
Consequences Of Urbanization: Beneficial Or Destructive

Urbanization refers to the population shift from the countryside to towns and cities. It is the process by which towns and cities are formed and how existing ones become larger as more people begin living and working in central areas in hope that they will enjoy a better standard of living. The United Nations predicts that about 86% of the developed world and 64% of the developing world will be urbanized by 2050. This equates to approximately 3 billion urbanites, much of which will occur in Asia and Africa.

Urbanization is considered to be the most important factor to make environmental change. Urbanization driven by economic growth tends to have deep environmental consequences. Many studies show that the urbanization that is being taking place around the world has been unplanned, uncontrolled and environmentally unfriendly. And this is a problem. This transforms the existing concerns at local level (such as drainage problems), towards a regional level (such as river pollution) which ultimately causes problems globally via marine pollution.

One of the major challenges that we humans face in today's expanding city life is environmental degradation. Urban population have no option but to interact with their environment. While doing so they change their environment through their consumption and usage of resources such as food, water, energy, and land. And in turn, this polluted environment affects the quality and overall health of the people. The ever increasing population and demands of urban lifestyle has led to poor air and water quality, lack of sufficient water, waste-disposal problems; and high energy consumption.

Energy consumption for cooking, heating, electricity, vehicles and industries is increasing day by day despite the huge advancement in technology. And this increased consumption of energy is more than likely to have disastrous environmental effects. The high emission of Sulphur dioxide and smoke caused from industries and factories is highly dangerous. The burning of fossil fuels such as coal and petrol to generate electricity is on the rise which not only increases the air pollutants but also the greenhouse gas emission. This leads to the formation of smog. Cloudiness and fog occur more frequently and precipitation of acid rain increases. This increases the chance of water pollution and floods. The greenhouse gas is ultimately responsible for global warming and climate change. Another dangerous aspect of urbanization is deforestation. While deforestation increases air, water and soil pollution; it also affects the wildlife which in turn disturbs the whole ecology and ecosystem.

So, Is urbanization environmentally beneficial or destructive? This is the million-dollar question. While we can have long debates and endless discussions on it, there however doesn't seem to be an alternative in this day and age. The relationship between urbanization and environment is not always directly proportional though. Big urban cities do not always create greater environmental problems as long as they are properly planned and managed; and small urban towns can also cause big problems if there is lack of proper management. This means the behavior, consumption of resources and living patterns of humans define what kind of an environmental impact will take place and not just the size of urbanization. Hence strong and proper scientific city planning will be essential in managing these difficulties as the world's urban areas continue to rise.

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