

FT for schools: Cities activity sheet 11

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Specification links

AQA A level 3.2.3 Contemporary urban environments. Sustainable urban development. Nature and features of sustainable cities. Concept of liveability.

Edexcel A level Topic 4: Shaping Places. Option 4A: Regenerating Places. 4A.5 There are significant variations in the lived experience of place and engagement with them.

OCR A level Topic 2.1 – Changing Spaces; Making Places. 5.a. Place is produced in a variety of ways at different scales.

Introduction

Access the article on urbanisation at www.ft.com/content/ef9d5031-4644-49b0-af3f-90a6e82817b8 titled 'Cities innovate to shrink their environmental footprints'.

Urbanisation describes the growth in the proportion of a country's population that live in an urban environment compared to a rural environment.

Cities have expanded throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 2008 the world surpassed a population tipping point, as for the first time in human history, more than half the population lived in urban areas. Whilst there was a marked decline in UK cities between the 1950s and 1970s (demographically and economically) an 'urban resurgence' has occurred since then with Urban Development Corporations, Enterprise zones, the City Challenge programme, and more recently public-private partnership schemes.

In spite of urban areas only covering 2% of land, they now account for 70% of global waste, and roughly 80% of the world's energy. Urban areas are increasingly seen as a large part of the global environmental problem due to density of population and their activities.

Paradoxically, for the same reasons cities are also part of the solution as the way we plan, build, manage and power our cities is changing. Our cities are at the centre of economic activity, affecting how economies grow, and they act as hubs for technological innovation.

Different cities are adopting different strategies in a bid to reduce their environmental footprints.

Activity

1. Give 5 reasons why cities are more agile than nations.
2. 'Cities have a poor eco-reputation, but the reality is often more nuanced.' Is this true?
3. For the named cities describe how they are reducing their environmental footprints.
4. 'Cities enable the collaboration that makes humanity shine' so says the urban economist Professor Edward Glaeser in his book 'Triumph of the City'. Do you think this true for the cities featured in this article?
5. Read 'How cities are going carbon neutral', listed in the Further work section. Home to the majority of the global human population, urban areas make an outsized contribution to carbon



emissions. What can they do to reach net zero by the middle of the century? Consider structuring your answer using the following subheadings:

- a. ULEZs
- b. Car-free zones and cycling
- c. The construction industry
- d. Nature-based solutions

Further work

- BBC [How cities are going carbon neutral](#)
- LSE YouTube lecture by Professor Edward Glaeser [Triumph of the City](#)
- UN [Cities: a 'cause of and solution to' climate change](#)
- Reuters [Cities drive climate change, and can provide a solution, U.N. says](#)
- Forbes [Rethinking Our Cities To Tackle Climate Change](#)