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History-Geography

Evaluate the challenges facing mega-cities in LEDC's and the strategies in place to deal with them.

Today's mega-cities are an excellent example of quickly progressing urbanisation in countries across the globe. These mega-cities can be seen across all different countries and settings, appearing in both MEDCs and LEDCs. However, where they appear a series of problems comes with them, which is most apparent in the mega-cities of the LEDCs. Over the past decades, many LEDCs saw their urbanisation rates jump really high, showing that many are leaving their homes in the countryside and they try their luck in the city: a phenomenon that is very common in MEDCs. But very often, due to this very high influx of people towards cities, the governments start to have trouble managing all of this incoming urban population, especially in LEDCs, where governments often lack resources to manage this influx, and can lead to cities have their growth spin out of control, often having severe consequences for the population, local industries and the environment.

Many of today's mega-cities are concentrated around densely populated areas, often appearing in what we consider the economical south: Rio de Janeiro, Lagos, Calcutta or Shanghai to name a few. But what these cities have in common is a problem of overcrowding and overpopulation: in Shanghai, over half of the population lives in less than 5% of the total land area and in the centre the population density reaches from 40 000 to 160 000 people per square kilometre. But even if the government of Shanghai pushed a series to address this issue, like with widespread family planning and medical care, compulsory work permits and educational initiatives that reduced the urban density and increased it in Shanghai's periphery, the problems still remain: firstly, Shanghai will soon experience the problem that poses an elderly population, with around 34% of the population that will be over 60 by 2020. Shanghai's overcrowding also poses a serious environmental dangers: less than 60% of waste water and less than 40% of sewage flows are actually processed and treated. Waste disposal is also a problem: the main river of Shanghai receives 4 million cubic meters of untreated human waste every day, and the construction industries of Shanghai generate 30 000 tonnes of building waste per day, all while they are running out of place to stock this waste. The concentration of the population also causes an issue of air pollution: Shanghai has the highest cancer mortality rate in China, and it was the 10th most polluted city in the world. Shanghai's industry would generate over 72% of CO2 emissions, 9% by transport system and the rest would be generated by domestic users. The situation isn't helped by the fact that about 75% of Chinese electricity comes from coal. So what ends up happening, in major cities, like Shanghai, with all of it's concentration of industries and emissions from vehicles, air pollution can reach very dangerous levels, often creating a photochemical smog severely impacting health of the local population with a low-level ozone that is responsible for breathing difficulties. However, Shanghai's authorities try to limit the air pollution by upgrading the transport systems and limit the growth in car ownership, as well as attempts to improve safety through pedestrianisation and reduction in the number of bicycles.

In other cities, this enormous influx of people manifests with the apparition of slums, which also bring a set of problems of their own. And these slums just keep on growing as these mega-cities increase in size: in 2001, about 32% of the world urban population lived in slums, and 78,2% of the urban population in LEDCs were in fact slum dwellers. Significant portions of some LEDC mega-cities are composed of slums and their population,