

Global Patterns, Growth and Significance of Urban Areas

What you need to know
Global patterns of urbanisation since 1945
Emergence of megacities/world cities and their role in global and regional economies
Urbanisation, suburbanisation, counter-urbanisation, urban resurgence.
Economic, social, technological, political and demographic processes associated with urbanisation and urban growth
Urban change: deindustrialisation, decentralisation, rise of the service economy
Urban policy and regeneration in Britain since 1979

Global urbanisation patterns:

The world passed a landmark statistic sometime in 2014, when it was estimated that for the first time in human history over 50% of the world's population was living in urban areas.

An urban area (as opposed to 'rural') is defined as a dense concentration of inhabitants living in a built-up area with supporting infrastructure and a high density of buildings.

'Urbanisation' is the process of urban growth and refers to an increase in the total proportion of the population living in urban areas, rather than the actual total number of people living in cities.

Urban populations grow as a result of:

- **Rural-urban migration (voluntary):** urban **'Pull factors'** predominate as people anticipate an improved quality of life in a city together with enhanced future prospects for themselves and their family.
- **Rural-urban migration (forced):** rural **'Push factors'** predominate as a result of environmental pressures in rural areas (floods/drought), food shortages and/or political conflict (violent insurgent groups such as Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria). More directly, government policy of moving rural inhabitants to cities may take any choice away from the migration.

GREAT EXAM EXAMPLE:

China's **bureaucratic relocation** involved in the 'National New-type Urbanisation Plan 2014-2020' foresees moving over 260m people to cities in an attempt to modernise social and economic systems – an easier prospect when people are gathered rather than dispersed.

- **Assimilation:** as urban areas expand they may incorporate nearby smaller towns and villages into expansive conurbations. The term **'urban sprawl'** denotes the rapid spatial expansion of an urban area that is likely to surround and incorporate previously separate settlements.

Since 1945 the rate of global urbanisation has risen increasingly rapidly, but affecting different continents at different times.

	N. America	S. & central Am	Europe	Oceania	Asia	Africa	World
% urban 2016	81	80	74	70	48	41	54

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Emergence of megacities, world cities and their role in global and regional economies:

Megacities:

- Megacities are defined by their size (over 10m inhabitants) rather than their global significance. It may be one city (metropolitan area) such as Cairo, Egypt or a merging of a number of cities into a continuous built-up area (Tokyo-Yokohama, Japan).
- They have doubled over the past two decades, from 14 in 1995 to 29 in 2016.
- Their development is more likely where rapid economic growth is concentrated in a limited number of locations within a country. Mass rural-urban migration tends to be focused on these core urban areas rather than dispersed between a wider set of optional cities that migrants may select from, with different decisions made.
- Megacities can benefit from more efficient infrastructure, such as mass transport systems and economically with both horizontal and vertical industrial integration. However, urban problems may be magnified in megacities (congestion, waste disposal, air pollution, lack of housing) and prove more problematic to solve.
- Megacities are frequently major global hubs of manufacturing and export (Shenzhen, China and Delhi, India) in which goods are produced efficiently and at low cost and exported to the major world markets. They are also key markets, themselves for basic raw materials, components and energy resources.

World cities:

- These are cities that have particular influence on global economic, cultural and political systems. They may be megacities (New York, Tokyo) but aren't necessarily (London, Moscow, Paris, Berlin). They are seen to function as global hubs.
- Key global financial networks are influenced by their concentration of major banks and commercial HQs, stock markets and politico-economic influence and include New York, London and Tokyo. Decisions taken there have global significance.
- World cities may display the full range of key influences & sectors, or be distinctive for their dominance in certain ones rather than others (*Paris: culture, fashion, art and media*).

The dominance of London on the rest of the UK as a world city reflects that of many others. The impacts in the UK regions can be **positive**: generating vast wealth (tax revenues) that can be reinvested in regional development; generating innovative ideas and practices that benefit provincial areas; having vibrant cultures and artistic richness that those beyond can visit and experience. However, there can be **negative** impacts too: London draws in the most qualified and ambitious graduates from the UK universities; the concentration of high-wage employment raises house prices and living costs, driving out lower-paid workers; and there can be a **'London-centric' perspective** that assumes what benefits London, benefits everyone else too. This **can cause resentment in regions further away**.

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[GREAT BUT OVERDETAILED FOR A-LEVEL – JUST NEED TO KNOW CORE CONCEPT & REASONS]

Suburbanisation and counter-urbanisation

Suburbanisation	Counter-urbanisation
<p><u>Definition:</u> The movement of people, businesses and retail out from the central city into new estates around the edge of the city called the suburbs.</p> <p><u>Reasons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger houses • More modern houses • Larger gardens • Quieter roads • Perception of 'better' schools • Perception of fewer visible urban problems of crime, gangs, drugs etc. • Perceived as a rise in status – moving to an 'up market' area • Shops follow residential development with development of specialised retail parks to serve suburban customers. • Greenfield sites for new developments <p><u>Consequences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of the city onto greenfield land. • Loss of agricultural land • Urban 'sprawl' – cities expand rapidly • Congestion on roads into the city as people travel in to work, shop and for leisure • The 'Rush Hour' – heavy congestion going into the city a.m., and the same coming out p.m. with commuter traffic • Loss of more affluent middle class families from the central city areas • Less affluent, poorer, older population left behind in the inner city & inner suburbs • Central city schools, shops, doctors – lose their 'customers' & are less profitable • Suburban schools and services become 'oversubscribed'. • Can result in a bland, monotonous landscape of residential estates with very little character. 	<p><u>Definition:</u> People, retailers and businesses leaving the city altogether and relocating in nearby smaller towns and 'dormitory villages' / suburbanised villages. It is the reverse flow (counter-) to 'urbanisation'.</p> <p><u>Reasons</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for a semi-rural lifestyle in a village setting... • ...but wanting to be close enough to the city for jobs / shops / entertainment • Seen as a 'more wholesome' setting to bring up a family • Favoured retirement location with essential services but absence of urban problems • Businesses take advantage of lower rates, taxes and less 'headhunting' of employees when located in medium-size towns rather than large cities • Easier commuting journeys <p><u>Consequences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of villages and small/medium size towns onto greenfield land • Loss of agricultural land • Pressure on greenbelt land to permit development • Change of villages from 'traditional farming village' to 'suburbanised village' • Congestion on roads into the city as people travel in to work, shop and for leisure • The 'Rush Hour' – heavy congestion going into the city a.m., and the same coming out p.m. but with longer journeys • Loss of more affluent from the city shops, cinemas, restaurants... • Loss of local tax revenue from businesses • Loss of tax revenue from households for the city. Local taxes (Community Charge) go to the neighbouring rural council.

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Geographical processes associated with urbanisation and urban growth

Socio-economic processes	Demographic processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small- and medium-size businesses develop in unregulated workshop areas of many developing world cities (Dharavi, Mumbai, India). These provide much employment from a young age. • Dedicated industrial/commercial zones are purpose-built for large-scale manufacturing businesses in industrial estates on the edge of cities in developed and developing cities. • Many developing cities are by-passing manufacturing stages and focusing on financial, IT, and tertiary services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth rate declines as people move to cities. Shortage of housing, prospect of paying for schooling, more liberal freedoms for women, easier access to contraceptives – all combine to reduce family size. • Life expectancy increases: better quality and more nutritious food, cleaner water, access to health care – all mean death rates fall. • Population increase occurs as in-migration is enhanced by longer life expectancy of those already there.
Technological processes	Political processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass-transit systems can reduce congestion, pollution and ease movement of people in urban areas (Dubai metro) • Rapid transport systems are organised to link major urban centre (Japan bullet train) – increasing their attractiveness and stimulating further growth • Broadband and internet provision can permit faster and more reliable communication in cities than in rural areas. • Technological innovation is more likely to occur where experts are gathered collectively (Francis Crick Institute for bio-medical research centre, London) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier for governments to improve the quality of life for a larger proportion of the population when concentrated in urban areas (China forced-migration plan). • Civil rights and democratic processes are more likely to exert influence in urban areas compared with traditional rural areas (Afghanistan). However, • Mass protests are more likely to occur in urban populations that can lead to positive political change (Berlin, 1989) or conflict (Tripoli, Libya 2011). • More control may be exerted by the authorities over public protest in urban centres (Tiananmen Square, 1989, China)

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Urban change: deindustrialisation, decentralisation, urban resurgence and the rise of the service economy

The dominant feature that stimulated urbanisation in Europe and North America in the 19c was the Industrial Revolution. Factories established, usually on water – then coal-energy sources, housing was built for workers, new factories established close to existing manufacturers... and cities grew rapidly. In the last three decades of the 20th c many of those factories have closed. The reasons for this include:

- Relocation to lower-cost countries, particularly in Asia (globalisation)
- Loss of profitability due to overseas competition using more modern machinery
- Rationalisation into fewer but larger organisations (corporate consolidation)
- Declining markets (market shift)

This resulted in many industrial cities losing much of their economic base from the 1970s. In an attempt to encourage new businesses to set up and attract existing firms to establish new operations, many cities have:

- Established modern manufacturing and light **industrial estates**. These are often located at the edge of urban areas where large expanses of relatively cheap, undeveloped land are available and close to major transport networks
- focused on new technologies by establishing **science and technology parks** (*Silicon Valley, Los Angeles; Cambridge Science Park, UK*)
- developed commerce- and administration-focused **Business Parks** with associated retail centres, hotels, leisure facilities and greenery
- Focused on **Finance Centres**, with banking, stocks and shares, insurance and international transactions involving wealth (*London Docklands – Canary Wharf, London; Frankfurt, Germany; Singapore, SE Asia; Zurich, Switzerland*)
- concentrated on improving their 'brand' image – known as **urban rebranding**. Hong Kong launched a series of 'Greening' policies in 2016 following concern that its very high level of air pollution was forcing the export of commercial organisation and their young employees away to competitive locations such as Singapore which has noticeably cleaner air.

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Urban policy and regeneration in Britain since 1979

Major industrial decline took place in many of Britain's cities throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government was elected in 1979, bringing the introduction of **market-led approaches** to urban issues.

Since then, broadly aligning with the change in each incoming government, the general trend in policy is focusing on less centralised 'top down strategies' and more on community based initiatives.

Key mechanisms:

1980s UDCs	<p>Urban Development Corporations were agencies set up to manage the redevelopment of particular areas. They attempted to attract investment to redevelop aspects of the urban area. They had little direct influence other than improving the environment (demolition and site-landscaping) to better attract subsequent investors onto levelled brownfield sites.</p> <p><i>The most visible impact is arguably the work of the LDDC (London Docklands Development Corporation) that brought into being the Docklands regeneration of Canary Wharf and stimulated much more thereafter in the area</i></p> <p>LDDC Case Study visible on the 4 Level Maps Page from our field trip to Canary Wharf.</p>
1990s City Challenge	<p>A more 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approach was emphasised by the City Challenge. This promoted Public-Private Partnerships between city councils and private investors/not-for-profit social organisations, giving greater consideration to the views and concerns of local people and key users. The Thatcher government removed powers of local authorities to build new 'council houses' as local authority housing was termed. The responsibility was given to NFP organisations to construct and manage 'social housing' for which residents would have their rents met by the local authority.</p>
2000s NDCs	<p>The New Deal for Communities programme was aimed at improving the most deprived residential areas of 39 cities in: crime, education, health, housing, employment and physical environment. It took a more holistic view of urban issues, realising that attempting to tackle single-issue problems tends to fail. Problems have integrated causes and this policy aimed to tackle issues on a broad front. <i>They operate alongside Local Strategic Partnerships, which work in the 88 most deprived local authorities in England (as indicated by the Index of Multiple Deprivation) –great link below - drawing on the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund</i></p> <p>https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/geodemographics/imde2019/default/BTTTFFT/10/-0.1500/51.5200/</p>
2010s LEPs	<p>The Coalition government of 2010-2015 moved back from schemes operated from central government and argued regeneration was a local issue with central government operating a 'strategic and supporting role'. Local Enterprise Partnerships were established to fund housing and infrastructure developments. 'City Deal' gave 28 urban areas power to attract private investment. The list of Enterprise Zones was expanded and the Growing Places Fund set up to invest in local infrastructure and make sites 'development-ready'. <i>Financial constraints after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis meant central funds were limited and the emphasis put more on local solutions instigated, run and funded by city authorities under the premise of devolving power to the areas of greatest need.</i></p>