
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN SETTINGS

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Define the term urban environment.
- Identify the features of urban settings
- Explain the meaning of urbanization
- Describe the importance of urban sustainability

1.1 INTRODUCTION

More than half of the world's population now lives-in urban areas. Urban settings are relatively new phenomenon which transit and transform the way of life, work, travel and build networks.

The definition of an urban setting varies from one context to another; it is usually agreed upon by governments at national level. However, there are several elements that constitute an urban setting that can be adapted and applied across contexts.

An urban setting can be defined broadly based on population density, concentration of administrative bodies and infrastructure and a diverse set of livelihood and income generation activities. Urban areas are characterized by high population density when compared to other areas. Cities are defined by municipal boundaries and are usually characterized by the presence of administrative structures like government offices, courts, hospitals, and

financial institutions (banks). In an urban setting, the forms of livelihood and income generation activities are diverse and are not bound for agricultural production like rural areas. If the area fits some if not all of these basic characteristics, it can be considered as urban.

Areas which tied to proximity of urban areas and located on the outskirts of cities or large urban areas but retain rural characteristics such as substantial reliance on agricultural production is traditionally known as peri-urban area. It is important to understand that peri-urban areas are not merely those which are close to cities and may include areas that are not neighbouring urban centres. Peri-urban areas are those which are characterized by a mix of rural and urban characteristics. Whereas in rural areas, there are relatively less presence of administrative structures, government services and other infrastructures. Livelihood activities are predominantly centred on agricultural production.

To understand and define the urban setting, it is useful to incorporate the social dimension along with geographic and population-based characteristics. The table below presents these characteristics. The different characteristics were selected for differentiating the ‘urban’ from ‘rural’ and were significant. While such characteristics can also exist in practice in rural communities, a rural community that increasingly displays these characteristics can be described as becoming increasingly urban.

Table 1.Characteristics for identifying increasingly urban settings

Physical	Economic	Human	Political	Environmental
Ongoing construction of buildings or major development of the infrastructure or Industry	Non-agricultural labor and industry	Population, size, density, and overcrowding	Proximity to political leaders and authorities	Major land occupied or in use, limited open space
Changing land use from agricultural to commercial and residential	Presence of informal, cash-based trades and services	Diversity of cultures, languages, religions, and identities	Territory governed through municipalities or similar administrative body	Pollution and traffic congestion issues
Presence of slums or other poorly constructed and informal	The poor are subject to price fluctuations and have	Presence of unregistered migrants	A high need for integrated land use and strategic planning to	Volume of waste and limited waste management, create

housing	limited coping strategies		meet the needs of the residents	environmental hazards
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Source: Centre of Expertise for Urban Programming (2016) Making Sense of the City: Developing Evidence through Action Research and Learning. Revised Ed. World Vision International.

1.2 CONCEPT OF URBAN SETTING

A general concept of the urban area is vitiated by the fact that urban area typically contains an enormous diversity of empirical phenomena. Urban theories face the task of complex array of similarities and differences. Urban areas can be together grouped as per common class of occurrences and into several different classes. The initial step to establish some features of urbanization over time and around the world opened the possibilities of a first round of theoretical description. So, an understanding of the historical origins of urban settlements is vital.

1.2.1 Revolution of Urban Settings

Urban setting emerges historically only where a food surplus can be extracted. Once urbanization emerge on the landscape, they have strong feedback effects on the further development of agriculture. When the rural area generates an excess of production over subsistence needs, a cohort of non-agricultural consumers of the surplus can be maintained. The members of cohort, who frequently hold some combination of political, military, religious and economic power, develop space to form urban or proto-urban places. In the very earliest urban settings, agglomerations of activities such as political administration, ceremonial and religious pursuits, craft production (e.g., for luxury goods or military hardware), and market trading constituted the core of the urban process. Various types of infrastructure help to consolidate the resulting dynamic process of agglomeration. One of the central features of urbanization has always been its efficiency generating qualities via agglomeration. The earliest urban centres emerged in the Middle East around 7500 BC. These were all modestly sized settlement clusters such as Jericho and Byblos. Around 3500 BC, agricultural surpluses were growing, and many cities formed in the geographic area ranging from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean coast and Egypt, as well as in India. Parallel revolution in social organization and state formation, was reflected in urbanization: dense permanent settlements, monumental public buildings, and exhibiting class relationships based on differences in wealth and power. Subsequent urbanization in the world's more advanced early states include the Mycenaean and Minoan cities of ancient Greece, around 2000 BC, Chinese urban settings along the Yellow River in the 2000–1500 BC period, ancient Rome around 700 BC, and the cities of Mesoamerica about 200 BC. Complementing with these developments, advances in transport

technologies was a major development. The long-distance trading activities frequently resulted in marked economic specialization of individual urban centres. Urbanization achieved impressive gains in various regions of the world in the 5,000 years prior to 1500, urban growth was still subject to severe constraints.

Over the European Age of Exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, some of these constraints started to loosen. Long-distance trade costs declined sharply, and highly specialized urban centres interconnections was established.

This development was the unprecedented increase in levels of economic productivity released by the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution leads in the modern era when urbanization begins in earnest. This was the era when the fundamental relationship between economic development and urbanization becomes clear.

1.2.2 Industrialisation and Growth of Urban Landscapes

Industrialisation and urbanisation are of importance particularly because of the rapid and unprecedented growth of large cities all over the world. The Industrial Revolution gathered pace in the more advanced capitalist countries in the nineteenth century and accompanied by urban growth, culminating in the large industrial cities of the American and Western European manufacturing belts. In the nineteenth century, there was growth of entrepôt, resource processing, administrative and trading centres in Asia, Latin America, and parts of Africa.

Later, after the mid-twentieth century, selected cities in the developing world expanded under the supports of government-sponsored industrialization programs. Cities continued to grow in the main capitalist countries over the twentieth century based on manufacturing. After a transitional period of slow growth in the 1970s and early 1980s, large cities again experienced a strong resurgence.

Urban setting now became a new 'pillar' of economy, characterized by a significant shift away from materials-intensive manufacturing to various kinds of high-technology, management, logistical, service, design, and cultural sectors.

The intensification of globalization has promoted a major wave of urbanization in the developing countries, where many developed urban areas now function as significant producers of manufactured exports. Several cities in 'third-world' countries (especially very large cities such as Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Mexico City and São Paulo) are also beginning to participate actively in the new post-Fordist economy.

Though the first seed of urbanisation germinated as early as the second century BC, the process remained very slow during pre-industrial period. The

post-industrial era witnessed urbanisation in concomitance with industrial and technological advancement. Later, it achieved a high acceleration due to growing impact of industrialisation, modernisation and changing proxemics of human societies.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note:a) Write your answer in about 50 words

b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the features of urban settings

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2) What are the benefits of urbanization?

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3) What is the relationship between Industrialization and urbanization?

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1.3 URBAN SETTING CHARACTERISTICS

Urbanisation process in developing countries exhibits different characteristics from the developed countries. In the Western world, industrialisation, over a period of two to three centuries, was mainly responsible for a particular urbanisation pattern. Developing countries on the other hand are trying to be industrialised in a short span of time. Hence, the relationship that urbanisation in these countries shares with industrialisation is different from the Western world. In developing countries industrialisation without urbanisation have achieved and urbanisation without industrialisation. Economic growth in India has been remarkable in the post-independence era but it has not been the cause of urbanisation or urban growth.

Industrialisation has largely contributed to economic growth and created large employment and the occupational structure of the country's work force. The proportion of urban setting and has increased. The impact of industrialisation on urbanisation has been not only limited but is conspicuous too.

Classification of urban spaces and sustainable development along with urbanisation, the role of urban theory and urban planning has been important in recent decades. The significance of an urban-centric population lies in its relationship with processes of climate change and ecological system. The urban population influences climate change and simultaneously also affected by climate change, must be viewed in the concept of mitigation and adaptation.

Urban setting is quite contrary to traditional rural area; however, it has affected rural life and is also a part of the process of change. Its characteristics represent by the term urbanism and the process of its expansion is called urbanisation.

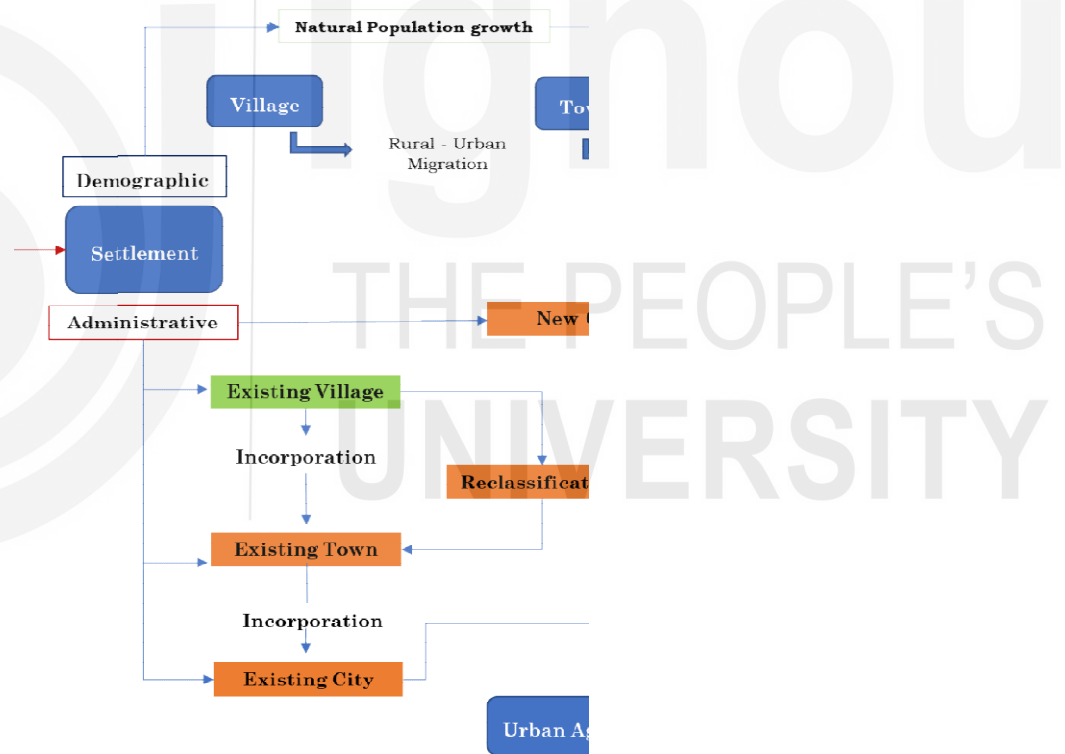


Fig. 1: Urban setting - process and classifying urban areas (modified from UNPD, 2018)

1.4 URBAN PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Urban planning is the technical and political process deals with the design of land use, incorporating environment factors (waste, air, water) and infrastructure.

Urban resilience for populations is to deal with the impacts of climatic disasters and extreme events. At the time of urban planning, building resilience is much more important now than ever, due to an increase in natural disasters. Climate-related disasters such as storm, hurricanes and heat waves were increases up to 80% from 1980 to 2009 was attributed to urbanisation in regions prone to natural disasters. Resilience incorporates a 'proactive approach' to planning systems that applies across placing urban planning at the centre of building resilience. The impacts of climate change are a reality for millions of people for many reasons, mitigation of further climate change should be the priority during urban planning. Some examples include switching to sustainable forms of energy usage, creating green space, encouraging pedestrianisation and mass transportation, through effective land-use consideration during urban planning.

Effective urban planning is required for urban environmental sustainability. Urban planning importance of building resilience and mitigation, for water management issues is considerable aspect of urban settings. According to the IPCC around 150 million people live in urban areas with perennial water shortage. Sustainable surface and groundwater flow within the urban area is also important. The stress on water sources from a growing population, climate change increases the risk of water scarcity for urban populations due to a reduction in groundwater and aquifer quality.

An increase in natural disasters for example contamination of water sources, reduce potable water availability, increase prevalence of water-borne diseases due to flooding in urban areas is also important for urban planning. Currently, less than 35% of cities in developing countries treat their wastewater, 2.5 billion people lacking safe sanitation and 1.2 billion people lacking access to clean water.

1.5 SUSTAINABLE CITY PLANNING - THE WAY FORWARD

With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) urban setting can cater to several issues of development in emerging as well as industrialised economies.

The significant concerns for urban setting in achieving sustainable development include:

- Building high-quality housing especially in developing centres whereby more than 90% of urban populations live in informal settlements.
- Introduction of full transformation in energy sector from coal and other unsustainable sources to renewable energy.

Addressing such issues are part of the 'sustainable urban settings' goal (UNDESA, 2013).

Currently the global sustainable development paradigm is not doing adequate to articulate the importance of urban areas in achieving sustainable development. An urban-centric development processes in urban settings and the role of governance at multiple levels is essential for more holistic understanding.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note:** a) Write your answer in about 50 words
b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Why urban planning is important?

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

The Urbanization has become an inseparable part of the global scenario. Understanding of urban settings are highly conducive. Various initiatives and preparedness to meet urban challenges and ensure urban transformation is required. Urban setting is complex in terms of its ever-increasing technological components and its social, economic and cultural interactions. The interactions between society, the built environment and natural resources add to the complexity. Urban setting in a regime of sustainable development emphasized conservation of both the natural and built environments. There is a need to use urban developed areas in the most efficient and effective way. Urban planning established on rigorous, realistic, solid bases situation is essential for analysing urban setting. An interdisciplinary approach is essential to determining a comprehensive conclusion of the urban settings.

1.7 KEY WORDS

Urban planning: is a technical and political process that is focused on the development and design of land use and the built environment, including air, water, and the infrastructure passing into and out of urban areas, such as transportation, communications, and distribution networks and their accessibility.

Urban areas: very developed area, a human settlement with a high population density and infrastructure of built environment such as houses, commercial buildings, roads, bridges, and railways. Urban area can

refer to towns, cities, and suburbs. An urban area includes the city itself, as well as the surrounding areas.

Peri-urban: Areas that are tied to proximity to urban areas or located on the outskirts of cities or large urban areas but retain rural characteristics such as substantial reliance on agricultural production is considered as peri-urban and are characterized by a mix of rural and urban characteristics.

Rural: Relatively low to no presence of administrative structures and government services and other infrastructure. Livelihood activities are predominantly centred on agricultural production

Infrastructure: The set of fundamental facilities and systems that support the sustainable functionality of households and firms including the services and facilities necessary for economy to function and is composed of public and private physical structures such as roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, and telecommunications.

Village is a clustered human settlement or community, smaller than a town, with a population ranging from hundred to thousand. Villages are in rural areas. Villages are permanent, with fixed dwellings.

Town: is a human settlement, generally larger than villages and smaller than cities. The criteria vary considerably in different parts of the world.

Suburb: A mixed-use or residential area, existing either as part of a city or urban area or as a separate residential community within commuting distance of a city.

Urban Climatology: The study of the physical, chemical and biological processes operating to produce, or change the state of, the atmosphere in cities is called urban meteorology and the study of the subsequent preferred states of their atmospheres is urban climatology.

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your Progress Exercise 1

Your answer should include the following points:

- 1) Modern infrastructure and amenities, better transportation,
- 2) Allocation of resources, job opportunities, improved standard of living, health and education avenues.
- 3) Industrialization leads to increase in opportunities and growth of urban areas.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Your answer should include the following points:

Utilisation of the resources in such a way that the urban services are provided sustainably.