

URBANIZATION AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
Urbanization is a complex social process that characterizes the growth and development of cities, as well as forms the share of urban residents in the total population. This phenomenon reflects not only demographic changes but also transformations in social systems, culture, lifestyles, and social relations. The article describes the main stages and causes of urbanization, its impact on social relations, as well as problems of urbanization such as social risks, environmental risks and instability in the urban environment. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between urbanization, globalization, technological advancements, and governance.	City, urbanization, social process, sustainable development, urban culture, urbanization and economic development, urban lifestyle.

Introduction

Urbanization is one of the main processes that determine the development of modern society. As a result of these phenomena, the growth of the urban population and the expansion of urban areas have sharply increased. However, urbanization is not only the migration of people from rural areas to cities, but also a complex social process that has a profound impact on culture, everyday life and social structure.

Cities are becoming centers of economic activity, innovation, and cultural exchange, attracting millions of people with their potential. At the same time, urbanization creates many problems, such as environmental problems, ecological problems, overpopulation, and degradation of the urban environment. These phenomena raise not only the issue of belonging and demographic growth, but also an important social problem that requires study and regulation - the urbanization process.

This work is devoted to considering urbanization as a continuous process. The main attention is paid to the impact on the circle of social strata, changes in the interaction between people, and the emergence of new forms of culture and identity. Particular attention is paid to the difficulties that accompany this process, as well as possible ways to solve them.

The study of urbanization as a social process allows us to understand more deeply the dynamics of changes in society and provides valuable recommendations for taking into account urban development. This makes the topic relevant for sociologists, urban planners, economists, and anyone interested in contemporary social change.

A city is a large settlement where the population is mainly engaged in industry, trade, as well as in the service sector, administration, science and culture. A city is a center of population not directly involved in agriculture. It is not only an administrative and cultural center for the surrounding districts, but also

a factor that greatly influences their settlement and growth. Currently, over half of the global population resides in urban areas. By 2050, 68% of the world's population is predicted to live in cities<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of the rapid development of urbanization around the world, today more than 70% of the population of Europe,<sup>2</sup> 100% of the population of Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuwait, Monaco, Nauru live in cities<sup>3</sup>. In Uzbekistan, this figure is 51%<sup>4</sup>. Our country's place in the world in terms of urbanization is quite low. According to the UN international rating, Uzbekistan ranked 155th out of 233 countries in this area in 2018. Over the past 15 years (2009-2024), the level of urbanization in our country has decreased from 51.7% to 51%. Therefore, the development strategy of Uzbekistan until 2030 sets the task of bringing the level of urbanization to 60%. In the future, the basis of Uzbekistan's development will be a network of medium-sized cities or agglomerations, which will become centers uniting small cities and small-town settlements. This will ensure an even distribution of productive forces and human resources in the country, accelerate the development of industry and the service sector. The development of cities affects the standard of living and socio-cultural image of the population. Since urbanization is a necessary and irreversible process, it is important to consider its social, environmental and indirect impact in advance in order to minimize its negative impact on the quality of life of the population. In this regard, determining how the urban environment affects people's lives allows us to identify the main factors, provide living conditions, and develop basic strategies for changing and reversing the impact.

Sociologically, urbanization is understood as the process of increasing the number and population of cities and the emergence of a (new) urban culture. In the field of sociology, many scientific and practical works have been created devoted to the study of urbanization, that is, the development of cities. Urbanization is studied as a social process within the framework of this discipline.

The topics of urban and industrial urbanization have been consistently studied in the works of classical Western sociologists<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, one of the main drivers of the development of sociology was the development of cities and the need to solve various problems that arose among urban residents.

Social scientists began to pay more attention to the process of urban growth and its social consequences in the first half of the 20th century. Scientists argue that cities, especially megacities, are characterized by a unique way of life. In his article "Urbanism as a Way of Life", Louis Wirth emphasizes that the urban environment has a unique character that changes people's relationships and behavior. According to him, the main factors of well-being that determine the urban way of life are the high level of illumination of the population, its diversity, functional specialization, anonymity, impersonality, and standardization of behavior. These characteristics create a unique cultural model known as the urban way of life. At the beginning of the 20th century, the disciplines of sociology and anthropology focused on studying two different types of society. Sociology has studied modern, industrial and urbanized societies, defined by Ferdinand Tönnis as *Gesellschaft* (society), while anthropology has focused on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.urbanet.info/world-urban-population/>

<sup>2</sup> CEC (2011), *Cities of Tomorrow. Challenges, Visions, Ways Forward*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. P-14.

Ways Forward. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

<sup>3</sup> <https://gtmarket.ru/ratings/urbanization-index>

<sup>4</sup> Data from the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan

<sup>5</sup> Вебер М. Город // История хозяйства. Город / Пер. с нем.; Под ред. И.Гревса. М.: КАНОН-пресс-Ц, Кучково поле, 2001;

traditional and local societies - Gemeinschaft (community). Currently, this traditional division has almost completely disappeared, as both urban anthropology and sociology are increasingly focusing on the study of a globalized, multicultural and hybridized society in the era of global urbanization<sup>6</sup>. The Chicago School (1918-1939, represented by R. Park and E. Burgess) developed a scientific direction known as "urban sociology". After its formation, according to O. Leibovitch, "urban sociology" became a branch of sociology that studies social processes, forms of urbanization and institutions in context. However, in the process of formation, the problems of urban sociology quickly acquired an interdisciplinary character and went beyond the scope of one discipline. Now the concept of urbanization was given an interdisciplinary definition. In its most general form, it was considered as a synthetic (integrative) result of the interaction of geographical, social and economic processes. For example, according to E. Demidenko, urbanization "includes, first of all, the following processes:

- 1) the development of the city as the starting point and defining link of urbanization;
- 2) the growth of cities, especially large cities;
- 3) the growth and increase in the share of the urban population;
- 4) the increase in the role of the city in the life of society;
- 5) the spread of "urban relations", as well as typical elements of urban culture and features of urban lifestyle throughout society;
- 6) the formation and spread of new urban forms of settlements, etc<sup>7</sup>.

Today, in foreign sociology, the study of the problem of urbanization in accordance with the laws of general social evolution is dominated by studying it. In this case, urbanization is approached as a process that has both local and periodicity. It is becoming more difficult to study large cities of the world's countries that are exposed to global influences. After all, the effects on urban life are strong in them, and the hierarchy of cities is changing and improving every day<sup>8</sup>.

In scientific literature, great emphasis is placed and studied mainly on the development of large industrial cities. In this, the main emphasis is placed on their access to raw materials, energy resources, transport highways, and economic and geographical location relative to large centers. Because it is they that determine the main and important characteristics of cities.

Urbanization includes a number of important aspects that are important as a social process. During the urbanization process, the population's migratory moods and approach to their lifestyle change. The urbanization of the population also affects their thinking, values, and goals. During this period, people who become marginalized may appear. Since the process of urbanization is a somewhat slower process in the minds of people, new cultural elements may form and manifest themselves. The following are aspects that indicate the importance of urbanization as a social process:

## 1. Economic development

Urbanization expands economic opportunities. Cities often serve as centers for jobs, business opportunities, and infrastructure development. This, in turn, increases incomes and ensures economic stability. Economic development is associated with the development of urban agglomerations and

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<sup>6</sup> DOI:10.12797/9788381386708.01 In book: European Cities in the Process of Constructing and Transmitting European Cultural Heritage (pp.15-33) Sotsiologik lug'at. M.: Politizdat, 1990. S. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Демиденко Э. С. Демографические проблемы и перспективы больших городов. М.: Статистика, 1980. С. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Beaverstock J.V., Smith R.G., Taylor P.J. Globalization and World Cities: Some Measurement Methodologies // Applied Geography. 2000. Vol. 20.

megalopolises. In the United States, the Boston-Washington, Chicago-Pittsburgh, and San Francisco-San Diego megalopolises are expected to have more than 150 million inhabitants (more than 50% of the US population) in the near future. The Moscow agglomeration unites 130 settlements (cities) within a radius of 100 km from its center<sup>9</sup>. Urban agglomerations provide industry and services<sup>10</sup>. They also facilitate exchange (e.g., large facilities), adaptation (e.g., jobs and people), and learning (e.g., about more efficient ways of working)<sup>11</sup>. It is beneficial for business to operate in cities because they have potential employees, suppliers, and infrastructure is cheaper for enterprises to use. Thus, cities are considered centers of high productivity and grow in agglomerations with high population density, since the proximity of the workforce is their advantage. However, this law does not fully work in Uzbekistan, since there are factors that prevent the benefits of the agglomeration economy - a type of economy that is achieved by reducing the costs of individuals and firms in places with high population and entrepreneurial activity. In cities, the cost of infrastructure, transport, and services decreases due to the distribution of these resources among a large number of users. According to the World Bank, if the density of cities in Uzbekistan increases by 1 percent, their efficiency decreases by 0.67 percent, while among international indicators, an average increase in density by 1 percent leads to an increase in efficiency by 0.47 percent<sup>12</sup>. So, if cities grow chaotically, and if there is insufficient public investment to maintain and develop basic infrastructure, the negative consequences of urbanization will intensify, and cities will bring in less money. Traffic jams, power outages, unreliable water supplies - all this discourages private investment and leads to the loss of business. In our country's capital, Tashkent, due to migration barriers for several years, migrants have preferred to settle on the outskirts of the city. The suburbs grow in the direction of the big city, as a result of which the agglomeration contours lose their roundness and take on the least efficient shape - the shape of an octopus. This shape is economically inefficient, because the distances between different points of the city where people need to go are too great, which increases the costs of residents. They spend more time on the road, more money on fuel, and more carbon emissions. In addition, people are less likely to communicate with each other, which worsens the overall quality of life and the uneven coverage of the population with social benefits - schools, parks, hospitals<sup>13</sup>. "Urbanization can still be a boon for development in Uzbekistan, but the Uzbek government needs to act now to make it happen. But decisive and concerted action needs to start now, or Uzbekistan risks missing the historic development opportunity that urbanization presents," the World Bank report says<sup>14</sup>.

In general, urbanization is a key factor in the economic development of countries, and world experience has proven that urbanization helps countries achieve higher efficiency and prosperity. For example, a 1% increase in the urbanization level has led to an increase in per capita GDP by 10% in China and

<sup>9</sup> Abirkulov Q.N., Rafikov A., Khojimatov A.N., Ecology. Handbook. T.: 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon McGranahan and David Satterthwaite. 2014. Urbanisation concepts and trends. IIED Working Paper. IIED, London.<http://pubs.iied.org/10709IIED> ISBN 978-1-78431-063-9

<sup>11</sup> Duranton, G. and D. Puga. 2004. "Microfoundations of urban agglomeration economies." pp 2063–2117 in Handbook of regional and urban economics: Volume 4, Cities and geography, eds J.V. Henderson and J.F. Thisse. Amsterdam: Elsevier North Holland.

<sup>12</sup> The Time is Now How Can Uzbekistan Leverage Urbanization as a Driver of Sustainable Development? World Bank report. 2022 pg

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gazeta.uz/oz/2022/07/10/urbanization/>

<sup>14</sup> The Time is Now How Can Uzbekistan Leverage Urbanization as a Driver of Sustainable Development? World Bank report. 2022 pg

13% in India<sup>15</sup>. Based on panel data from 27 provinces from 2006 to 2020, Chinese researchers Yejin Liu, Meirong Yang, and Jiahui Cui conclude that urbanization generally plays a positive role in stimulating economic growth. First, urbanization and economic agglomeration have a positive effect on economic growth and have a spatial diffusion effect<sup>16</sup>. Second, the development of urbanization is closely related to economic growth, especially the development of economic agglomeration. If economic agglomeration is based on a single-center model, it will hinder urbanization and economic development. On the contrary, the model of economic agglomeration with several centers has the potential to stimulate urbanization and further enhance economic growth. Third, it is worth noting that the impact of urbanization on economic growth varies across regions. Factors such as geographical location, resource availability, and local economic conditions contribute to regional variations.

## 2. Education and learning.

Cities are often associated with educational institutions, universities, and research centers. Urbanization facilitates access to education, which increases the level of education of the population and promotes social mobility. For example, in China, educational resources for urban students have a general advantage over rural educational resources. Urban education in Beijing is similar to elite education in the United States, in that both are aimed at providing the best educational resources to elite families, upper-class urban families<sup>17</sup>. Urbanization has had a positive impact on the mindset of rural residents. In many rural areas, the ideology of education is similar to that of cities. Parents do not force their children to choose a profession that will earn them more money. They simply want their children to find a subject or direction that interests them.

The quality of education in rural areas is problematic in many developing countries. But even in Turkey, which is on the verge of joining the top ten most developed countries, the gap between urban and rural education is wide. Urban schools are generally larger, have a larger socio-economic composition of students, and have greater responsibility for resource allocation. Urban schools are less likely to suffer from staff shortages. Schools have a higher proportion of qualified teachers. The ratio of students to teachers in urban schools is higher than in rural schools. As in many developing countries, the quality of education in rural areas is problematic in Turkey. Rural schools do not meet the national standards of the Ministry of National Education in terms of student qualifications. Resources such as libraries and computers are not sufficient to meet the needs of students in rural schools. Teachers and administrators are not given sufficient opportunities to participate in professional development activities in rural areas<sup>18</sup>.

The gap between urban and rural education is also evident in our country. The expected duration of education for children aged 3-6 in cities is 2.4 years, while in rural areas it is 1.7 years. In these two

<sup>15</sup> Tursun Ahmedov, Urbanization Program: goals, objectives and expected results. 22/01/2019. <http://mineconomy.uz/uz/info/2512>

<sup>16</sup> Volume 10, Issue 1e23772 January 15, 2024. Open access. Urbanization, economic agglomeration and economic growth. Yejin Liu hayeking@163.com · Meirong Yang 12019201016@cueb.edu.cn · Jiahui Cui 1573825089@qq.com

<sup>17</sup> Jingchen Xue. Education and Urbanization An Analysis of the Differences in Education Between the Village and City. Experimental High School Attached to Beijing Normal University, Beijing 100032, China eric\_xjc@126.com

<sup>18</sup> Nukhet Konuk, Gamze Turan, Yuksel Ardali. THE IMPORTANCE OF URBANIZATION IN EDUCATION. The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS), 2016 Volume 5, Pages 232-236 ICRES 2016: International Conference on Research in Education and Science THE IMPORTANCE OF URBANIZATION IN EDUCATION



categories of regions, the duration of preschool education for girls and boys is equal. There are also significant differences between urban and rural areas in the coverage of the school preparation system for 6-year-olds. In urban areas, it is 77 percent, in rural areas, 65 percent (in rural areas, this figure is 1 percentage point higher among girls, 65 percent). Uzbekistan has established 11 years of compulsory secondary education. The duration of primary education is 3.8 years across the republic, and there is no gender difference in this regard. However, there are also differences between urban and rural areas in this regard. That is, the expected duration of education in urban areas was 4.15 years (boys 4.19 years, girls 4.12 years), and in rural areas it was 3.51 years (boys 3.47 years, girls 3.55 years). Therefore, urbanization has a significant impact on the duration and quality of education<sup>19</sup>.

### 3. Health and Services

Cities facilitate access to health services and other social infrastructure. Urbanization improves health systems and improves the overall health of the population.

Urbanization can also cause some health problems. Some of the major health problems resulting from urbanization include poor nutrition, pollution-related health and infectious diseases, poor sanitation and housing conditions, and related health conditions. These directly affect the quality of life of a person, while also straining health systems and resources<sup>20</sup>. Urbanization can have a major negative impact on the nutritional health of the poor. This process requires further strengthening of health systems. The more urbanized a country is, the higher the life expectancy. The countries with the highest life expectancy in the world are largely urbanized. Since urban residents have greater access to health resources than rural residents, urbanization policies should be based on goals such as improving health equity, that is, reducing the rural-urban gap.

### 4. Cultural changes.

Urbanization helps to increase cultural diversity, as cities attract people from different regions and social groups. This is due to economic opportunities, educational prospects, and a high standard of living that the urban environment provides. As a result, cities have created a multicultural society that contributes to the interaction of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and social classes.

In large cities, the weekly, monthly, and episodic life activities of the population are formed, work, study, recreation, treatment, housing, and communal services are used more effectively, and above all, the high potential of the agglomeration “core” attracts the population to its sphere of influence. A unique lifestyle and urban culture are formed and developed in this area. There are ample opportunities for the human personality to develop fully and harmoniously. Such influence attracts more people from abroad, and it expands and develops<sup>21</sup>. Thus, urbanization not only increases cultural diversity, but also turns cities into centers of global cultural exchange and innovation.

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<sup>19</sup> Data from the Institute of Macroeconomic and Regional Studies

<sup>20</sup> Kennedy G. Food security in the context of urban sub-Saharan Africa. Internet paper for food security, food Africa, internet forum 31 March–11 April 2003;2009.

<sup>21</sup> Tashtayeva S.K. Features of the formation and development of urban agglomerations of Uzbekistan (on the example of the Tashkent agglomeration). Dissertation written for the degree of Candidate of Geographical Sciences

## 5. Social stratification and inequality

Cities play an important role in social stratification, as they concentrate personal, cultural and educational resources. Urbanization promotes stratification, reflecting different aspects of people based on income level, occupation, level of education and access to benefits. As a result, social status becomes not only an economic but also a spatial phenomenon. Data show that people in cities have more opportunities than those in rural areas. Because in cities, people can use more resources than in rural areas, such as electricity, clean drinking water, education, healthcare, culture, art, etc<sup>22</sup>. The high level of urbanization has widened the poverty gap between rural and urban areas. However, poverty also exists in cities. The gap between the rich and the poor is high. This situation gives rise to many grievances among the lower classes.

## 6. Sustainable development

Urbanization provides opportunities for the implementation of sustainable development strategies. Cities can play a key role in developing and implementing innovative solutions to environmental issues.

Sustainable development is understood as the ability of future generations to meet their own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, with a strong environmental component. Sustainable urban development is defined as development that meets the needs of society without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It prioritizes economic, environmental and social sustainability. Sustainable development aims to ensure that cities are livable and to support economic, social and environmental sustainability in a changing climate.

Today, cities account for about 70 percent of global energy consumption and 70 percent of global carbon emissions, as well as more than 70 percent of resource use, and in the context of unplanned or poorly managed urbanization, cities are often characterized by severe socio-economic inequalities social exclusion, extreme poverty, high unemployment, low-cost and inadequate housing and poor environmental conditions, as well as unsustainable environmental conditions beyond city boundaries<sup>23</sup>. These interactions are important for the formulation of integrated policies and plans necessary to achieve sustainable urban development

## Conclusion:

Urbanization as a social process is a complex and multifaceted social process that has a decisive impact on all aspects of society. It not only changes territorial organization and instability, but also changes the social structure, cultural norms and daily lifestyles of people.

On the one hand, urbanization stimulates the development of the workforce, economy and technology, and creates new opportunities for education, work and cultural exchange. The urban environment has become a center of innovation and global interaction, contributing to the improvement of living standards and the transformation of cultural diversity.

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<sup>22</sup> Urbanization: a problem for the rich and the poor? Md Abdul Kuddus\*, Elizabeth Tynan and Emma McBryde. Kuddus et al. Public Health Reviews (2020) 41:1 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-019-0116-0>

<sup>23</sup> [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org) United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Sustainable Development Goals.

On the other hand, the rapid pace of urbanization can cause social and environmental problems. These include the growth of two colors, the emergence of megacities with an increasing population, environmental degradation and the weakening of traditional forms of social life. Such challenges require an integrated approach to urban planning based on the principles of development.

In fact, urbanization as a social process reflects profound changes in society and forms a new type of social organization in which human interaction is largely dependent on the urban environment. Effective management of this process should combine interests with social justice and particular sustainability to ensure the development of society in times of change.