

Essay on urban sociology

[Countries](#), [England](#)



How does urbanization in the United States differ from that of other places discussed in chapter 2? Identify three specific differences and explain their significance for urban and suburban development in the United States .

Urbanization in the United States

The United States differs from other countries such as India and China in the way urbanization takes place and how it has evolved over the years.

Principally this is due to the fact that there are a large proportion of immigrants in the US who have always been assimilated into society rather quickly and at several stages at once.

Another factor which obviously affects the way the United States has become urbanized when compared to other cities in Western Europe for example is due to the fact that US history is far more recent than other countries where settlement has been going on for thousands of years. One need only compare London and New York as typical examples where one notes the constant urban sprawl in London which by the early 1700's was already a huge city with over a million inhabitants while New York was just a simple trading outpost with a population of less than 100, 000.

Things obviously changed as the decades went by and the massive influx of immigrants towards the US changed population conditions substantially. This could be seen principally in the large population centres such as Philadelphia and New York in the North and Atlanta and Jackson in the South. Comparing these urban population increases and trends with what happened in ancient cities such as Babylon is interesting and intriguing as it does demonstrate that the shifts were substantial in some ways but in others they were not (Gardiner, Hutchison 2011). Basically the older cities took a lot more time to

develop and to grow through a much slower process of urbanization when compared with US cities which have practically only recently exploded in the past 100 years or so with some increasing their respective populations by over 1000 per cent.

Another issue which is perhaps overlooked is the fact that transport completely changed the face of urbanization in the United States and this is what really brought about the population explosion in the West. The growth of railroads and the expansion of industrialization did actually bring about a massive influx of workers which eventually hugely increased the population of cities in California such as San Francisco and Los Angeles which themselves saw an incredible population implosion (Gardiner, Hutchison 2011). One could compare and contrast here with what happened in Europe in the Industrial revolution especially in England where large factories sprung up in the big cities which saw a considerable influx from the country towns and villages with these people eventually settling into cities albeit in horrifying conditions.

Another aspect which was different in the United States was the effect of the Second World War. Whilst most European cities were bombed out and had to be rebuilt with different streetscapes and plans, the US saw an influx of servicemen coming back from the war who needed to be housed somewhere. A massive programme of new housing took place over the late 1940's and the 1950's which saw an incredible expansion of cities and new ones being built with the concept of suburbia becoming ever more pronounced. The GI Bill provided for housing at reduced rates for returning soldiers and this obviously affected the development of urban cities

massively. The formation of personal home lenders such as Freddie Mac and Ginnie May also guaranteed home loans at reduced interest rates (Gardiner, Hutchison 2011).

Still the main reason for population expansion in the US was the influx of immigrants which give the country the multicultural society it is today. This can be compared to other cities in Europe which also had an influx of foreign workers who eventually settled there but nowhere is this more pronounced than in the US.

What is the role of political economy in urbanization and city life? In answering this question, you will want to discuss three separate aspects of the role of political economy in shaping urbanization and/or city life. Here are some examples of aspects you could focus on:

The political economy is obviously an important part of urbanization and how city life develops. Historically cities have always been left leaning in their politics possibly due to the fact that the vast majority of a city's population is made up of those who come from the lower classes and these would tend to support the left welfare policy.

Obviously cities grow due to the fact that planned policies affect that growth. The rise of industrialized capitalization saw to the population explosions in various cities such as London, Birmingham and Leeds in England and similar growth was also experienced in New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia. A clear example of how political economy affects city life is the impact the developer and entrepreneur Robert Moses had on the growth of New York with his vast public works projects which changed the face of it forever and also brought about population shifts and trends which are still being felt to

this day.

Government obviously has an important role in urbanization not only in the way plans are made to increase and develop housing but also in social regeneration policies for depressed areas. This may mean that certain areas will require more funding than others to be regenerated but if this occurs then the full potential of certain areas will perhaps be achieved. This is unfortunately not always the case. Still living in a vibrant modern city can also be a life enhancing experience as the assimilation of cultures and practices have a refreshing influence on one's way of life. Social participation is also far more pronounced in the city where rural life can tend to leave a person isolationist and ignorant of certain political aspects.

In conclusion, governments and real estate institutions play a pivotal role in the life of any city. Policies determine if the city will swim or sink while the town planners are ultimately responsible for making the city a better place. Observations by Engels in books such as 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' only serve to exacerbate the poor side of city development.

References:

Gottdiener M, Hutchison R (2011); *The New Urban Sociology*, Westview Press