

**Forum: The Economic and Social Council**

**Issue: Addressing the Convolution of Rapid Urbanization, Including the Formation of Slums, Degradation of the Environment and the Unsustainable Use of Provisions such as Electricity**

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## Introduction

Revolution has never lightened the burden of tyranny. They have only shifted it to another shoulder. Economic and territorial scenarios define a nation's prosperity in today's dynamic society. Countries with large territories but unstable economies are as destitute as nations with vast economies but densely populated citizens. These 2 sides of the extremes represent an aspect of urbanization. Since the Industrial Revolution in 1760, major countries such as the US and the UK have strived to shift from an agrarian economy to a more industrial one. This industrial shift resulted in major environmental degradation and many densely populated areas. One such example to elucidate this point is when the black death hit (bubonic plague); the bubonic plague was caused by a bacterium known as *Yersinia pestis* believed to have arrived in 1338 or 1339 in Issyk-Kul now known as Kyrgyzstan. Slowly as the years passed this virus made its way to Europe, which was already considerably urbanized (keep in mind not industrialized) ("History of Europe - Growth, Innovation, Expansion | Britannica"); because Europe was relatively more urbanized, people lived closer together and because they lived closer together the environment was naturally degraded to a certain extent that it became a perfect spot for diseases such as the black death to nurture and grow. This is only one example of how urbanization can prove to have side effects. If we were to ignore history and talk about issues that can arise from such urbanization today, then 4 main things come into play: infrastructure, health, climate and environmental aspects, and social instability. ("The Risks of Rapid Urbanization in Developing Countries")

## Key Terminology

### Slum

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(n.) A crowded, run down section of city, characterized by poverty and dilapidation. (“Definition of Slum | Dictionary.com”) It is defined by the UN Habitat as “a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: 1. Permanent, long-term housing that protects against adverse climate conditions, 2. Adequate habitual area for multiple people in the same house, 3. Unchallenging and safe access to water.” (Rowe)

### Security of Tenure

(n.) The legal right to continue living in or using a rented building, land, etc. (Cambridge Dictionary)

### Rations

(n). Provisions which are given to be used during a particular period of time or activity. (Cambridge Dictionary, “Ration”)

### Urban Segregation

Spatial separation of different socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic groups within an urban area.

### Urban

(adj.) Of or in a city or town. (“Urban”)

### Rural

(adj.) Having characteristics of the countryside, associated with being less developed. (Cambridge Dictionary, “Rural”)

### Gentrification

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The process in which an area gains wealth, becoming a place where people from a higher social class might live. The term especially applies to parts of a city. (Cambridge Dictionary, “Gentrification”)

### Adequate Housing and Shelter

The Habitat Agenda defines adequate housing and shelter to encompass structural durability, basic infrastructure such as access to water, sanitation, and waste management facilities, adequate privacy, space, lighting, heating, and ventilation. It also includes affordability and a location accessible to work and basic facilities. In order for a dwelling to be identified as healthy housing, the residence must also fulfill physical, chemical, biological, social, and building and equipment conditions. (Jacobs)

Physical conditions include energy efficiency, radon exposure, noise, lighting, and ventilation.

Chemical conditions include carbon monoxide, volatile organic chemicals, secondhand smoke, and lead.

Biological conditions include pests such as rodents and cockroaches, allergens, humidity and mold.

Building and equipment conditions include access to sewer services and sanitations, and accidents and unintentional injuries.

Social conditions include architectural features related to mental health. (Jacobs)

If housing space does not fulfill these requirements, it can be considered inadequate housing.

## Background

### History

Urbanization, or the movement of people from rural areas to cities, is one of the greatest shifts that nations have experienced in their histories. The first cities formed in history after the emergence of horticultural and pastoral communities allowed citizens to settle in one place since they no longer had to roam in search of food. In the ancient cities, there were no systems

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put in place for collecting garbage; therefore, people threw their garbage in the streets and as time went by, garbage began to collect in certain areas (and we refer to such regions as the slum, today). This poor sanitation increased diseases and high death, and some cities, later on, devised better ways of treating such issues such as Rome, which was noted to have developed a sewage system.

Nonetheless, the majority of the global population was still living in rural localities right till the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. The American colonial period saw the coastal cities along the seaboard as the hub of commercial and political activities. The three biggest cities in terms of the overall population were Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Yet they were small compared to their size today.

Thus, in the United States in 1790, two years after George Washington became the first president of the new country, residents of New York numbered just 33, 131; Philadelphia, 28,522; and Boston, 18,230 (Gibson 1998). Today, of course, cities of this size are called small towns. New York's population is vastly higher, at about 8.2 million; Philadelphia's is 1.5 million; and Boston's is 618, 000.

Two major causes for the fact that US cities were more numerous and much larger during the nineteenth century were the following. The first one was immigration since people from Ireland, and later from Italy and other countries began to arrive in United States by 1820s. The second was industrialization after individuals migrated to reside in close quarters to industrial centers and sources. As a result, of this massive influx of people within cities issues like crime and even mob violence become a major concern of 1830s. Such large-scale violence became a 'social norm' and because of this, the 1830s have been termed as the 'turbulent era' (Feldberg, 1980). Majority of this mass violence was by the native born whites on blacks, Catholics' and immigrants. The white population refused to accept them and the prejudice against these people was rife. From 1830 to 1860 over 75 per cent of American urban places with populations of more than 20 000 recorded at least one riot. This wave of mass violence in the nation's cities made Abraham Lincoln to comment and say, 'Mobs furnishing accounts of

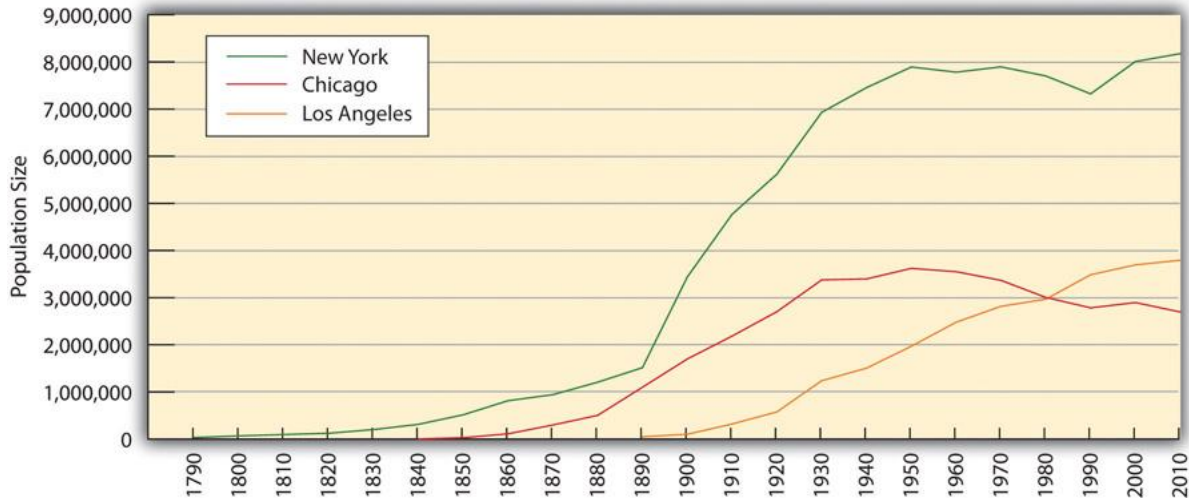
outrages upon the black man, forms the every day news of the times...Whatever they may be, it is common to the whole country' (Barkan & Snowden, 2008, p. 34).

American cities expanded even more after the civil war particularly through industrialization and immigration. By the early years of the twentieth century, US cities on the Eastern seaboard seemed to be as densely packed as would have been physically possible, and their inhabitants' living standards remained appallingly low for a considerable portion of the population. The city governments, the police, and business environments in these countries were also acrimoniously corrupt.

Already in 1904, Lincoln Steffens, an outstanding representative of the "muckraking" journalism, issued the collection of six articles initially published in McClure's Magazine and known under the title *The Shame of the Cities*. In this book, Steffens employed very harsh words to make critics against the municipal corruption of the period in Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and other places. In the original articles that compose the book, he named names: He specified people who took and offered bribes, and all other filthy individuals as well.

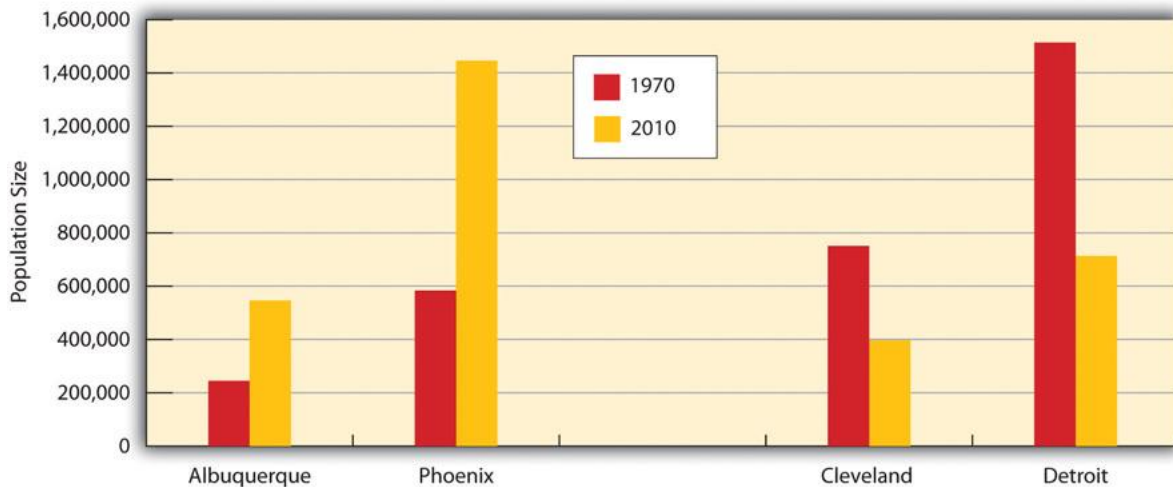
A decade earlier, another muckraker, Jacob Riis, had published *How the Other Half Lives: The New York Tenements* described in *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob A. Riis published in 1890 is another work filled with sharp photographs of the extreme poverty in America's largest city. Thus, the books by Steffens and Riis stay as a testimony of what cities looked like a century ago, and maybe still look like today to some extent. This increment in social unrest and political discrepancy is an example of the social side effects of rapid urbanization, specifically an example of how the rapid urbanization effected the US in its colonial period.

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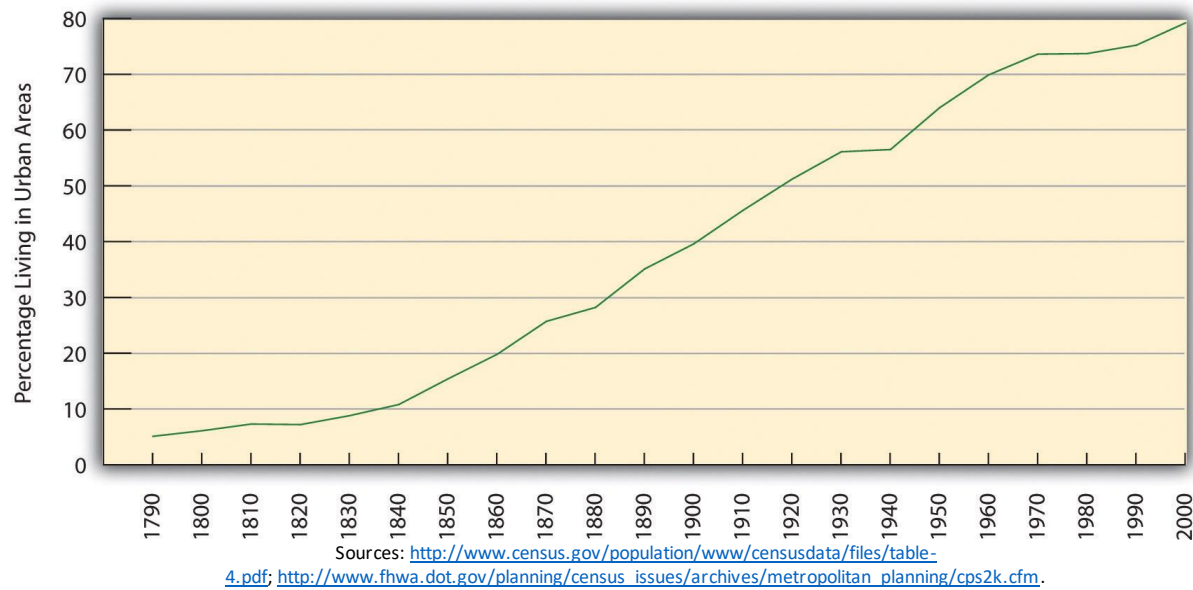


New York annexed Brooklyn in 1898; therefore, New York's population beginning in 1900 includes Brooklyn's population.

Sources: Gibson, C. (1998). *Population of the 100 largest cities and other urban places in the United States: 1790–1990*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2012*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab>.



Source: US Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2012*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab>.



### Ineffectual Measures Addressing Slums

Slums are a major source of crime, illness, and violence, due to the lack of many basic necessities. Due to a 'poverty penalty', basic services are more expensive than in affluent cities of equal size (Rowe). One in seven people on the planet live in a slum, while it is predicted that in 2030, this number will grow to one in four (Habitat for Humanity). In some countries, as much as 90% of the urban population live in slums (Habitat for Humanity).

Some of the world's largest slums include Khayelitsha in Cape Town South Africa, which houses 400,000 people, Kibera in Nairobi Kenya (700,000 inhabitants), Dharavi in Mumbai India (1 million inhabitants), Neza in Mexico (1.2 million inhabitants). The largest slum in the world, Orangi Town in Karachi, has 2.4 million inhabitants (Rowe). Even in prosperous nations such as America, one-fifth of the urban population live in poor, substandard housing (Ankam).

However, slums have rarely been addressed with the well-being of the residents themselves in mind. Instead of providing better living conditions, knocking down slums displaces residents and does not ameliorate the situation. An overwhelming number of cities simply "knock slums down and rebuild in the most cost-effective way possible," often failing to improve living conditions with regard for residents' social network, employment opportunity, or

sense of home and place (Hart and King). Simply knocking slums down simply changes the problem, even adding unforeseen consequences.

### The Negative Impact of Overpopulation on the Environment

The overwhelming speed of urbanization can lead to many complications. Deterioration of air and water quality, unsustainable waste disposal, and depletion of natural resources such as water, are only a few of the dilemmas which threaten the welfare of Earth and its inhabitants (“Urbanization Effects”). Human overpopulation often adds to the problem, as it leads to a spike in resource demand. In fact, statistics reveal that the average person in the United States consumes nearly five times more resources than what the planet is able to provide sustainably (Bish). The extraction of such resources such as electricity, freshwater, and food also produces an immense quantity of harmful pollutants, creating a self-destructive cycle (University of California Regents). As the population grows, forests and other important ecological habitats are destroyed in order to manufacture urban areas such as residences or roads required of a larger population. This results in a “decrease [in] species populations, geographic ranges, biodiversity, and [can] alter interactions among organisms.” (University of California Regents)

### Unmanaged Land Expansion Results in Unsafe Living Environment

The struggle to provide resources for an ever-growing population are often exacerbated by a lack of strategic expansion or cultivation of sustainable infrastructure. An example is Lagos, Nigeria, one of the largest cities in sub-Saharan Africa (Britannica). Of more than 16 million residents, less than 20 percent have access to tap water, while less than 10 percent are connected to the sewer system (Du and Mahendra). One of the main contributing factors to their dilemma is urban sprawl. The city’s rapid “outward” instead of “upward” growth results in weak infrastructure and causes difficulty allocating adequate resources to all corners of the city.

Families move away from the city center, seeking more affordable housing, only to discover that basic services are excessively greater: families spend twice as much money on overall expenses, and three times as much commuting to jobs and other services located far from their less developed living space (Du and Mahendra). Informal service provisions, such as



private water trucks or waste collectors can charge up to 30 times more than official city agencies. (Du and Mahendra) Such essential services cannot be overlooked when creating a safe and sustainable urban space.

Inadequate sanitation also results in severe health threats to the inhabitants, including diarrheal diseases, dengue, leishmaniasis flourish caused by unclean water supply and tuberculosis, provoked by overcrowding (The Lancet).

## Major Parties Involved

Nationwide urbanization isn't something that happens based on lucky circumstances, there are multiple frameworks dedicated to sustaining these kinds of scenarios for the benefit of the national economic circumstances. A few of these institutions include:

1. African Centre for Cities (ACC), University of Cape Town
2. African Cities Research Consortium
3. Agence Française de Développement (AFD)
4. Asian Development Bank (ADB)
5. Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU-UCL)
6. Cities Alliance
7. C40 cities
8. Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)
9. European Commission
10. ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
11. Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
12. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
13. Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS)
14. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (LILP)
15. Manchester Urban Institute
16. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
17. Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

18. Shack/Slum Dwellers International
19. South African Cities Network – SACN
20. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
21. World Bank (Urban Development)
22. World Resources Institute (WRI) Ross Centre for Sustainable Cities

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description/Note
<b>1969</b>	Kampung Improvement Program. A program which creates sustainable and healthy neighborhoods by mobilizing resources and increasing the people’s awareness of the crucial nature of a clean living environment. (Hart and King)
<b>1976, June 10</b>	United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - Habitat I. The first conference recognizing “the need for sustainable human settlements and the consequences of rapid urbanization, especially in the developing world.” (Nations)
<b>1987, May 21</b>	Brundtland Report. Released by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), it explores and develops policy solutions which take into consideration the correlation between social equity, economic growth, and environmental degradation. (Jarvie)
<b>1992</b>	Agenda 21. A detailed plan of action concerning the human impact on the environment, which is encouraged to be adopted globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups.
<b>1996</b>	Habitat II, City and Town Summit. A United Nations Conference on Human Settlements which addresses the topics of “adequate housing for all” and “viable human settlements in a changing world”, especially considering the root cause of urban growth: population increase. The conference produced the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda.

	(Nations, “United Nations Conference on Human Settlements: Habitat II”)
<b>2015</b>	Paris Agreement. A legally binding international United nations treaty whose goal is to prevent the increase in average global temperature from breaching 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It is the first binding agreement which brings nations together to combat climate change. (UNFCCC)
<b>2016</b>	New Urban Agenda: Habitat III conference. A Global summit which secured renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, discussing the challenge of urban planning and the role of cities and towns as drivers of sustainable development. During this conference the New Urban Agenda was developed. (“Habitat III   UN-Habitat”)

## Previous Attempts/Solutions

Urbanization occurred rapidly within America during the early 19th century for numerous reasons. The advancement in technology led to an increase in industrial activity, which then required a large workforce to sustain it. New electric lights and powerful machinery allowed factories to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This tremendous workload forced workers into 12-hour shifts requiring them to live close to the factories.

While the work was dangerous and difficult, many Americans were willing to leave behind the preindustrial agrarian prospects in the hope of better wages in the newly built cities. Furthermore, problems ranging from famine to religious persecution led a new wave of immigrants to arrive from central, eastern, and southern Europe most of whom chose to settle within the large cities.

Although cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York sprang up in terms of population in the first half of the colonial period, the real increment in urban population growth

did not occur until the mid-nineteenth century. During this time period, city life became a more ideal choice particularly because of the employment opportunities and how these opportunities exponentially grew as industrialization took place. Up to the mid-1800s, factories for instance the textile mills required to be stationed around water sources, rivers, and the sea to transport raw materials, produce, and water for operations. Transportation on the rivers was reduced to a halt during the extremely cold winters as the production entirely hinged on the volume of water in rivers. This need was later revolutionized by the emergence of the steam engine so that businesses could place factories near the cities. These factories provided employment opportunities to the masses to come and reside in urban areas because jobs were easily available there but the wages paid per hour were negligible, and the work was repetitive and monotonous.

### The keys to successful urbanization

Where the country advanced, specific aspects contributed to some towns transforming into big cities while others failed to do so. The following four innovations proved critical in shaping urbanization at the turn of the century: proper lighting to turn on their lamps, better ways of communicating, ways of moving within a city, and the appearance of tall buildings which are called 'skyscrapers'. When the people moved to do those new jobs, they had to deal with key features of urban life that were missing; these include transport, housing, communication, and methods of providing light and power. Again, even the primary needs like clean and safe water, and sanitation, which the rural dwellers might have enjoyed, were relatively very difficult to access in the compacted cities.

### Electric Lighting

Thomas Edison obtained the patent for the electrical incandescent light bulb in the year 1879. This development became quickly popular and was used not only in factories but also in numerous homes changing even lower and middle Americans' lives. While electric power took a relatively long time to be distributed in rural regions of the country, cities had rather easy

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accesses to it after the initial commercial power plants started coming up in 1882. When Nikola Tesla later went on to develop the AC (alternating current) system for the Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company then it was possible to have power supply for lights and other factory equipment trailing for many a miles from the power source. AC power altered the consumption of electricity meaning that urban Physical geography covered larger tracts of land. In the factories electric light made it possible for the operations to conduct themselves throughout the day and night as well as throughout the week. Such an increase of production needed more labor force and this demand again led to more people migrating to cities.

Over time, cities then tried to light up the streets with lamps particularly the electric ones so that the city will still be 'alive' during nighttime. There is no more lagging of the rhythm set by life's wheel and economy, seen in the decline of other small towns after the sun set. The cities, the same as the factories that were attractors for people, never sleep.

### Communications Improvements

The patent of the telephone in 1876 greatly transformed communication methods both regionally and internationally playing a really large role in industrialization. The telephone supplanted the telegraph as the preferred mode of communication; by 1900 over 1.5 million telephones were used around the nation, whether private lines in the homes of some middle and upper-class Americans or jointly used "party lines" in many rural areas. By allowing instant communication over larger distances at any given time, growing telephone networks made urbanization not only easier but also possible.

Similar to how electric lights contributed to greater factory production and economic growth, the telephone allowed for increased business through the more rapid pace of demand therefore making it more convenient. This discovery allowed for orders to be placed via telephone rather than via mail order which would take a lot more time. Furthermore, the invention allowed corporations to generate more orders, but because more orders were placed

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more production was needed therefore opening up job opportunities for workers. This demand for additional labour played a crucial role in the corporates expanding themselves and reaching more consumers.

### Intracity Transportation

With cities forming and expanding outwards, a major issue emerged – mobility within city limits – from home to place of work or business, and back. In most cases transportation infrastructure was employed to link cities, often by rail or through canals. Prior to the 1880, one of popular means of public transport in cities was the omnibus. It was a big carriage having horses to draw it, sometimes on iron or steel rails to get a smoother journey. Although omnibuses proved somewhat efficient in the context of the relatively lesser populated and less busy city-townships, they were no longer competent enough to accommodate the ever increasing rush that emerged towards the end of the century. Carriages could no longer move at high speeds; they even needed to dismount; and the piles of horse dung became a constant issue.

Later in 1887, Frank Sprague produced an electric trolley following the design of the omnibus, that is a large wagon on rails but being pulled electrically. The electric trolley could go on working throughout the day to the late hours as the factories and the men which put the industries into motion. However, it did increase the modernity of such secondary industrial cities as Richmond Virginia in the South. Since 1873, engineers in San Francisco started using pulley technology that has been used in mines to bring cable cars and convert the city's steep inclined plane into aristocratic middle-class neighbourhoods. Yet, as people filled more and more the largest cities like Chicago and New York, trolleys were not able to travel through the masses of walking people. To counter this problem, city planners decided to build the trolley lines above the streets, providing what was known as the L-trains as early as 1868 in New York, followed by Boston in 1887 and Chicago in 1892. Last, as aerial space for construction was occupied by skyscrapers, transportation took its one last phase and shifted underground in the

form of subways. Boston Subway started in 1897, the New York Subway followed it, and others also started entering the scene.

### The Rise of Skyscrapers

The last issue that large cities had to deal with was that of space as the demand for it continued to grow endlessly. Now eastern cities, unlike their midwestern counterparts, could not expand in area outward, and there was no more vacant land around the cities. This is true because areas that were surrounded by rivers or the coast were limited in sprawl as well. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, citizens had to be located near these city's central business districts to easily access work, stores, and most importantly the primary institutions of urban society. The cost of properties went high, thus, upward expansion became desirable, and the tall structures were associated with prestige for the firms that occupied them. Employees finished the first-ever skyscraper in Chicago; the ten Stores Home Insurance Building in the year 1885. Although engineers could go higher, thanks to new steel construction techniques, they required another vital invention to make taller buildings accessible. Interestingly, one of the oldest types of elevators is the electric elevator, which was first designed in 1889 by the Otis Equipment and Erector Company whose leader was James Otis. This paved the way for the start of the construction of skyscrapers that enabled developers in eastern cities to commission and sell huge supervisory spaces in the thick of busy eastern megacities.

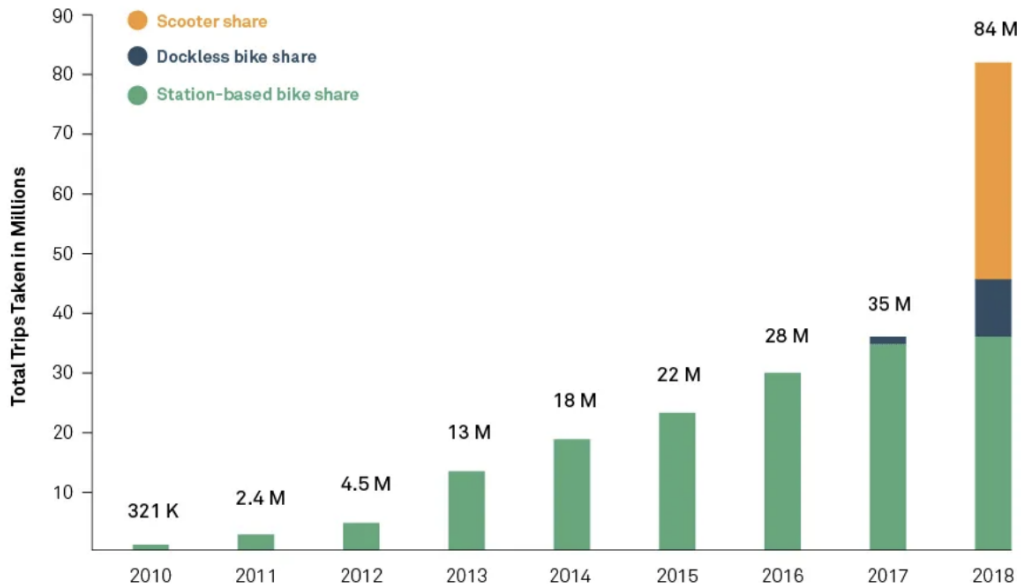
### Potential Solutions

- Instead of attempting to wipe out slums altogether, efforts can be made to upgrade the slums themselves. Urban mobility is an important element in increasing the appeal of a city as a potential workplace or living area. Studies have also revealed that inefficient transit systems, often a result of unsatisfactory transport planning or lack of infrastructure, results in traffic congestion, and longer commuting hours, consequently producing fatigue and a reduction in productivity (Rai et al.). In fact, every 1 dollar investment into public transportation directly translates into economic return of approximately 4 dollars (Rai et al.). By building cheap and reliable transport networks, urban areas can not only lessen people's expenses

- spent on commune, but also creates jobs and opportunities for economic growth, promoting the growth of businesses and wealth. (Services) Furthermore, urban mobility can be central to achieving sustainable cities as transport produces approximately 14 percent of global carbon emissions (“Urban Mobility”).
- Further upgrades and modifications can be made to existing sustainable and convenient transport systems to fulfill the needs of developing cities and slums. A popular form of cheap and easily accessible public transport is bike sharing or ride sharing programs, which allow users to rent bikes or automobiles through simple and easy-to-use programs (Services). Furthermore, bike sharing programs are environmentally friendly and have proved highly popular among cities already implementing similar systems (Walker). The World Resource Institute also encourages the implementation of “high-quality, integrated public transportation systems that include Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), urban buses, informal transport, micromobility, autonomous vehicles”, and “more active mobility options, like bicycling and walking, and public spaces that safely accommodate these modes.” (“Urban Mobility”). It is clear that related infrastructure such as cycling paths and pedestrian sidewalks must also be part of initial urban planning.



## 84 Million Trips on Shared Micromobility in 2018



Source: NACTO

*Graph illustrating the increasing popularity of bike sharing systems in the United States.*

- Instead of displacing the residents, perhaps the wiser solution would be to allow sustainable development within the slums. Involving the residents themselves can be instrumental in sustainable urban development, as it allows more efficient development that suits the need of all audiences. Past attempts have exemplified that attempting to steamroll slums are not effective ways of promoting sustainable urban growth. The residents often continue to find it hard to support themselves, especially in an unfamiliar, hostile environment unsuited to their specific needs. In order for new facilities, housing policies, and urban services to “meet the needs of the most vulnerable”, all members of the population must be consulted (Hart and King.) This includes informal residents, migrants, the disabled, women, and numerous other minorities. Only with the inclusion of all inhabitants can a truly inclusive city be constructed.

- An important part of involving residents in slum upgrading is granting security of tenure. Without security of tenure, people living in slums are unable to ensure a rightful place within their homes, leaving no incentive to put in an effort on improving living conditions for a space from which they could immediately be evicted. (Habitat for Humanity). As explained by Rose Molokoane, the coordinator of Slum Dwellers International in South Africa, “Can a poor person afford to buy a mansion in the city? We want to create our own informal cities meaning that if we get security of tenure, if we are allowed to build our own houses then we can create our own settlements.” (“Finding Solutions to Slums and Informal Settlements | UN-Habitat”)

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