

# City Life in Tokyo and Beijing: An Unprecedented Possibility in the Breadth and Depth

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## Abstract

**Synchronized with a globalized world, urbanization in many countries is accelerated so fast that many challenges have shown up, but urban life still has an unprecedented possibility in breadth and depth. Taking Tokyo and Beijing as examples, the essay has first focused on, with the rapid worldwide economic growth, as metropolises, Tokyo and Beijing have extended to service centers to offer educational resources, convenient transportation, and women empowerment. Another focus is on the two primary factors of a highly civilized society: a balanced ecologic relationship and cultural diversity. Based on comparative and extensive literature research, there might be a dynamic but more positive relationship in the circle of urbanization, globalization, economy, ecology, and cultural diversity. Moreover, it is referable for further research on how future mega-cities develop positively and how their residents take advantage of city life.**

## Keywords

**Urbanization in Tokyo and Beijing; Service Center; Globalization; Cultural Cross-pollination.**

## 1. Introduction

Cities, which have thrived since the Greek polis, are not a new thing in history but never stop growing and expanding, especially now cities are a necessity in a globalized world. Amid globalization, the accelerated domestic migration from rural to urban areas, which is the fundamental trait of urbanization, is not exclusive to one country or one specific region. The lives in new mega-cities like Beijing and mature mega-cities like Tokyo are becoming even more complex in two chief dimensions.

One is the breadth of city life, on which researchers have basically observed an increasing tendency. According to IKALOVIĆ, Chen, and their colleagues, with the expanding demand for high-quality city life, urbanization has brought out metropolises covering a far wider range of social service functions [8]. AKHMETSHIN also has strengthened in his research that, especially now in the interconnected world, the more available transportation in daily life has lengthened the distance of worldwide communication [2]. Moreover, as UNFPA has stated in the article, "People in Cities: Hope Countering Desolation," urbanization does offer a favorable condition for a variety of employment choices, economic well-being, and women's empowerment, which promotes gender equality [11].

Another dimension is depth. What takes root in modern society are reasonable global governance and a harmonious connection with nature. Now changes, consisting of a series of institutional reforms and ecologic conservation, have been carried out, as Kraas has demonstrated in his article, Megacities and Global Change: Key Priorities [9]. A highly civilized city set up a healthy ecologic relationship and substituted the overwhelming conquest of nature. Beijing stands out among the mega-cities in progress that have found efficient ways to save natural resources with the help of international organizations. Through Hoshino's detailed data and literature analysis in "Transition to Municipal Management: Cleaning Human Waste

in Tokyo in the Modern Era,” it is acknowledged that Tokyo also has succeeded in reducing waste through its autonomous garbage management since 1918 [7]. Besides, cultural diversity becomes a new trait of civilized society, particularly in metropolitan cities. In these cities, well-educated people show a considerable acceptance of foreign culture while insisting on their root culture via official international certification such as ICH [5].

All the previous studies listed above have revealed the great potential inside mega-cities, where world economic development brings all possibilities. As a corollary, this essay tends to illustrate further how urbanization extends unprecedented feasibility for the breadth and depth of the citizens’ lives against the backdrop of the global economy. Despite Asian countries industrializing late, Tokyo and Beijing, respectively capital cities of Japan and China, have generously provided related evidence to support this further research.

## **2. Breadth of City Life: To Broaden People’s Social Activities in the Spatial Realm**

### **2.1. Definition of the Breadth of City**

#### **2.1.1. Increasing Services**

Regarding the breadth of city life, mega-cities manage to enrich people’s social activities in the spatial realm. City life developmentally ranges from partial functions to modernized services, inaccessible areas to the global village, and paternity primacy to woman empowerment. Tokyo, once serving as an undertaker of heavy industries, has altered into a service, economic, and political center where plentiful educational chances and advanced infrastructure are more available [8].

Also, industrialization in Beijing has replaced agriculture as the prominent feature in the urban economy, and accordingly, people leave villages for jobs in the industry. The increasingly growing number of inhabitants in both cities indicates a fast development in urban areas and promotes growth in various realms. After settling down in cities, these “rural-to-urban residents” [4] pursue more life services rather than merely make a living.

The population that gathers in cities improves the economic development of urban areas, especially the tertiary industry [13]. After the Reform and Opening-Up, China’s economic condition has been rapidly developed as well as the urbanization, which improves the demand for services in urban areas. As a variety of services are provided, there require more and more workforces to support the expansion, and then more and more people from rural areas come to cities for jobs. In this dynamic interaction between urbanization and the tertiary industry, city life is also extended.

In Tokyo, a highly civilized mega-city, there are more immigrants getting jobs ranging from the restaurant industry, the shipbuilding industry, transportation and so on [15]. These new settlers have created prosperous industry development in Tokyo, at the same time, they require various services in children’s education and the protection of foreigners’ legal rights. All of these above, functioning as a dynamic cycle, have widened the content of city life at both macro and micro levels.

Except for increasing services in mega-cities, convenient transportation, one of the high-quality services in cities, has widened the scope of social activities when people can move anywhere and interact with each other with the help of many available forms of transport such as cars, trains, and planes. Recently, the new car-sharing market and services have arisen, showing a great thirst for “improving the transportation comfort and mobility of the population of metropolitan cities” [2].

### 2.1.2. Women's Employment

An advanced urban structure will approve of the transformation in functions and graphical expansion but, most importantly, add a fair labor division inside the social organization, which cope with the discrimination against women employment. As Tokyo and Beijing, such metropolitan cities with various amenities can offer a broader stage for women to develop in society.

Firstly, an increasing number of females participate in a variety of employments. Although in the workplace of urbanized areas in China, informal and unstable jobs such as textile workers with a low wage are still the majority of female employment, women have more access to sorts of new jobs and earn more in comparison with those still in rural areas. As for metropolises in Japan like Tokyo, according to the "Labor Force Survey" conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the rate of female labor force participation in Japan ranged from 15 to over 65 years old is M-shaped [10]. In the survey, a large number of women quit working in their 20s and 30s affected to marriage, pregnancy, family and so on, but many of them will come back to a career when their family is considered stable, so the overall rate of female employment in Japan is around 60% (not a considerable portion but not worse as it was before).

Secondly, intangible and tangible empowerment to women is that women's property and right to education are stipulated and protected by law and advocated by the government's policies. With Japan encountering the crisis of an aging population and a stagnant market, Abe's government turn to support "Womenomics" [10] by increasing careers of women as leaders and adding extra social welfare. To the extent of what resources females can get in mega-cities of China, girls can obtain adequate education in youth to become competitive in the future. Compared to the time when the center of domestic development in china was still in rural areas, girls, as aggrieved groups in society, have had no access to education and employment. At that time, their legitimate rights and interests in education were not safeguarded by state power and acknowledged by society, not to say their property or development, which was not changed until urbanization.

Lastly, women's employment can continuously benefit the whole economy. Goldman Sachs and Hillary Clinton analyzed data and predicted that the Japanese economy would probably improve to approximately 15% in GDP if the quantity of women in the job market is equal to that of men [10]. Therefore, women are indispensable in the economy and can obtain legal education and job opportunities in mega-cities, so that they can achieve economic independence, decision-making autonomy, and good health, and ultimately get a better social and economic station in the future [10, 11]. Also, since the Reform and Opening policies were implemented in China, women have contributed a large part to economic development. A prosperous market economy creates different sorts of jobs where women enter and play an incredibly important role. That is to say, a much wider range of equal rights for women to enter workplaces does provide far more vigor for economic growth, particularly in metropolitan cities.

From the micro perspective of human rights and even from the macro perspective of civilized society, women should not be discriminated against in status, particularly in their economic independence. In the overall modernization of mega-cities and new towns, women's employment not only presents recognition on women's economic rights but also works as the backbone of the market economy. A high level of modernity in the 21st century should cover the acknowledgment of women's rights and give play to the strengths of sufficient employment for all genders.

## 2.2. Reasons for the Breadth of City Life

### 2.2.1. Vibrant Economy Providing Various Job Employments

It seems easy to notice cities' diverse functions, but what enables metropolitan cities to make a difference in their dwellers' breadth of living in substance? One of the most vital factors of mega-cities, or in other words, the root that mega-cities become so powerful is a vibrant economy with various employments. As Bertinelli and Zou have figured out, based on data analysis, urbanization has a dramatic effect on human capital accumulation. The evolvement of urban functions from traditional industry-oriented activities to modern "service-oriented activities" [3] promotes interaction among people, which brings about "skill-oriented activities" [3]. A virtuous circle in a mature mega-city like Tokyo thus comes over: more complex jobs with professional skills are created to accommodate new unceasing demands. Meanwhile, the spread of knowledge facilitates unexpected economic potential.

According to the survey by Wang Zhensheng, in the postwar period of cities' development in Japan, Tokyo, as one of the city centers, benefited the social economy so much. In the 1970s, urbanization in Japan already reached more than 70%, which led to the centralization of the population in cities [12]. People moved from rural areas to urban areas, looking for new jobs arising in industrialization. The government had made a series of development plans and launched programs to restructure industries, which was still meaningful to current development in cities.

Though urbanized cities generally provide better sanitary conditions, education sources, infrastructure, information, and chances, the urban poor remains, even in a capital city like Beijing. Urban poverty, comprising income poverty, poor and overcrowded housing, and lack of public services and infrastructure leaves poor dwellers disadvantaged in the health field. Beijing also suffers a lot from air pollution, industrial sewage, and overcrowded living condition, especially the soaring housing price troubles residents a lot. Since the Chinese economic system reform in the 1990s, rural-to-urban migration prosperity has led to a population explosion. Given that the land is finite, housing shortage and the consequent "urban housing commercialization" [4] emerge. Exorbitant home prices in Beijing hinder its new residents from finding a place to live, which may ultimately disturb social order and harm economic development. This fast becomes an issue of cities due to mismanagement, which is underrated, while governments have not decided to intervene and take care of the root until recently. In order to cut down overall poverty and improve the living condition of the slums, especially in the developing world where most of the slum population settle, the United Nations Millennium Declaration calls on that proactive policy should be carried out however difficult it is. Consequently, fast urbanization has realized several positive changes in the poverty issue through instant restructuring of employment [11].

### 2.2.2. Globalization

Unlike so often in the past, globalization become the overall background for the growth of cities worldwide, which not only accelerates economic cooperation but also creates a platform for different cities to give play to their complementary advantages.

Synchronized with globalization, urbanization makes economic cooperation prosperous in the "diversity of the workplace" [10]. For instance, Tokyo's companies are vibrant in the world job market with "the highest number of corporations and employees in the world" [8]. In the global capital market, cooperation is prosperous worldwide. Some capitalists are willing to invest in some underdeveloped areas for rich natural resources and superior geographical location but lower cut costs. Many manufacturing industries grow fast and replace the agricultural economy, ultimately giving rise to people pouring into the first cities of the Third World. Understandably, people would choose mega-cities with better economic conditions if they could not survive in rural areas, despite the horrible environment in some big cities.

Globalization offers an opportunity for mega-cities to enhance connectivity, communication and international trade. For instance, the policymakers in China have announced the Belt and Road Initiative to open the domestic market, increase investment and create jobs for relevant countries, especially the cities. On the one hand, in China, the Belt and Road Initiative makes Beijing a real metropolitan city and a higher diplomatic position; meanwhile, the accelerated supply-side structural reform has contributed to a dynamic balance in the economy. On the other hand, according to the survey of the international implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, the population and the urbanization rate of the cities along the line has been substantially increased as the trade and investment rate grows [17]. That is to say, positive policies for a more tolerant, open and globalized world encourage worldwide modernization. Furthermore, the world is not separated into parts that never connect with one another but work as an interactive entirety.

Also, what globalization builds is an interactive bridge between developed countries and developing countries, where they can share advantages but compensate for each other's disadvantages. Tokyo is one of the mega-cities in the developed world with more chances for high-tech enterprises while it lacks young employees and consumers in the domestic market because of the aging population. And Beijing is a vigorous mega-city in China with a large number of employees and consumers, which suggests an active domestic market. However, Beijing also has its limits in upgrading industries and its need to introduce high-tech projects with the aim of promoting hard power. Therefore, Tokyo and Beijing can be an example on the path of win-win communication and cooperation. It is expected that more cities can participate in this kind of global work to give play to complementary advantages.

### **3. Depth of City Life: To Deepen the Intellectual Dimensions**

#### **3.1. Substance of Modern Society**

##### **3.1.1. Modernized Institution**

Vertically, city life, including deepening the intellectual dimensions in the physical and cultural construction, makes Tokyo and Beijing attractive.

There comes another virtuous circle deep in the cities: urbanization is a worldwide phenomenon with more big cities coming into being; simultaneously, these mega-cities in bloom interact with one another to intensify an international world. When active international exchange becomes the norm, metropolitan cities confront a series of "socio-economic, global ecological and political changes" [9]. In the socio-economy, international trades have made new progress to connect different nations such that every participant has to bear the risks of the global market. For example, the 2008 recession gets more than Tokyo and Beijing involved. Coinciding with the unknown crisis, the profit of worldwide collaboration is also shared by all. In order to overcome the adverse factors of globalization, countries turn to establish exclusive organizations which can regulate world trade in a specific region or even the whole world. And thus, modernized institutions become a special character in metropolitan cities around the world.

Instead of a regional feature of different parts of the world, modernized organizations work as a whole to set up laws and regulations through the negotiating table. Throughout human history, wars and plagues are always the key factors to destroy the order of society. Now there comes a highly modernized world with many civilized mega-cities at its core, leading the socio-economic development. The United Nations is expected to be one of the biggest official platforms for every country and region in this world to have different voices but sit on the negotiating table for a common and satisfactory solution.



### 3.1.2. A Healthy Relationship with Nature

Another change that has deepened civilized life is to form a healthy relationship with nature. Thanks to prevailing anthropocentrism, there was once a time for Tokyo and Beijing to undergo over-urbanization. Overdevelopment in the city center, such as the construction of soaring towers, the expropriation of much natural space, and the discharge of industrial pollutants randomly, has deteriorated the inhabitability of cities. Intending to change these situations, both domestic and international groups are working on protecting natural resources and sponsoring environmental projects [1]. People become aware of environmental conservation and sustainability, such as “efficient resource use” [9]. Significantly, Tokyo conducted a series of “municipal management” [7] to remove human waste. Instead of individual efforts, Tokyo has taken every responsibility to waste, including establishing the Sewage Law [7], the regulation of Garbage Classification, and new facilities.

In the early stage of industrialization, Beijing’s air pollution was once a dilemma for both economic and environmental development. China, as the world’s largest developing country, has an increasing demand for economic growth while ignoring the necessary protection of the environment, for example, carefully dealing with natural sources and recycling waste. In the research on the relationship between economic growth and environmental damage, Zheng Haitao and other researchers have found an analysis model which is applied to the investigation of Beijing’s economic development and air pollution [16]. It shows that striking a balance in different cities’ features plays an important role in the choice of different developing patterns. For Beijing, a booming mega-city, it is of great significance to transform the economy fundamentally into a clean one. Now, the index of Beijing’s air pollution is going down while a diversity of economies has sprung up, suggesting the healthy relationship with nature cannot be separated from modern economic growth.

## 3.2. Cultural Cross-pollination

As another internal factor, the cultural Cross-pollination in Tokyo and Beijing has blossomed. As urbanization develops rapidly, ideas, values, and beliefs begin to change, which brings about not only a more creative society but a more acerb contradiction. On the one hand, urbanization indeed enriches the cultural development of larger cities where generations of migrants live and have various cultures. On the other hand, modernization and globalization accelerating the invasion of foreign values give rise to separation from their own traditional culture.

### 3.2.1. Removal and Preservation of Heritage

However, international metropolises with well-educated residents have shown highly tolerant but selective acceptance of adjusting to such cultural diversity. The Chinese morning exercise culture, such as Tai Chi, has been accepted by many foreigners in Japan or even some western countries, which in their opinion, reveals “volumes of the city’s pulse, diversity and inclusiveness” [6]. Also, in cultural development, urban residents who have been universally educated are encouraged to get out of the culture dross and inherit excellent traditional culture in the meantime, especially in Beijing. The conservation of ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) is beyond a cross-country program but “a social movement” [5]. In mega-cities, how to protect cultural heritage is widely discussed and worldly acknowledged. By 2014, there have been over 1,000 ICH items “at a national level”, and nearly 1,500 individuals “were entitled the national ICH bearers,” [5] which implies that the project covers many aspects of intangible heritage and influences Chinese’s contemporary cultural perception profoundly. Furthermore, the central government has made a great effort to achieve the world level in the preservation of intangible heritage.

### 3.2.2. Cultural Diversity and Acceptance

The cultural Cross-pollination in Beijing can be traced back to the New Cultural Movement in 1919 when Beijing was one of its cores. Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), the president of Peking University from 1917 to 1927, was one of the leaders of this movement. since then, western culture and values have been spread to all walks of China [5]. Many Chinese scholars in Beijing who learned western knowledge led this movement with the hope of the substitution of many advanced ideas, science and technology for Confucian thoughts. And thus, with different thoughts emerging, Beijing became a booming city for changes. Also, new technology and science accelerated the industry development in Beijing, making it a larger population center. In the progress of urbanization in Beijing, the capital city of the People's Republic of China, more and more values about human rights and liberation absorbed from western culture were affirmed by the Chinese government, particularly in the 1980s when the Reform and Opening policies were implemented. Old mega-cities were encouraged to develop, and many boom towns began to grow, where inhabitants were expected to embrace high tolerance and acceptance of different cultures.

Compared to Beijing, Tokyo, the capital city in Japan with a higher level of industrial and economic development, has suggested a cultural symbiosis between national culture and foreign culture based on migration. After World War II, according to Ruth Benedict, Japan government tried to carry out laws and regulations to stop new arrivals from foreign countries or hire foreign staff, so as to strengthen to establish its own cultural identity [15]. However, it did not last long for the quick development of modernity in Tokyo and other mega-cities in Japan. As a highly developed city, many immigrants from other less developed areas have settled down in Tokyo since the 1990s. It is considered an irresistible phenomenon that people from different nations live in one city. Then, many scholars begin to use "multi-cultural symbiosis" to describe the cultural Cross-pollination in Japan, especially the mega-cities, which is probably not a positive response to the immigrants' culture but a gradual recognition of those foreigners. Also, under the influence of the public spirit, no matter whether Japanese or foreigners, they help each other when natural disasters such as earthquakes happen in Japan. New laws are established to protect foreigners' rights in Japan, which improves the citizens' acceptance of cultural diversity.

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, in Tokyo and Beijing, there is a dynamic relationship between urbanization, economic development and globalization. With the trend of globalization, the breadth and depth of urbanization in some metropolises like Tokyo and Beijing are extended to an unprecedented possibility.

In terms of the breadth of city life, the definition of urban social activities in the spatial realm includes educational resources, transportation, and gender equality, where women's employment becomes a substantial factor in the economic growth of mega-cities. And the reasons why mega-cities can enable various demands to socialize widely as service centers lie in the vibrant global economic development.

Regarding the depth of city life, the dimensions of a civilized society with well-educated residents are not only enlarged but deepened indeed. For one trait of modern society, metropolises have cooperated in various organizations internationally and tended to build a mature and healthy relationship with nature. For another, the prevailing cultural Cross-pollination, though it functions differently in cities with various types of development, encourages cultural diversity, acceptance, and selectivity in metropolitan cities.

Furthermore, to help citizens content themselves in a modernized but quick-fix society, it is advised to make the best of opportunities materially and spiritually, adapting to the global trend and flexibly changing with domestic demands.

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