

Urbanization and Social Inequality: Challenges in Building Social Cohesion in a City-Based Environment

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization has a significant impact on social life in cities, affecting social structures and interactions between residents. Urbanization offers economic opportunities and infrastructural advances, but it also exacerbates social inequalities, especially in terms of housing, job, and basic services. The social segregation that occurs in big cities, both by economic class and ethnicity, causes social fragmentation that affects social cohesion between residents. Unequal access to urban facilities exacerbates inter-group tensions, leading to reduced social interaction and decreased mutual trust. Changes in social structure due to urbanization require serious attention in terms of their impact on social integration and solidarity in urban communities. Through a literature review, this research analyzes how urbanization affects social inequality and social cohesion in big cities, focusing on social segregation, lifestyle changes, and access to basic services. This research also explores how these factors contribute to reducing or increasing social cohesion, as well as the implications for public policy. The findings of this research point to the importance of designing inclusive and equitable policies to create a more harmonious and fair urban society, where individuals can gain equal access to opportunities and resources.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization has been one of the global trends that has continued to grow rapidly in recent decades. This process refers to the mass movement of people from rural areas to city-based environment (Berry, 2008), triggered by various economic and social factors. Urbanization is usually triggered by the search for better jobs, access to better education and health facilities, and the hope of improving the overall quality of life (Kotkin, 2007). This massive displacement affects various aspects of social life, ranging from family structures, social interaction behaviors, to cultural dynamics in urban communities (Hareven, 2018). High population density can cause congestion, air pollution, and a lack of green open spaces which reduce the quality of people's lives (Wolch et al., 2014). Rapidly growing cities are often faced with the challenge of providing adequate infrastructure, such as housing, transportation, and other basic services, all of which contribute to changes in people's lifestyles (Cohen, 2006). Poorly managed urbanization can lead to urban poverty, social inequality, and environmental degradation.

The government and related institutions must Urbanization also has a direct impact on a more specific scale on the social life of urban communities. The process of urbanization introduces more complex forms of social diversity, with increased ethnic, cultural and economic status differences among residents (Vlahov, & Galea, 2002). People from various regions who move to the city bring different beliefs, customs, and languages. This more heterogeneous social life often poses challenges in terms of social integration, relationships between individuals, and the creation of a cohesive community (Lloyd et al., 2016). The diversity of cases can lead to social tensions, economic disparities, and marginalization of certain groups, leading to open conflict between different groups. Urbanization also allows for the creation of new social spaces, such as urban communities formed in neighborhoods based on interests or professions, which have a positive impact on enriching social life in the city (Lyon & Driskell, 2012). Although urbanization presents challenges, diversity can be a source of strength to create a more tolerant and open society.

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Rapid urbanization has led to various problems in urban social life, one of which is widening social inequality. Urban communities, especially those from lower economic strata, are often marginalized in various aspects of life (Connor, 2008). The economic disparity between the city's rich and poor residents is further highlighted by limited access to decent housing, healthcare and education (Corburn, 2009; Rodríguez-Pose & Storper, 2019). Uneven distribution of infrastructure also results in a large proportion of the city's population having to live in inadequate conditions, such as neglected slums. This inequality further exacerbates the social structure, creating a sharp divide between those who have access to urban amenities and those who live on the margins (López-Morales, 2016).

Urbanization also often exacerbates the problems of urban poverty, especially in relation to quality of life and social security. Population of city-based environment whose population is increasing, limited job opportunities are unable to accommodate the growing. Many individuals come to the city looking for work, but in fact they are trapped in low-wage jobs or informal jobs that do not provide social protection (Sabates-Wheeler & Waite, 2003). This leads to a growing urban poverty rate that cannot be solved by economic improvement alone. Job in the informal sector often does not provide adequate social security, further increasing the instability of their social lives (Burgess, 2019). Economic development that focuses on job creation without regard to the quality of jobs and the social security that comes with them is insufficient to solve this problem (Blank & Haskins, 2001; Smit & Mpedi, 2010).

The third issue that arises from urbanization is changes in the social structure and relationships between individuals in urban areas. The fast-paced and competitive life in city-based environment tends to reduce meaningful social interactions between citizens (Walters, 2011). City residents are often more focused on their personal affairs and work, reducing the opportunity to build deeper social relationships (Catell, 2001). The diversity that exists in city-based environment does bring opportunities for new connections, but it often creates social fragmentation (Harrison et al., 2003). Each social group is more likely to live in their own "social bubble", interacting with individuals who share a common culture, ethnicity or economic status. This reduces the opportunity for greater social solidarity, which in turn affects social cohesion in urban communities. This social fragmentation also affects the quality of life of city dwellers, who feel isolated despite being in a crowd (Putnam, 2000; Tonloss, 2013).

The rapid growth of urbanization requires attention because of its far-reaching impact on the social structure of cities. The rapid urbanization process has led to an increase in the number of residents in city-based environment, exacerbating social inequality (Hesse & Scheiner, 2009). More people move to cities in search of opportunities, the social gap between those with more access and those with less is becoming more pronounced. This inequality affects the quality of life of individuals, and has the potential to disrupt the social stability on which harmony in society is based. If these inequalities are not managed properly, social tensions can arise, which exacerbate economic disparities and hinder the achievement of more equitable social welfare (Clark, 2008).

Another issue that arises is that the social dynamics that occur due to urbanization have the potential to create problems in terms of social integration in city-based environment. Changes in the structure of relationships between individuals, which are increasingly fragmented due to differences in ethnicity, economic status, and lifestyle, can reduce the sense of solidarity among people (Smith, 1992; Townley et al., 2011). This has a risk of exacerbating social isolation and affecting the quality of interactions between residents. Understanding more about the social changes that occur due to urbanization allows us to formulate policies that are more inclusive and capable of creating a more harmonious urban environment, where every individual can feel connected and have equal access to opportunities (Spence et al., 2008; Buhaug & Urdal, 2013).

The purpose of this research is to analyze how urbanization affects social inequality in urban life, particularly in terms of access to housing, job, and other basic services. This research also aims to explore the influence of changes in social structure and interactions between residents due to urbanization on social cohesion in city-based environment, focusing on how social fragmentation can affect relationships between individuals and social integration in urban environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study approach to understand the impact of urbanization on social life in urban areas. This method relies on the analysis of relevant written sources, such as scientific journals, books, policy reports, and previous studies that discuss urbanization and social change in city-based environment. This literature review aims to identify common patterns that have emerged in previous research, as well as to explore various perspectives on social inequality and social cohesion in urban

areas. This approach allows researchers to gather information that has been tested and discussed in a variety of geographic and social settings, and provides a solid basis for understanding the social dynamics of urbanization (Harvey, 2012).

Through literature review, this research also explores theories related to urbanization, social mobility, and social fragmentation that often appear in social and economic literature. Analysing existing research, this approach gives researchers the opportunity to see how the phenomenon of urbanization affects social life at various scales and conditions. For example, research by Glaeser (2011) on the effects of urbanization on economic growth and social life in megacities provides insights into the social challenges faced by megacities, including increasing social inequality. This literature review provides a foundation for understanding the complexities of urbanization in a global scope that can be applied to the analysis of social problems in urban areas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social Inequality in Urban Life due to Urbanization

Urbanization is a growing global phenomenon, with massive migration from rural to urban areas in search of economic opportunities and a better life. Urbanization can also potentially exacerbate social inequality, especially in terms of access to housing, employment, and other basic services, despite economic progress (Santana et al., 2015). In many cases, city-based environment often unable to meet the needs of all their residents, especially those who come from lower economic strata. This leads to sharp differences between groups with access to adequate urban facilities and those who are marginalized, both socially and economically (Muster & Ostendorf, 1998; Sassen, 2014).

One of the most obvious aspects of social inequality in the urbanization process is housing. City-based environment often unable to provide enough affordable housing for their growing populations. In many places, slums are growing rapidly on the outskirts of cities or even in city centers, where access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity is often limited (Bolay, 2006; Mahabir et al., 2016). Those who cannot afford to buy a house or rent at market rates have to live in these areas, which exacerbates social and economic inequalities (Bureckner & Lall, 2015). Due to rising property prices and rents, low-income groups are increasingly marginalized, leading to social segregation and impediments to social mobility (Yinger, 2001; Downs, 2010).

Employment is also an important factor in the social inequality that occurs due to urbanization. Many city-based environment offer more job opportunities, but not all individuals have the skills or education needed to get a decent job. Many migrants from rural areas are trapped in informal low-wage jobs, such as day laborers, taxi drivers, or other service sector workers who do not receive adequate social security or employment protection (Martin et al., 2007). This exacerbates social inequality as this group cannot enjoy the same economic benefits as those with formal employment or more stable positions (Bertoncello & Giuffrida, 2019).

The provision of basic services, such as education, health, and transportation, also greatly affects the social inequality created by urbanization. Although the city center is growing rapidly and has many facilities, access to these basic services is not always equitable. The lower classes are often forced to use limited public services, which are of much lower quality than those available to higher economic groups. For example, in the health sector, those living in slums or suburbs often struggle to gain access to adequate hospitals or health facilities. This exacerbates social inequality, where poorer groups tend to have a lower quality of life, even when living in the economic centers of thriving cities (Satterthwaite, 2017).

Social inequalities arising from urbanization also exacerbate social segregation based on ethnicity, race, and social class. Minority or working-class in many cases are often trapped in underdeveloped areas, far from thriving urban centers. This segregation creates gaps in access to quality education, employment opportunities and other basic services. These socially and geographically isolated communities often do not have the same access as other groups in urban society, which exacerbates differences in quality of life and opportunities for development (Wilson, 2012).

The social inequality created by urbanization is not only related to physical resources but also creates problems in terms of access to social networks and social capital. Those who live in slums or suburbs often have limitations when it comes to building beneficial social and economic relationships (Marx et al., 2013). These social networks are critical for information, employment opportunities and access to resources. Without strong networks, these individuals are increasingly marginalized and have little chance of improving their lives (Putnam, 2000). This also adds to the difficulty in social mobility for those trapped in urban poverty. Social inequality is not only limited to economic or physical aspects but involves a social dimension that exacerbates existing disparities.

Urbanization exacerbates social inequality in terms of access to housing, employment, and basic services, and can exacerbate social conflicts in communities. Tensions between rich and poor groups can increase if these inequalities deepen, further creating the potential for social conflict. Perceived injustice can lead to frustration and anger among marginalized groups. In city-based environment with high levels of inequality, these tensions often erupt in the form of protests or even social violence. It is important for society to understand how urbanization exacerbates social inequality in order to reduce these divides and create more inclusive and equitable urban societies (Harvey, 2012).

The Effect of Urbanization on Social Cohesion in City-Based Environment

Urbanization has a significant impact on the social structure and interactions between urban residents, which in turn affects social cohesion in city-based environments. Urbanization introduces more complex social dynamics, with increased ethnic, cultural and social class diversity. This diversity can enrich social life, but it also has the potential to cause divisions, especially when interactions between citizens are limited to homogeneous social groups. Such differences can lead to inter-group tensions, which in turn affect social solidarity and weaken social cohesion in society (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000). It is important to facilitate more inclusive social integration and reduce segregation between groups.

One of the impacts of changes in social structure due to urbanization is the occurrence of social segregation, both in the form of economic and ethnic segregation. In city-based environment, there is often a physical separation between rich and poor, with high-income groups tending to live in the city center or elite areas, while low-income groups are forced to live in the outskirts or slums. This leads to the formation of "social bubbles" where social interactions are limited to individuals who share the same social or economic status. This reduces the opportunity for mutual trust and solidarity between citizens, which are the basis of strong social cohesion (Durlauf, 2004).

Differences in lifestyles also play a large role in influencing social cohesion in urban areas. Urbanization causes individuals to focus on their busy personal and professional lives. Time constraints and different priorities often reduce opportunities to interact with fellow city residents. This increasingly individualistic society can lead to a decline in wider social ties, weakening the sense of community. Diversity in lifestyles and values also often creates tensions in society, especially when these groups feel that there is no room for mutual understanding (Putnam, 2000).

Imbalances in infrastructure development can exacerbate social tensions that can affect cohesion in city-based environment. Unequal infrastructure leads to inequality in access to public facilities such as transportation, health services, and education. Communities living in slums are often isolated from more developed urban centers, which creates disparities in quality of life. When a large proportion of the city's population cannot access the same resources, a sense of injustice arises, which lowers social trust and reduces overall social cohesion (Sassen, 2014).

Urbanization can also cause changes in communication behaviors between residents. People living in city-based environment tend to be more socially isolated despite being physically close to many people. Technology, especially social media, allows individuals to communicate and form social networks without having to interact directly with neighbors or fellow city residents (Gibbons, 2020). This can provide opportunities for greater connection, however, it can also exacerbate real-life social isolation, where deeper physical interactions between people become less frequent. This lack of direct interaction can weaken social cohesion, as trust and relationships between individuals are difficult to form without real social engagement (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

Urbanization often leads to social fragmentation, city-based development also facilitates for social integration through the formation of communities based on interests, professions, or even goals. Some urban groups can serve as agents of social integration by creating spaces where individuals can interact, share experiences, and develop a sense of solidarity. These communities can build inclusive social networks, which can enhance social cohesion, even in the midst of diversity and rapid change (Bauman, 2000). Such communities help overcome the limitations produced by social segregation and strengthen the sense of community among residents (Uslaner, 2012).

Urbanization also has the potential to generate social tensions and conflicts, which can threaten social cohesion in city-based environment. As social inequalities become more prevalent and certain groups feel marginalized or disrespected, tensions between different social groups may increase. This social discontent can take many forms, from social protests to violence. Maintaining social cohesion is crucial for governments and communities to create inclusive policies that reduce inequalities and integrate different groups in the social life of the city. An understanding of these social dynamics is essential for designing policies that strengthen people-to-people relations and improve social cohesion in cities (Harvey, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Rapid urbanization has brought major changes to the social structure and life of urban communities and has influenced social cohesion in complex ways. While urbanization can increase economic opportunities and provide access to facilities, it can also exacerbate social inequalities in terms of housing, employment and basic services. Social segregation by economic class and ethnicity, became more pronounced, with certain groups isolated in rural areas. This decreases social interaction between diverse communities, reduces mutual trust, and exacerbates inter-group tensions. These social dynamics lead to a decline in social cohesion, which is essential for creating harmonious and inclusive societies in city-based environment.

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