

Urbanization in Developed and Developing Countries around the World

Urbanization is a new trend throughout the world. Over the span of nine decades since 1900, the world's population trebled from 2 billion to 6 billion, but the urban population increased more rapidly from 2.4 million to 2.9 billion in 2000 and is expected to rise to 5 billion by 2030.

Urbanization in Developed Countries:

Prior to 1950, the majority of urbanization occurred in developed countries. Rapid urbanization took place during the period of industrialization in Europe and North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Many people moved from rural to urban areas to get jobs in the rapidly expanding industries in many large towns and cities. Since 1950, urbanization has slowed down in most of the developed countries. The present day situation is such that the biggest cities in these countries are losing population as people are moving away from the city to rural environments. This is known as counter urbanization.

Counter Urbanization:

Counter urbanization is the movement of people out of cities, to the surrounding areas. This process has been occurring in developed countries, since 1950. There are four main reasons for counter urbanization:

(i) The increase in car ownership over the last 40 years means people are more mobile. This has led to an increase in commuting. Also, the growth in information technology (e-mail, faxes and video conferencing) means more people can work from home.

(ii) Urban areas are becoming increasingly unpleasant places to live as a result of pollution, crime and traffic congestion.

(iii) More people tend to move to rural areas, when they retire to lead a peaceful life.

(iv) New business parks on the edge of the cities (satellite towns) mean people no longer have to travel to the city centre. People now prefer to live on the outskirts of the city to be near where they work.

This trend has given rise to the growth of suburbs.

Urbanization in Developing Countries:

Around 1950, most of the erstwhile colonies became independent countries. Most of these countries fall under the developing country category. Since 1950, rapid growth in urbanization has occurred in these countries. These are the countries located in South America, Africa and Asia. Between 1950 and 1990, the urban population in the developing countries doubled whereas in the same period in the developed countries it was less than half.

While the developing world is still overwhelmingly rural, it already contains over one-third of the world's urban population and some of the world's largest cities.

There are two following main causes of urbanization in these countries.

(i) Rural to urban migration is happening on a massive scale due to population pressure and lack of resources in rural areas. The 'push' factors are stronger here compared with the pull' factors. People living in rural areas are pulled' to the city because they often believe that the standard of living in urban areas will be much better than in rural areas. People also hope for well-paid jobs, the greater opportunities to find casual or 'informal' work, better health care and education.

(ii) Natural increase is caused by a decrease in death rates while birth rates remain high.

PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:

The growth of population in urban areas is known as urbanization whereas The growth of cities will be the single largest influence on development in the 21st century.

It predicted the world urban population will grow upto 4.9 billion by 2030, most of which will be in Asia and Africa.

Historically most of the first ancient towns were found in areas which now come under 3rd world countries.

PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Urban transition has paralleled the demographic transition in Less Developed Countries in the form of a S shaped curve.

Disparities within developed world- nearly 3 quarters of population of Latin America and Caribbean live in urban areas, while 2/3rds or more population remain rural in china, India, Indonesia, & sub Saharan Africa.

Africa- most rapidly urbanising in past 4 decades.

China- urban growth accelerated while population growth declines.

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