

Impossible cities?

22 Dec 2005



Tom Cruise poses promoting his new film in Shanghai November 30, 2005. Cruise filmed part of his movie 'Mission Impossible III' in Xitang, a town near Shanghai in China. The producers of "M:I3" reportedly paid £7million for the use of Xitang, criss-crossed by canals which was sealed off to the public during filming. Shanghai's Gotham-esque Jinmao tower, the country's tallest building and home to the Grand Hyatt hotel, and the city's futuristic Pearl TV tower, will both feature in the movie. So will the Huangpu River, which snakes through the city before feeding into the Yangtze. © Reuters

The world is currently experiencing urban growth on a scale that has never been seen before.

Towns and cities are home to 48% of us now, whereas in 1970 the urban share of world population was less than one-third.

In 1950 only eight world cities had a population in excess of five million, whereas by 2015 there will be 58.

What challenges does this rapid growth bring for city planners in the world's fastest developing urban areas many of them in Asia, such as Shanghai? Is it 'mission impossible'?

And as the economic power of these new cities grows, how are MEDC cities responding to growing global competition for employment and investment?

What kind of "post-industrial" activities and societies are increasingly associated with Europe's major cities, and how are changes being managed?

What are the challenges for cities?

Worldwide, cities are gaining a million people a week.

The items included with this case study examine some of the many challenges that different societies face as a result of processes of urban change

For instance, one source suggests that 100 million **rural migrants** arrived in Chinese cities during the last decade (*The Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2005). Another estimate projects that a staggering 300 million **country dwellers** will migrate to Chinese cities over the next ten years, with three million currently settling in Shanghai every year (*The Guardian*, 06 December 2003).

In some places, managing the unchecked expansion of **shanty towns** and **spontaneous settlements** remains a key policy, leaving poor and vulnerable people in perpetual fear of the bulldozer.

In other cases, such as South Korea, over-concentration of national growth in one or two **megacities** (the capital, Seoul is the world's third largest megacity) has prompted governments to build a new capital city.

In contrast, the **post-industrial** cities of France and the UK are no longer experiencing breakneck speed in-migration and expansion.

Instead, it is the management of **functional** changes, as old industries die and new land uses emerge, that occupies the attention of policy makers and planners.

Additionally, **environmental** concerns are high on the urban policy agenda for MEDCs, alongside a desire to improve levels of integration between different **social** groups.

In this case study:

- **World urban update:** what do the latest facts and figures tell us?
- **Growing pains:** why are shanty towns being bulldozed?
- **Changing places:** how did Liverpool become a post-industrial city?
- **Suburban shame:** why were there riots in French cities?
- **Making places:** why do governments build new capital cities?

This resource will have particular appeal for GCSE and A-level candidates who are studying **urban settlements** and **economic development**.

Each item deals with the opportunities or challenges facing different types of modern city, and explores some of the management strategies that are being adopted.

Parts of this resource can be adapted to support the teaching of geography at KS3, including:

- What is a settlement? Where do we build our settlements and why? (*Unit 3, section 3*)
- What are some of the issues arising from changes in economic activity in France? (*Unit 17, section 5*)

Related *Geography in the News* articles:

New towns for new times

Shack Attack

South Africa's Apartheid cities

Compiled and written by Dr Simon Oakes, who is a senior A-level examiner for Edexcel.

What do the latest urban facts and figures tell us?

22 Dec 2005



CHINA Shanghai - Visitors look at a model map of what municipal planners hope Shanghai will eventually look like at the Shanghai City Planning Museum

© Qilai Shen/Panos Pictures

Worldwide, cities are gaining a million people a week.

In terms of the sheer numbers involved, it is the most explosive wave of urban growth the world has ever seen. "Humanity has not been down this road before" writes geographer Peter Hall in *National Geographic* (November 2002).

For instance, one source suggests that 100 million rural migrants arrived in Chinese cities during the last decade (*The Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2005). Another estimate projects that a staggering 300 million country dwellers will migrate to Chinese cities over the next ten years (*The Guardian*, 06 December 2003).

While most of the new growth is taking place in China and other LEDCs, there are exceptions: Tokyo has kept growing to become the world's biggest city (see

Geography in News articles from 5 June 2005 and 20 August 2004), while Las Vegas' population increased by 83% during the 1990s.

2004 Percentages of population living in urban areas

World	48
Northern Africa	46
Western Africa	36
Eastern Africa	22
Middle Africa	35
Southern Africa	50
Central America	68
Caribbean	62
South America	79
Western Asia	63
South central Asia	30
Southeast Asia	38
East Asia	46
Northern Europe	82

Western Europe	79
Eastern Europe	68
Southern Europe	74
Oceania	72
<i>Selected countries</i>	
China (Total pop 1.3 bn)	41
India (Total pop 1.1 bn)	28

Source: 2004 world population data sheet of the Population Reference Bureau (Washington). "Urban" is defined here as "the percentage of the total population living in areas defined as urban *by that country*". Typically, the population living in towns of 2,000 or more is classified urban".

Why are so many of the LEDC cities growing bigger?

- Migration to cities is triggered by **overpopulation** in rural areas in LEDCs (resulting from high rates of **natural increase** as modern medicine and improvements in food supply reduce mortality rates). Over three million people arrived in Shanghai last year, for instance.
- Modernisation of agriculture in rural areas leaves many peasants landless. 50 million lost their land during India's **Green Revolution**, many of whom migrated to cities.
- **Natural hazards** (drought in Ethiopia) or **civil war** (Sierra Leone) could also contribute to rural-urban migration.
- Migrants often exhibit a youthful **population structure**. They may push the crude birth rate (CBR) of cities even higher, leading to steep rates of natural increase (NI) in urban areas, in addition to migrant-led growth.
- Early industrialisation often focuses upon a single region where a **multiplier effect** is occurring while, in comparison, other settlements may still lack the infrastructure for growth. The result is **primate cities** such as Cairo or Mexico City that experience particularly severe housing shortages.
- The pull of employment draws rural migrants, either in the formal sector - perhaps working for **Transnational Corporations**, especially in cities in Indonesia and other "Asian Tigers" - or the informal ("cash-in-hand") sector.
- The pull of amenities, education and healthcare in cities may draw young families. In Tunisia, nearly 100% of urban dwellers have access to safe water whereas this drops to 30% in some rural districts.

Why are city authorities bulldozing shanty towns?

22 Dec 2005



A Zimbabwean riot policeman keeps watch as a house is destroyed by a bulldozer during a police crackdown on illegal buildings in the Kambuzuma township of Harare June 3, 2005. Police launched Operation Restore Order which has destroyed buildings, markets and informal settlements and rendered many thousands homeless in what locals call 'the tsunami'. © Reuters

In Kenya, Zimbabwe and India, the poorest urban dwellers have recently been dispossessed of their land and houses, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless.

Parts of Kibera, one of the largest shanty towns in Africa, have recently been demolished by the Kenyan government (*The Guardian*, 20 April 2004).

Further south in Zimbabwe, up to 1.5 million people have been made homeless this year in the cities of Bulawayo and Harare.

This is the result of a new modernising urban policy called *murambatsvina*, which means "driving out rubbish" (*The Guardian Education*, 07 May 2005).

A continent away in Mumbai, Indian slum-dwellers have fared no better, as shanties such as Bhimchaya have been levelled by bulldozers, leaving 350,000 homeless.

In all three cases, city officials are desperate to modernise the districts in question, but not in ways that

will immediately benefit current occupants.

In Kibera, just outside Nairobi, bulldozers tore through the shanty housing in preparation for the construction of a major new road.

In Mumbai, the slum districts were similarly removed to allow the expansion of a new airport. *The Guardian* (01 March 2005) reported that a new £20 billion development programme known as "Vision Mumbai" aims to reduce the number of slum dwellers by around one-fifth. The long-term goal is to turn the city into "the new Shanghai" – a modern magnet for growth and foreign investment into India.

However, modern Shanghai is a mostly recently-built city covering a whopping 4,500 square km of China, whereas India's Mumbai is an ancient island city occupying just fewer than 1,500 square km.

Land shortages have driven up land values in Mumbai, making it the world's eighth most expensive city for property (*The Guardian*, 01 March 2005). Although the local economy needs the urban poor to provide valuable low-cost labour for manufacturing industries, city authorities do not want the workers to actually reside there, now that space is at a premium.

Unlike poor council-maintained areas of housing in MEDC cities, LEDC shanty towns are often built illegally and without government consent.

Housing is constructed on land that is not being used but rights of ownership do not pass to the slum dwellers.

Their homes remain vulnerable should the true owner or city authorities make claim to the land.



Contrast showing new high-rise blocks alongside slum dwellings by the water in Mumbai, India
ACHARYA-UNEP / Still Pictures

This is what is now happening more frequently in Mumbai and other major cities.

Is this destruction inevitable?

Growth may become unsustainable in many LEDC cities unless housing problems are tackled as a matter of urgency.

However, demolishing illegal settlements is far from being a satisfactory solution, according to critics of such heavy-handed government intervention.

Given the importance of low-paid labour to the growing economies of these cities, is eviction really a sensible (not to mention humane) solution?

In fact, not all LEDC city authorities take such drastic action against illegal labour settlement.

For instance, the permanence of the Rocinha settlement in Rio is now accepted by the Brazilian government, despite the fact that the land was initially occupied illegally. Basic infrastructure has been provided and Rocinha has become an area of permanent settlement, integrated into the formal city through the legalisation of some land holdings.

[Read more about Rocinha \(Shack Attack\)](#)

How did Liverpool become a post-industrial city?

22 Dec 2005

"The nation's greatest post-industrial cities have recently enjoyed regeneration, renaissance and revitalisation. They now offer a terrific leisure experience to young and old alike. 17 English cities overflowing with life & style offer it all to you..." (*City Breaks web site www.citybreaks.org.uk*)

During the 1970s and 1980s, massive factory closures and job losses blighted the British urban landscape.

Yet only 15 years later, all the talk is now of "regeneration, renaissance and revitalisation" in our "post-industrial" cities.

How has this rapid turnaround been achieved? And who are the agents of change that have made this possible?

In the case of Liverpool, the announcement that the city has been awarded the title of "European Capital of Culture 2008" marks a turning-point in the city's fortunes since the collapse of its traditional industries (based around its docklands and various manufactured goods, ranging from sugar to motor cars).

Encouraged by the award, private sector investors are now committed to working on a number of new **flagship** developments, including the £800m Paradise Street project, which will create 4,400 permanent jobs and 3,300 construction jobs.

Click on the images below to see the development of the Paradise Street Project. Roll your cursor over each image to read the caption



The development is a key ingredient of what city officials call the “strategic reinvention” of Liverpool as a world-famous post-industrial city. They believe that long-term sustainable income can be derived from the Liverpool’s **culture** sector and **creative** industries.

During the 1970s, the city experienced around 150,000 job losses in traditional industries such as textiles and clothing, engineering, electrics and car manufacture: between 1978 and 1982, as many as 2000 factories closed in Liverpool and its suburbs.

Manufacturing investment was beginning to move overseas in search of cheaper labour, while a general shift of trade towards Europe and away from America hastened the city’s decline throughout the post-war period.

Initially, there was no way of replacing jobs lost in manufacturing, aside from limited growth in the tertiary sector’s shops and later call centres.

Job replacement did not occur on the scale needed to reduce inner city unemployment rates that were generally twice the national average during the 1970s.

As conditions deteriorated further, the city grew a reputation for drug abuse and violence, with appalling riots taking place in the **Toxteth district** in 1981.

A growing unease amongst the urban middle-classes finally materialised into widespread decentralisation. Those who could afford to migrate away mostly chose to do so.

They deserted the city in their droves, heading towards green belt settlements in neighbouring Lancashire and Cheshire. The net result of all of these changes was that Liverpool’s population was halved from more than 800,000 in the 1950s to just 440,000 in 2001, declining at a rate of 12% throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Click on the images below (courtesy of Noel Jenkins) to investigate where the city of Liverpool has come from over the years. Roll your cursor over each image to read the caption



Moving forwards

With the loss of its traditional industrial base, how does a city like Liverpool continue to deliver employment and services to its population?

In common with other northern cities such as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle, Liverpool has recently begun the work needed to transform itself into a **post-industrial city**.

This involves constructing a new urban economy around the delivery and consumption of services. However, this will not be achieved solely through the promotion of shopping. It also involves the nurturing of creative industries, culture, arts, sports and heritage. All of these sectors can provide employment, while also generating additional wealth by attracting tourists.

For a durable **multiplier effect** to develop in a city, some kind of focal point or flagship development is usually needed to stimulate all of this fresh activity (if a fresh initiative has regional significance, then it may also be termed a **growth pole**).

Often, this comes in the guise of an impressive new building, such as the £70m Sage Gateshead music centre in Newcastle or the £106m Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

For Liverpool it has come in a different way, primarily through the award of a coveted title: the city has been granted "European Capital of Culture" status for 2008.

This is an honour that has been bestowed on a different European city each year since 1985.

Grant aid is provided by many different partners, including the European Union and the beneficiary's own city council. National governments also contribute, while city officials are expected to recruit "business partners" to provide private sector investment.

Liverpool city officials are currently claiming that a total of £2 billion will be invested in Liverpool in the run-up to 2008 (this includes the £800m that property developer Grosvenor Henderson is investing in the Paradise Street retail development).

Below are a series of quotations taken directly from the official literature for 2008, published by the Liverpool Culture Company (set up by Liverpool City Council).

For A-level and undergraduate geographers, it is interesting to note the importance that city planners attach to making Liverpool a "world city" and of making sure that the city is properly connected with new global networks of trade and tourism (thereby avoiding becoming what geographer Manuel Castells describes as a "switched-off area" of globalisation).

Increasingly, urban management in MEDCs is all about the successful projection of a global image – and there are plenty of allusions to this in the quotes below

Liverpool Culture Company

"The work we are doing in the build-up to 2008 is designed to transform Liverpool into a truly world-class city. Our initiatives are both economic and cultural. The £800m Paradise Street development – the largest retail development taking place in Europe – will create 4,400 permanent jobs and 3,300 construction jobs. The King's Dock arena and conference centre represents another £300m investment. Our new cruise-liner terminal, our status as a World Heritage City and the re-modelling of Central Library into a World Discovery Centre will together bring even more visitors to the city's attractions. Liverpool is re-inventing itself as a world city for the 21st century. The city has never before enjoyed such fantastic opportunities. Join us on our journey.

"During the next five years Liverpool's cultural and tourism infrastructure will benefit from an investment of over £2 billion. Employment in the culture sector – tourism, sport, heritage and the creative industries – will grow by at least 20,000 jobs, based on the current trends of growth and new investments. There will be an extra £220 million of expenditure by tourists up to and beyond 2008. The cumulative effect of Capital of Culture would be an extra 1.7m visitors generating extra spending of over £50 million a year.

"The strategic reinvention of a city, brought about by the 08 status, is a rare and coveted opportunity. This experience should not be confined to the chosen few. That is why we want to involve and include the widest numbers in our 'voyage' of transformation. European Capital of Culture status is accelerating the rebirth of Liverpool, propelling the renaissance further and faster. Capital of Culture will change Liverpool. It will change the physical and social fabric of the city. And it will leave a lasting legacy.

"Capital of Culture stories have appeared in publications around the world, including India Weekly, Le Temps, Washington Post and Time Magazine. Journalists from as far afield as Australia, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Norway and Switzerland have visited the city. The Capital of Culture website has received over one million hits in the past year. And more than one million people have visited the Liverpool City Council website in the past 12 months.

"Building a world-class brand: the Liverpool 08 opportunity is to build on our universal reputation and create a world-class brand based on dynamic creativity."

Can't stand losing?

The importance of leisure and culture services for post-industrial cities was highlighted in April of this year, when city leaders in Southampton and Norwich were reported to be bracing themselves for the negative impact on both cities' economies that relegation from the Premier football league would bring (*The Guardian*, 30 April 2005). The economic development manager of Norfolk County Council explained that the city team's Premiership status had been "fitting" for a city that has seen £1 billion investment over the last few years (with a major retail park, a news station and three city-centre hotels all constructed). However, he warned that "should they go down... there will be a big knock-on for tourism as the big (visiting) clubs won't be booking out hotels". In addition to loss of revenue from the fans of visiting teams, relegation means a drop in income of at least £10 million for the home teams. All of this has a negative impact on the local economy, with less big spending by the players and management on housing, entertainment and services!

Why were there riots in French cities?

22 Dec 2005



Firemen try to extinguish a car which was set on fire during the third night of riots in the Paris suburb city of Clichy-sous-Bois October 30, 2005. Following the death of two teenagers, youths fought with police and set cars ablaze in the Clichy-sous-Bois suburb.

© Reuters

During November 2005, a series of riots and violent clashes took place in the suburbs of French cities between thousands of youths (predominantly of North African background) and the police.

In England, the most serious social problems are usually associated with inner urban areas.

Why do the French have a suburban problem instead?

The riots began on Thursday 27 October in a poor suburban district of Paris. By 7 November, 274 districts had reported some level of violence or disorder nationwide.

The troubles lasted until 17 November by which time, according to official figures, 8,973 vehicles had been torched during the 20 nights of rioting, with 2,888 arrests, and 126 police injured.

The rioting began when two teenagers, of African origin, were accidentally electrocuted while hiding from police in Clichy-sous-Bois, north of Paris (*The Guardian*, 07 November 2005).

The violence that then erupted amongst France's north and black African communities is rooted in long-standing unhappiness with economic conditions in the poorest suburbs - called *les banlieues* - especially the lack of employment and housing opportunities.

Unlike English cities, many of the poorest areas of French cities are found on the outskirts.

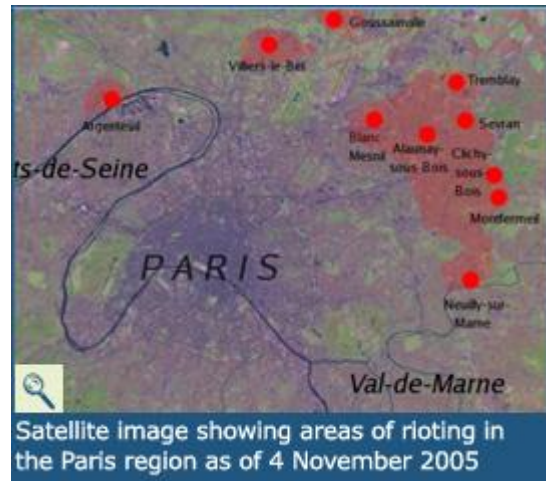
Not all suburbs have this image: for instance, Neuilly and Versailles are wealthy parts of outer Paris.

However, in recent decades, conditions in many of *les banlieues* have become increasingly difficult, with poor housing, high unemployment, high crime, and a high proportion of population of foreign origin.

The roots of these problems lie in poor planning for migrant communities during the immediate post-war era.

In common with Germany and the UK, France invited foreign workers from its ex-colonies to help rebuild the nation after the end of the Second World War in 1945.

Housing also had to be found for nearly one million French settlers who returned from Algeria in 1962, following independence.



Shortages of housing led to the development of hastily constructed suburban estates to house many of the new settlers.

Geographer Peter Hall, described the new suburbs of Paris as "a vast, ill-conceived, hastily constructed emergency camp to house the labour force of Paris, presenting almost the limit of urban degeneration".

By the 1970s, economic recession was setting in across Europe and guest-workers everywhere found they were especially vulnerable to the restructuring taking place in the industries that they had migrated to join.

Since then, a combination of poor housing and limited employment opportunities have continued to be experienced by a high proportion of the descendents of Algerians and other North African settlers in France's major cities.

The events of November 2005 have widely been interpreted as a wake-up call to the French government to develop new and more inclusive urban policies.

An early assessment of the French troubles can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_Paris_suburb_riots

In the future, could UK cities face French-style social conflict due to poor planning?

Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force thinks there is a risk of it, according to a recent report by the BBC (22 November 2005):

As many as 578,000 new homes could be built across the South East of England by 2026, but (Deputy Prime Minister) Mr Prescott is concerned the process is too slow and too expensive. He has launched a pilot scheme to find homes that could be built for £60,000.

In a new report, Lord Rogers said social integration and good design should be a key priority - and the new homes should be built on previously-used land, not greenfield sites. Launching the report, Lord Rogers said Mr Prescott's plans could 'deliver so much' but he warned 'the wrong approach now could saddle generations to come with a legacy of failure. Quantity should not be placed before quality.' He said 'creating ghettos of poorly designed environments can fuel social tension and exacerbate social conflict as recent events in France have shown. Integration is the key to modern urban living. So much has been achieved in the UK. Don't fail England's towns and cities at this crucial time.'

Lord Rogers also said more should be done to encourage the middle classes to move into inner city areas: 'There's a lot of single and small families (moving into the inner cities) rather than the middle classes. And, of course, if the middle classes move out then you get a polarisation and often an ethnic polarisation,' he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

The Urban Task Force was first brought together by Mr Prescott in 1998. Its new report - Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance - presses for one organisation to lead the regeneration of every area. And it says design competitions should be used to ensure the quality of the projects.

Source: [BBC News](#)

What leads a country to build a new capital city?

22 Dec 2005



Military trucks wait to transport office furniture in front of Petroleum Products Enterprise, a department within the Ministry of Energy, in Rangoon, Burma, November 24, 2005. The trucks left on November 25, 2005 for the new administrative capital near Pyinmana, about 320 km (198 miles) north of Rangoon. © Reuters

Burma and South Korea have just become the latest additions to a growing list of countries announcing that they are to **build** a new capital city.

Given the vast expense that such grand-scale urban development brings, what forces drive a country to take part in "capital flight"?

The case of Burma:

Burma's military government have just abandoned the old coastal capital city of Rangoon in favour of a new settlement called Pyinmana, located about 500km inland.

According to *The Independent* (08 November 2005), construction has been taking place for three years, and within the last few weeks government officials have actually begun to migrate there.

Physically situated on a **site of low relief** surrounded by jungle-clad hills, a combination of **economic** and **political** factors is thought to be driving this new urban development.

The government claims that moving nearer to the centre of the country, and away from the old colonial coastal site of Rangoon, will make administration easier.

In a statement, a spokesman claimed that Pyinmana is "geographically and strategically located for the development of the country".

However, *The Independent* newspaper believes that it is more likely linked with fears of a US-led invasion similar to the one recently carried out in Iraq.

Burma's military government, led by General Than Shwe, has often been singled out for international criticism on account of his poor human rights record and aggressive foreign policy.

Fear of receiving similar treatment to Iraq's Saddam Hussein may have something to do with his "flight to the jungle".

The Case of South Korea:

South Korea has also made a recent announcement that it aims to develop a new capital city.

Last August, the South Korean government unveiled a £26 billion scheme to develop a site in the region of Gongju-Yongi, 100 miles south of existing capital city Seoul (*The Guardian*, 12 August 2004).

This will become the new seat of government by 2020, with construction starting in 2007. The move is due to:

- **social** factors - after decades of rapid population growth and in-migration, Seoul and its suburbs



NASA Satellite image of Seoul

are now home to almost half of South Korea's 48 million population, suffering from chronic overcrowding as a result.

- **economic** factors - uneven regional development is seen as a real problem, with Seoul's giant size hindering the development of the rest of the country (similar concerns led the Brazilian government to build Brasília away from Rio and Sao Paulo in the late 1950s).
- **political** factors - moving the nation's government offices 200km south takes them out of the range of much of hostile neighbour North Korea's weaponry and lessens the danger of a military bombardment.

Which other countries have built a new capital city?

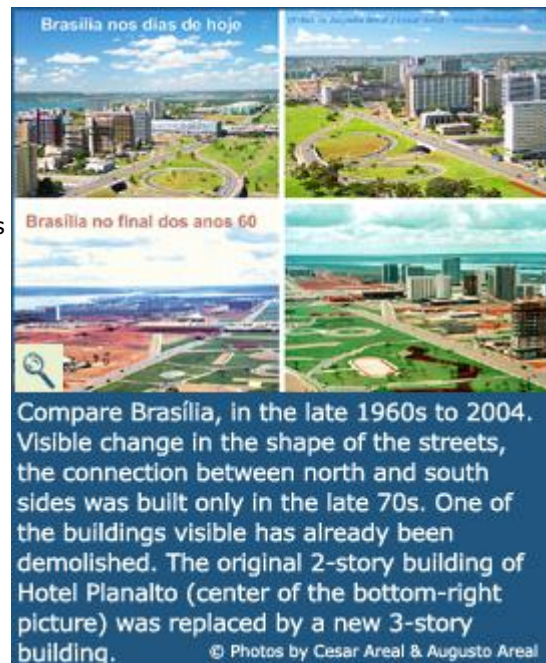
Brazil Between 1956 and 1960, Brasília was built from scratch in the interior of the country, replacing crowded Rio de Janeiro as the capital. However, the new city has failed to reduce regional imbalances in Brazil and economic growth remains overwhelmingly concentrated in the south-eastern cities of Rio and Sao Paulo. Brasília's huge cost added to the country's crippling debt problem during the 1970s.

Belize Like Brazil, the small Central American state of Belize was impoverished by the construction of a new capital, Belmopan, in the 1960s-1970s, the cost of which spiralled to four times its original estimate (*The Economist*, 13 August 2004).

Australia The plan to build Canberra was developed in 1908, although construction dragged on into the 1980s.

Nigeria Lagos lost its role as capital city in 1991 when the government moved to Abuja, ten years after building began. However, over 10 million people still live in Lagos, and it remains Nigeria's economic power-house, while Abuja has failed to boost the country's under-inhabited interior (*The Economist*, 13 August 2004).

Kazakhstan The northern city of Astana was expanded and made the capital of Kazakhstan in 1997, in an attempt to spread national wealth northwards and promote national unity.



11-16 teachers notes

22 Dec 2005

KS3 teaching

Settlements (Unit 3): Official KS3 guidance suggests that teachers devise "a game/simulation to allow pupils to explore the factors that may have affected the location of an original settlement".

They may find the idea of "dodgy dictators hiding in the jungle" (Burma) an attention-grabbing addition to the usual suspects.

France (Unit 17): Teachers are recommended to give pupils a choice of two or three issues for a mini-enquiry; urban sprawl in the Ile-de-France can be one of these.

The root causes of the suburban rioting here and elsewhere can be explained in terms of quickly-built housing for the original migrants and the lack of jobs that are now available.

Ask students to suggest questions that cover the causes, consequences and possible solutions for the current unrest. Check their suggestions; some will have a good list of enquiry questions, others will require support.

GCSE teaching

(1) Ask students: how reliable do you think the latest urban statistics actually are?

Why might it be difficult to accurately measure city growth, rural-urban migration figures and population numbers in the favelas?

Why might figures quickly become out-of-date?

Is "urban" defined differently by different countries?

(2) Sound knowledge and understanding of why LEDC cities are growing so quickly is a key element of a good foundation in human geography – try to get it right from the outset by seeing "the big picture".

The world's population has exploded since 1900 – there are billions more people than there used to be and they all have to live somewhere.

The growth is due to the spread of modern healthcare to places in the world where large families are still the norm.

As more and more people are born into farming communities there is not enough work and they migrate to cities for employment.

It is the 'push' of unemployment, hunger and poverty that makes many move; it is rarely a choice made willingly by people who are forced to abandon their homes and families in search of work.

What ever you teach about cities, play very loud music as well.

Suggestions from Noel Jenkins and Tony Cassidy include:

Sightsee MC: Big Audio Dynamite

Letter to NYC: Beastie Boys

Stevie Wonder: Living For The City

Stereo MCs: Ground Level

The Jam: In The City

Anything by the Clash - e.g. Ghetto Defendant, London Calling, One More Time etc.

Jam 'Town called Malice'

Pet Shops Boys 'Suburbia'

Blur 'Countryhouse'

AS and A2 exam tips for students 22 Dec 2005

Getting the causes of urban growth right

AS students should firstly start out by reading the GCSE tips given with this article – in their exam, too many may simply assert that urban growth in LEDCs is due to the “bright lights” of the city attracting migrants – suggesting that farmers who have previously been perfectly happy with their life in the countryside just decided to put down their tools and head off to the city one fine day.

While “bright lights” have an important role, this is not the primary trigger – otherwise why did the urban growth occurring today not begin sooner?

Cities have always been exciting and vibrant places: why is it only in the later half of the Twentieth Century that explosive urban growth begins on a world scale?

The answer is that it coincides with a global reduction in mortality and a doubling of world population from 3 billion to 6.3 billion since 1950.

Cities have grown through a combination of their own natural increase and mass migration from overpopulated rural districts of landless peasants desperate for work.

Correspondingly, city populations have grown from 1 billion to nearly 3 billion.

‘Consequences of growth’ questions

Most AS/A2 students are well-prepared with a case study of a shanty town but must be careful to revise thoroughly and apply their knowledge appropriately:

- Make sure you have some good details for your case study– be specific about the numbers of people that live there, the names of the diseases that threaten residents, average per capita incomes and so forth.
- Have you been asked to write about the consequences of urban growth *for the individuals that live there or for the nation as a whole*? When viewing the nation as a whole, remember that shanty towns are a *necessary* aspect of early urban growth in poor nations that lack the resources to properly house everyone. Be careful not to focus entirely upon their negative aspects. They house a large labour force that can attract foreign Transnational Companies. This may lead, in time, to improved conditions as the nation industrialises. Equally, if a country lacks the resources for public housing projects then what other options exist? Should the residents return to the countryside?
- Overall, make sure your answer is well-structured, even if you are only required to provide one page of writing. At the very least, plan a response with two clearly defined paragraphs, one covering *positive* consequences, the other *negative*. Perhaps you may conclude that shanty towns are a “mixed blessing”.

Urban management questions

Q1. Many central urban areas provide opportunities for flagship developments. For a named flagship development, examine how it will re-generate and re-image the city. (Edexcel B, 2004)

Examiner's tip: this is an excellent showcase for the material on Liverpool's City of Culture 2008 award and the new Paradise development. Pay attention to the word "re-image" and remember that the city council hope to improve Liverpool's global image.

Q2. With reference to a large named urban area in a MEDC, examine how planners have attempted to manage its growth. (Edexcel B, 2005)

Examiner's tip: in addition to considering strategies developed to tackle the *size* of settlements (Green Belt, etc.), you should also really be considering attempts to manage its on-going *economic* growth by steering *functional* changes – again, Liverpool could be an interesting case study to use.

Q3. With reference to specific examples, examine how urban environments can be made more sustainable. (Edexcel B, 2005)

Examiner's tip: don't forget to outline what "sustainable" actually means in your answer. In Liverpool, *economic* sustainability is being linked with the development of a post-industrial economy. Whereas in South Korea, concern over the *social* sustainability of over-populated Seoul has led to plans to build a new capital city. Local studies of recycling in your own urban neighbourhood would be a useful addition to your answer, as this would address *environmental* sustainability and the "ecological footprint" of the settlement in question.

Synoptic links

A2 students will need to make connections between their urban studies and their physical geography. Important themes could include:

- Mass movement on steep slopes
- Spread of diseases through contaminated water supplies
- Flooding due to increased run-off following vegetation removal
- Atmospheric pollution. This negative externality of urbanisation is especially marked in cities in the Tropics that have poor atmospheric circulation due to the Hadley Cell. The worst photochemical smogs are found in Mexico City, for instance.

OCR (A) students can always expect synoptic essays that use urbanisation as a theme, such as: *Discuss the view that the continued growth of large cities in LEDCs is unsustainable (January 2003).*