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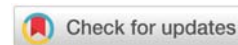
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## Research Article

# Mutual Effects of Environment and Urbanization: A Sociological Assessment

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## Abstract

The article explores how urban areas are widely affecting the environment with special reference to the developing countries. Urbanization as the outcome of population growth in rural areas, decline of agricultural productivity and migration is creating more economic activities and dynamics in towns and cities leading to environmental issues and challenges. It is well observed in terms of transportation, solid waste, air, water, shortage of green space etc. in urban areas. In that, different age groups including children and the elderly people are badly affected. While urbanization affects society, urban inhabitants are constantly increasing due to improved transportation, more social network accessibility, higher literacy rate of young population, higher socio-economic expectations, change in lifestyles etc. However, density of population in cities has widely and negatively culminated in urban environmental catastrophes; some phenomenon which will affect next generations as well.

**Objective:** As one of the main functions of sociology is to find social problems, the current paper tries to do that. Urbanization is increasingly and primarily affecting the environment. Destruction of environment and creation of the built environment, itself creating social, economic, health and many more problems, is one of the objectives of the research. If the issue is controlled, decline of other problems will follow, and consequently steps toward a safe and secure society will be taken. The analytics of the paper will on average reflect how urbanization is destroying societies as a whole. Similarly, sociology usually proposes ethical resolutions. The author also made use of the sources possible to collect the data necessary. Note, English not being the first language of the author, is expected to be average.

One of the topics very related to sociology is urbanization. Population proves the objective relationship between urbanization with the environment. Any change in population in quantitative or qualitative terms, while impacting urbanization, it affects the environment too. Nowadays, the factor of population, and as a result, increasing urbanization has endangered the environment. Therefore, governments and the decision-making systems need to make proper decisions to keep the environment safe and clean. Environmental safety widely impacts the population; in that, babies, mothers and the aging people find more security.

Probably, most of the problems and challenges of the 21st century are the results of the 20th century problems which were not administratively and politically observed and paid attention to, sufficiently. Weaknesses and shortcomings pertaining to policy-making have contributed to the 1st century challenges as stemmed from population, urbanization and the environment. Those are the key points to be explored in the present article.

## Introduction

The premier question in this article is how and why urban inhabitants increased in the past 300 years, when and why the urban growth happened? The process of urbanization gradually and widely affected the environment. Also, the expanding urbanization will lead to how the conditions will be in the years to come? It is expected that sociology and physical sciences would answer to such questions.

However, the expansion of the world cities in the past three centuries happened because of more population growth rate. The response to why the number of cities increased, is because industries, economic exchanges, application of

expertise and skills, competition and economies grew. Such a multi-dimensional process largely impacted the environment. Environmental status has deteriorated in an unprecedented manner; a phenomenon that needs more social studies, application of scientific plans and methods, and other approaches to be able to keep the environment safe and healthy. However, though catalyses and other relevant means, urban environments could be benefited and kept under control.

Up to the mid of the 20th century, levels of urbanization was lower, and the number of cities was smaller; the conditions followed by almost safe environments in cities. Due to the industrial and economic development, cities have physically witnessed various changes. Emergence

of industrial installations, birth of motor vehicles, and increasing consumption, all have variously endangered urban environment. In addition to that, physical expansion of cities continued during the 20th century; a phenomenon which need multiple therapies. Cities need therapies in order to be successful, and for that, they need change; every successful city must be competent in its competition and sustainable in its entrepreneurship. Such a process has been recognized in the past few decades [1].

Following the expansion of urbanization and environmental reforms, many of the agricultural lands, mines and forests were much applied for, to be used. In this way, exploiting mines and forests, while had economic benefits, it was followed by challenges and weaknesses for the environment, destruction of forests, over exploitation of resources, ending resources etc. Such a scenario not only affects the current generations, but it will affect next generations too, so far as security and natural resources are concerned. Therefore, demographic, social and environmental planners must predict and project the future in an integrated manner. By the year 1900, there were only 43 cities in the world with a population of over 500 thousand, and also only 16 cities with one million settlers had been registered [2]. From the year 1400 onward, population increase, enlarging cities, and appearance of industries in cities, all brought vulnerabilities and dangers to cities that was even increased later. Hence, city planning, city and environment must be the priority of social planning, and if not, environmental safety will be in danger and critical.

The number of one-million-resident cities have been on increase since 1950, and today there are more than 400 of them available in the world. That is because of expansion of industries in cities followed by economic development, increasing number of people have migrated to cities. Such cities need more transformation rather than resilience [3].

The consequence of such a situation is pollution of environment and other side effects. Currently, in countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Dubai and Iran the consequence of such migration is obvious and reflected in environmental pollution. Therefore, and sociologically speaking, environment and the balance between population and urban space must always be kept in mind by socio-environmental planners.

## Method of research

Methodology used in the present article is of qualitative type. In that, various paradigms have been used to find facts. Qualitative research usually studies people or areas in their natural settings. In finding facts for the research, the researcher engaged in careful data collection and thoughtful analysis of what was relevant. In the documentary research applied in the present article, printed and written materials were widely regarded. The research was performed as a qualitative library type in which the researcher had to refer to relevant and related sources. In the current research, various books on environment were thoroughly investigated, and the needful inferences were made. The data fed by the investigator in the present article is reliable. Though literature on environment is very limited, yet the author tried to investigate many different

resources in order to elicit the necessary information to build up the text.

## Modernization and expansion of cities

Expansion of large cities followed by modernization has led to environmental change and increase of more cities; further endangering the environment. Due to the development plans and modernization, many green spaces have been destroyed, and that has culminated in shortage of green space in city areas. Similarly, due to the density of population in cities and shortage of water, air pollution is observed too. Risks of such kind have encountered social planners with limitations in many developing countries. As a result of which reversal plans of migration are encouraged in those countries to send migrants to rural areas. In the meantime, in case of expansion of cities, necessary infrastructures of water networks, sewage system, roads, electricity, transportation services, hygienic services and the like must be thought of, and planned for. To well process the above networks, national and technical potentialities need to be thought of.

Developing countries currently modernizing, their urbanization process is expanding, and because if that environmental destruction is happening in them in various dimensions. While industrial and economic investments do not take place in all cities in developing countries, increasing citizens migrate to large cities in search of jobs. Such a type of increasing urbanization leads to numerous social disorders, environmental pollution, crimes etc. In such a process, safety of next generations will be negatively affected too.

Therefore, environmental destruction in urban spaces of the developing world is far larger than that in the developed countries. Some of such examples are Egypt in Africa, United Arab Emirates in the Middle East and China in Asia. Density of population in such areas is accompanied by environmental change in the same areas. Demographically speaking, a sort of balance between population and environmental potentials must be maintained in order to protect the natural resources for the next generations Figure 1.

**Urban ecology** Urban ecology includes investigation in ecological system pertaining to human beings living in cities and urban land spaces. Urban ecology as an interdisciplinary subject investigates how human processes can coexist with the systems in which human beings dominate them. Coexistence

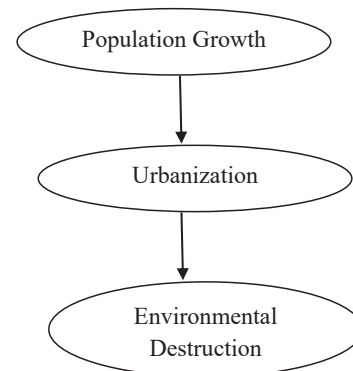


Figure 1: Impacts of the Three Main Variables.



of man with nature is currently the agenda of scientific and academic schools of thought. Population of different age groups migrating to cities in the past few decades; such a process has endangered urban ecological balance. On the contrary, the environmental advocates are generally of the opinion that exploitation of resources must so happen in an orderly balanced manner. For example, migration should not happen to particular areas to exert pressure on environment. Therefore, balance between population and environment contributes to sustainable resources for the next generations. To control environmental, social ecologists believe in a decentralized society in which citizens at urban and regional levels regulate the industrial and production processing appropriate to the local resources in this way environment could be better protected. The theory of ecological modernization emphasizes on suitable application of technologies to better exploit resource [5,6]. Application of intermediate means and technologies to clear up the air, means to control pollution and as a result, it could play a good part to safeguard the environment.

### Population and productivity

To better understand the role of population growth, it is advisable to study the high population growth of the South countries. In those countries, production of goods, and services are not proportionally to the rate of growth of population; leading increasing number of social and economic challenges such as migration within these countries. Many countries in the Middle East and East Asia are currently are facing the mentioned challenges. The set of countries that we mentioned have been in a better state in terms of food accessibility, quality of healthcare systems and had lower mortality rates since the World War II.

Consequently, the young age population are emerging in those countries that they have better chance of giving birth to more children, in the upcoming years. Prior to that, the children who were born usually did not have as the chance of becoming parents as a result of mortality. Eventually the urban environmental destruction took place. Generally speaking, the countries that experienced the highest economic growth rates, had the lowest population growth rates in the 20th century. The scenario caused better preservation of the environmental. Based on estimations, till 2025, about 84% of the world population will be living the developing World [7].

While facing high urban growth rate, the developing countries cannot manage their economies. Under such circumstances, and due to low wages more flexible laws in environmentalism the other Western countries largely produce their products in those countries; the countries which must tolerate more pressure on environment [8]. Therefore, a considerable portion of environmental destruction or pollution in developing world is caused by industrial countries. However, the priorities for planning in the developing world should properly utilize water and land in order to provide suitable and sufficient food [9]. Similarly, mounting evidence suggests mental and physical health issues are related to the built-

environment, such as human modified places like workplaces, homes, schools, industrial areas, farms, roads, and highways etc. The built-environment depends on quality of mediating and moderating factors [10]. However, developing countries that are following further modernization in different areas, are confronting environmental pollution, shortage of water and many more challenges in social health.

### Conclusion

Environmental vulnerability is on the agenda worldwide. Not only, the developing world is facing it, the industrial countries too are confronting environmental challenges. Factors of population growth and migration widely play role in environmental destruction in developing countries. Environment as a matter of discussion has attracted the attention of experts. Sociologists too are expected to play a great role to address the issue, and create an improved environment for the future generations. Because of industrialization, the changing lifestyles, more consumption, the never ending modernizing efforts and other factors, the environment is highly vulnerable specially in the developing societies. Densely populated urban areas are suffering from pollution of water, air, housing and waste. They are facing the shortage of food, medication and low job openings. They face high rates of crimes, corruption etc. Therefore, sociologists need to constantly appraise and predict the existing and future needs of environment. Modifications and reforms are always needed to reach safe environments for all ages.

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