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THE 'URBAN AGE'

The Urban Age Project by the London School of Economics and Political Science's British Urbanism Society

121 <small>10,045</small>	10% <small>lived in cities in 1900</small>	4% <small>22.7%</small>
14% <small>35.6%</small>	50% <small>is living in cities in 2007</small>	65% <small>56%</small>
19m <small>47.5x</small>	75% <small>will be living in cities in 2050</small>	16m² <small>2.5x</small>
\$1.3m	33% 35% 91%	25x

PHALDON

Book titled *The Endless City* (Phaidon)

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The age of megacities

More than half of Earth's population lives in cities—and many of them reside in megacities, the world's largest urban aggregations.

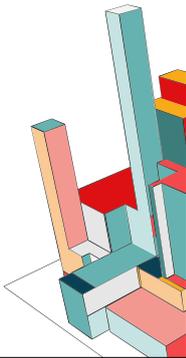
By the Earth Story Maps Team
20 April 2021

The world is a crowded place, with human population expected to reach 9 billion by mid-century. Over half of us now live in urban areas, the largest of which have swelled into giant urban agglomerations, sometimes called megacities—metropolitan areas with 10 million people or more (mapped on the globe below).

See: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/interactive/age-megacities/>

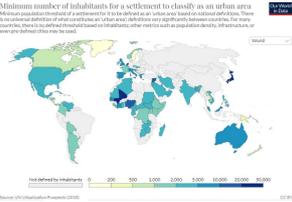
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HOW DO WE DEFINE URBAN GROWTH?



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- Urban growth can refer to **land area**, but it's generally synonymous with **urbanisation of population**: 'the absolute and/or relative growth in the number of people living in urban settlements' (Castree et al. 2013, p. 542)
- Depends on how we define an urban settlement
- >1,000 people (NZ) or >5,000 people (European Commission) or >50,000 people (Japan)?



Minimum number of inhabitants for a settlement to classify as an urban area. Minimum population threshold of settlement for it to be defined as urban and based on national definitions. There is no universal definition of what constitutes an urban area and definitions vary significantly between countries. For many countries there is no official threshold based on population density, but structure, infrastructure, or other criteria may be used.

Source: N. et al (2013) Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography. Oxford University Press.

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URBAN GROWTH ISN'T JUST ABOUT QUANTITY OF URBAN RESIDENTS

Planetary urbanisation?

"Today, it is increasingly evident that **the urban has indeed become a worldwide condition** in which all aspects of social, economic, political and environmental relations are enmeshed, across places, territories and scales, crosscutting any number of long-entrenched geographical divisions (urban/rural, city/ countryside, society/nature, North/South, East/West)." (Brenner & Schmidt 2015, *Towards a new epistemology of the urban?*)



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OqQPipUBMU

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How megacities are changing the map of the world
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7y4GtmwRLQ>
Start at 05:15

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INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS

At its simplest:

- Relatively poor standard of living in rural locations 'push' people to urban areas
- Relatively good standard of living in urban locations 'pull' them there

But standard of living can have many dimensions, including income, services (e.g. education, healthcare), congruence with beliefs/identity

STRUCTURAL CONTEXT

Taking a purely individual focus overlooks the ways that political-economic structures create the conditions that shape individuals' choices

Urbanisation is a spatio-temporal fix to capitalist crises of over-accumulation (Harvey, *Urbanization of Capital*, 1985)

Urbanisation is part of state-led developmental projects/visions (e.g. China, Singapore)

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China has at least 65 million empty homes — enough to house the population of France. It offers a glimpse into the country's massive housing-market problem.

INSIDER

- * One-fifth of the homes in China — at least 65 million units — are empty.
- * That amount of empty real estate is enough to house the population of France.
- * The ghost cities are a testament to China's reliance on real estate as a driver of economic growth.

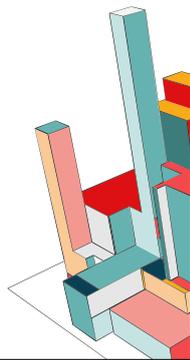


Unfinished buildings and vacant streets in Xianglin Bay, Yuhou & Xianglin Bay, a new central business district under construction in Tianjin, was once expected to be China's Manhattan. Now it's a ghost city. *David Peres/Contrasto/Getty Images*

Source: <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-empty-homes-real-estate-evergrande-housing-market-problem-2021-10>

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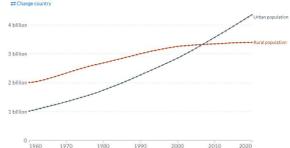
GLOBAL OUTLOOK



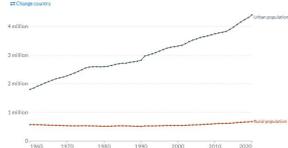
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WHEN ...

Number of people living in urban and rural areas, World



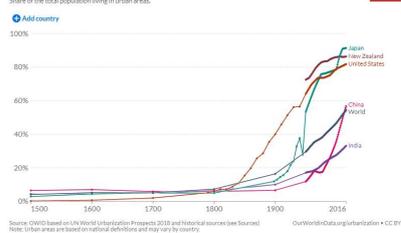
Number of people living in urban and rural areas, New Zealand



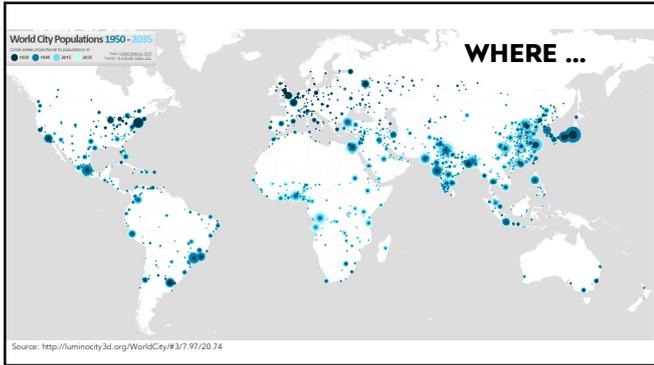
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WHEN ...

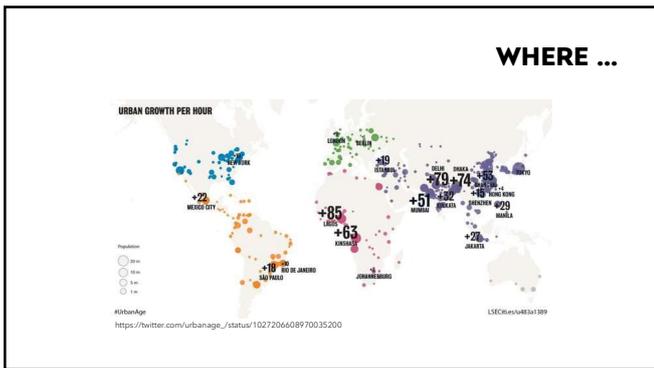
Urbanization over the past 500 years, 1500 to 2016



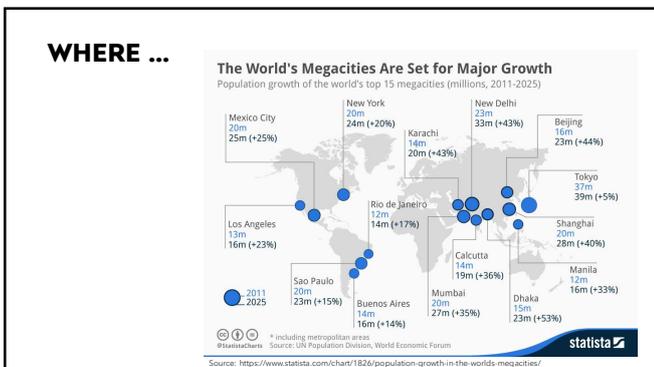
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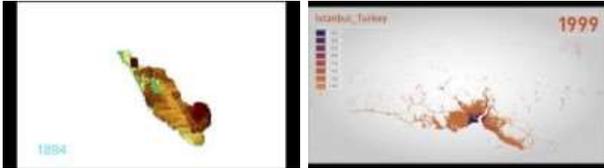
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HOW ...

UP AND/OR OUT



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGXJTwLc0CA&t=87s>

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45Ho_u0p0c&t=44s

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CONFLICT OVER GROWING 'UP'

GREATER
AUCKLAND



Source: <https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2021/11/11/bring-on-the-density/>



Source: <https://theconversation.com/whose-identity-are-we-preserving-in-aucklands-special-character-housing-areas-183207>

Auckland councillors divided over proposed housing density law

164 people 4 November 2021

by Chris Harte
@chris_harte

Source: <https://www.nz.co.nz/news/national/454962/auckland-councillors-divided-over-proposed-housing-density-law>

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CONFLICT OVER GROWING 'OUT'

Do urban growth boundaries hold up land prices?



Source: <https://www.omerof.co.nz/news/do-urban-growth-boundaries-hold-up-land-prices-36559>

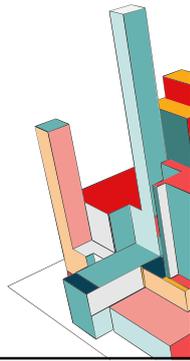
GREATER
AUCKLAND



Source: <https://www.greaterauckland.org.nz/2021/11/11/clawing-back-the-cost-of-sprawl/>

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A COMPLEX CHALLENGE



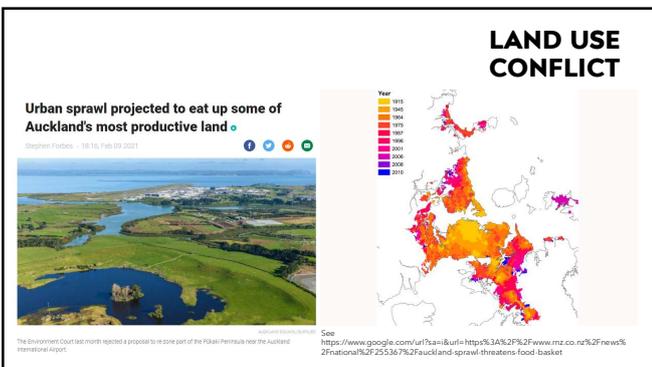
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ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION



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LAND USE CONFLICT



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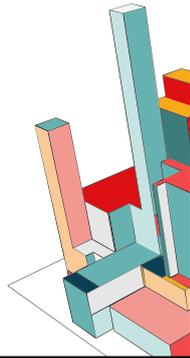
SOCIAL INEQUITY



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KEY POINTS

- There are different ways to define urban growth (land area or population?; when does a population become urban?)
- Urban growth can be quantified, but we should also pay attention to the qualitative drivers, nature, and impact of urban growth
- Urban growth is occurring unevenly, across the globe (predominantly in the global South) and within particular cities (growing up and/or growing out)
- Urban growth brings great possibility, but is also a topic of social concern (e.g. environmental issues, food sustainability, social inequality)
- The next two lectures go into more detail about sustainable urban growth and inequitable urban growth



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GEOG 307 Urban Geography

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