

**Key Issue n°2: reducing the gap between the urban and rural divide**

*Matthew Bürgermeister*



*Dear Delegates of the Economic and Society council,*

The chairs of the ECOSOC would like to welcome you to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of NCYMUN. An event in which we hope you will debate and reflect about the issues that we all have come to care about; inequality and sustainability amongst others. The aim of our council can be linked to the three pillars of sustainable development: Economic, Environmental and Social. Strengthened by our partnership with other UN councils, we enable intergovernmental action on regional and local issues. ECOSOC has been at the forefront of development initiatives since 1945 and we hope that the forthcoming meeting will lead to constructive policies around global issues that can bring real change to people's life.

## Introduction

Reducing spatial inequality along the urban-rural continuum is increasingly becoming a key issue throughout countries in the world. Population in rural regions are suffering from a lack of access to education, information, jobs and basic needs such as water or healthcare. Consequently, the living conditions of rural areas have worsened; for example, the poverty rate is more than 60 per cent higher in rural than in urban areas. This leads to a rural exodus as people migrate to cities often not prepared to accommodate the increased population; in developing countries, the slum populations continue to grow at a significant rate of around 10% every year, therefore intensifying spatial inequality inside urban areas. In order to establish equal human development opportunities across rural and urban areas, it will be crucial to address these issues and formulate concrete development goals.



## History of the topic

### When did your problem first occur?

Though urbanized populations have only become a majority of the total population in western countries since the 1950s, the divide has existed since the Industrial Revolution (with the progressive decrease of the landed gentry), urban areas have come to concentrate wealth, power and culture at the expense of rural areas. Indeed, profiting from the Industrial revolution and the accumulation of wealth off financial interests, the 'bourgeoisie' expanded in towns contributing to a concentration of activities in the cities. In LEDCs the urban-rural divide is mostly the fruit of forced development and globalization which has marginalized agricultural regions though some countries still heavily rely on domestic agricultural resources for their economy.

Rural and Urban Populations in the United States, 1860–1920			Populations of Major Cities in the United States, 1860–1900			
Year	Rural	Urban	City	1860	1880	1900
1860	25,226,803	6,216,518	New York	1,174,800	1,912,000	3,437,000
1870	28,656,010	9,902,361	Philadelphia	565,500	847,000	1,294,000
1880	36,059,474	14,129,735	Boston	177,800	363,000	561,000
1890	40,873,501	22,106,265	Baltimore	212,400	332,000	509,000
1900	45,997,336	30,214,832	Cincinnati	161,000	255,000	326,000
1910	50,164,495	42,064,001	St. Louis	160,800	350,000	575,000
1920	51,768,255	54,253,282	Chicago	109,300	503,000	1,698,000

Source: Bureau of the Census

(a) (b)

### Which actors have been involved in the past and present?

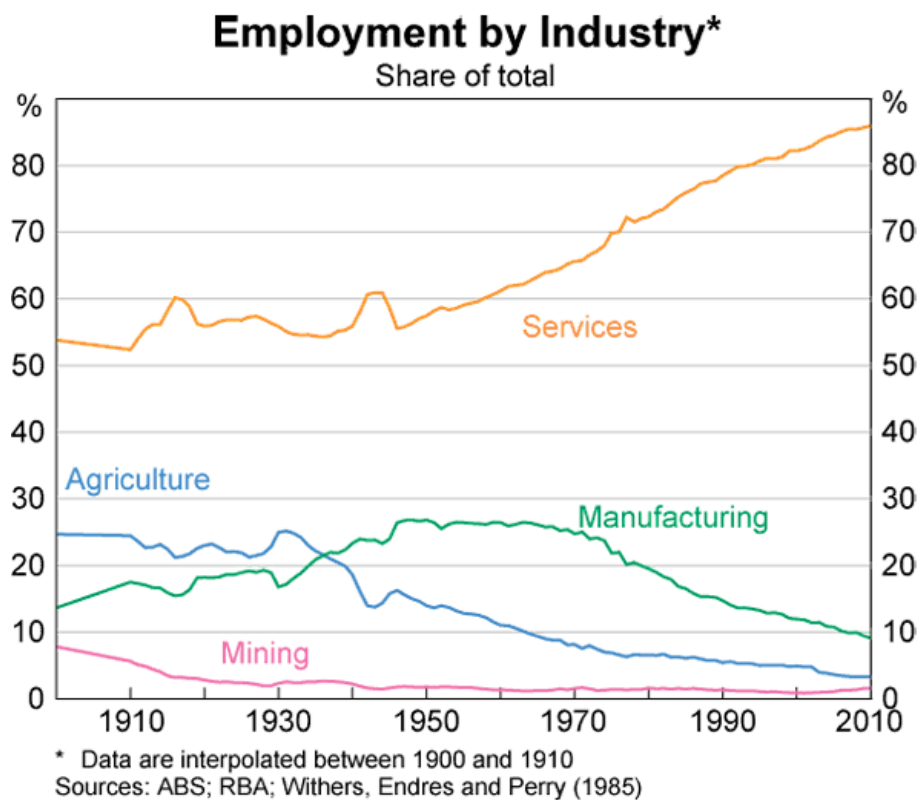
Urban-rural inequality has mostly been the fruit of societal and economic developments such as globalisation or the emergence of service economies which accentuates the centralization of powers in cities, widening the gap between urban and rural areas.

However, the main actor of these changes is the state which, through legislation and specific measures has the power to implement them. In the case of federal states, regional governments receive more means and power to organize economic development around the specific resources the region possesses. In the opposite case of a centralized state, there is less concern for rural development; for example, there is a discernible difference in the access to transport infrastructures or services in rural areas. This is the case with the controversial creation of a new "TGV" line between Milan and Lyon accentuating the "empty corridor" effect of isolation for rural communities.

In LEDCs where some States struggle to provide basic services to its population, charitable organizations such as UNICEF or the Red Cross have also considerably helped to tackle the inequality in living conditions between urban and rural areas.

**Has the problem been reduced or increased over time?**

However, rural areas that mostly lived from an agricultural economy suffered deeply from this phenomenon as the economy became industrialized, diminishing the role of the primary sector now employing fewer workers with the emergence of technological advances able to improve production. Yet urban areas thrived from the concentration of services, industries etc. as major cities such as Paris saw its population grow exponentially reaching 2 million in the 1890s. This can be linked with the important demographic expansions and rural exodus which took place throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the slow entropy of the manufacturing sector and the boom of services such as tourism and financial activities in the 1980s, economies now entirely depend on cities which concentrate these activities to boost the economy. The issue of the urban-rural divide has also been worsened by the centralization of powers to ( = the act of **removing authority** in a **system, company, country**, etc. from **local places** to one **central place** so that the **whole system**, etc. is under **central control** ).



Through annual reports from entities such as UN-Habitat or ECOSOC's target goals, the UN has perfected its research input regarding the issue of the Urban-rural divide, mostly regarding rural development and sustainable agriculture:

- Ever since the Agenda21 of the Rio convention in 1992, rural development is recognized as an important issue as the SARD (sustainable agriculture and rural development) is promoted.
- In the new Sustainable Development Goals set by the Agenda2030, target 2.a resolves around an *“Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure”*
- But the Millennium Goals Report which translated 15 years' worth of effort to fight inequality acknowledged that, “big gaps exist between the poorest and richest households, and between rural and urban areas” as one of the challenges where there is still progress to be made.



## The Urban-rural divide in an MEDC: USA



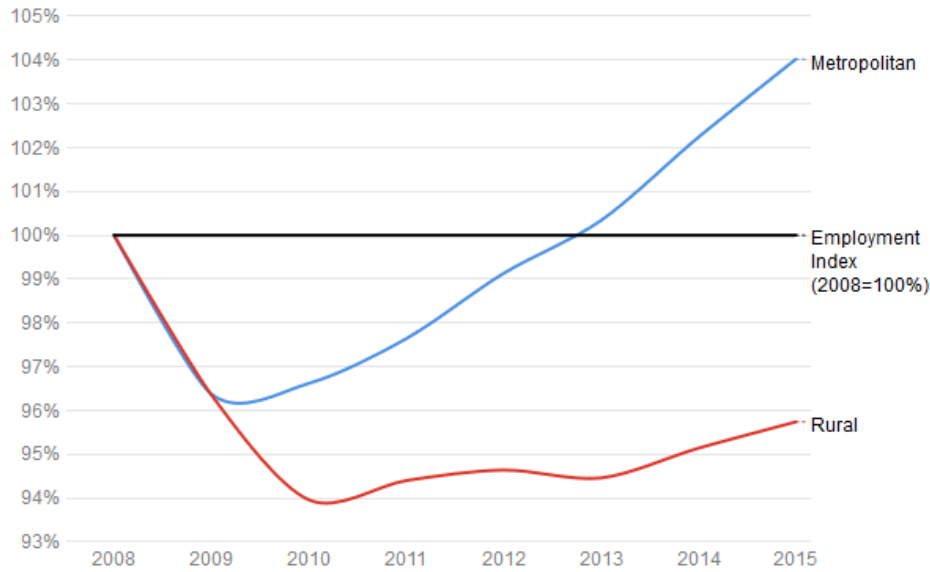
The 2016 American Presidential election confirmed the widening gap between urban and rural communities. Indeed, major US cities voted in huge majority for democratic candidate Hillary Clinton whereas most rural communities voted in favour of President-elect Donald Trump. This stark contrast between voting intentions forced academics and politicians alike to reflect on the reasons behind such polarized society. It is therefore important to understand which factors contributed to such a divide between rural and urban areas.

Unsurprisingly, statistics showed that poverty was more important in rural areas. Employment prospects are scarce in comparison to urban areas as rural communities still deal with the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis ; a third of the rural working poor are faced with extreme levels of financial insecurity. However, the link with the education rate of the population or industrial activity is not clear as recent research suggests that specific attention to the structure of "rural economies and communities" is what rural communities lack in comparison to major cities.



## Job growth in America

Since 2008, job growth in metropolitan areas has outpaced that in rural areas.



*The Conversation, CC-BY-ND*

Source: [Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0, 2008-2015 ACS. Get the data](#)

However, the link with the education rate of the population or industrial activity is not clear as recent research suggests that specific attention to structure of “rural economies and communities” is what rural communities lack in comparison to major cities.

What is clear is that American rural areas are faced with crumbling infrastructures and public services. In 2016 Flint Town in Michigan was placed in a State of emergency as local officials as lack of water treatment exposed 100,000 residents to dangerous lead concentration in their drinking water. Paradoxically, Flint was also the city where the cost of water per cubic meter was the most expensive in the United States.

Country	Dollars per cubic meter
Flint MI	\$3.84*
Germany	\$1.91
Denmark	\$1.64
Belgium	\$1.54
Netherlands	\$1.25
USA	\$0.51
Australia	\$0.50
South Africa	\$0.47
Canada	\$0.40

\* [http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2016/02/flints\\_water\\_rates\\_highest\\_in.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2016/02/flints_water_rates_highest_in.html)

The lack of investment in public infrastructures is a phenomenon which affects the whole of Michigan; the American Society of Civil Engineers established that 22% of major roads are in substandard condition, 1,300 bridges are structurally deficient, and they estimated that an investment in infrastructure of almost \$14 billion would be necessary over 20 years.

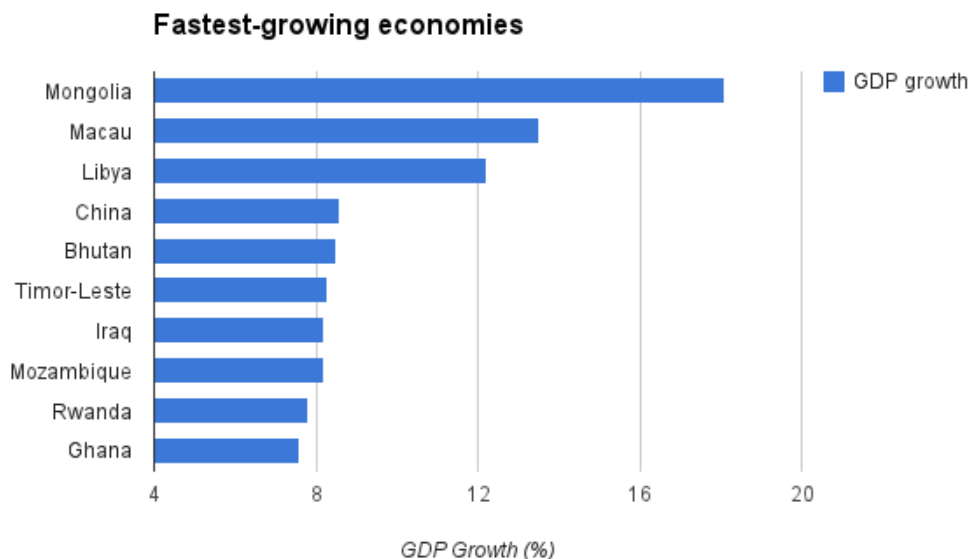
While developed country have more means to bridge the urban-rural divide, much still remains to be perfected in order to address the inequality between urban and rural communities. Measures such as an improvement of the coordination between Regional and National governments and increase in spending are required to enable local councils to help develop rural areas.



## The case of an LEDC: *Mongolia*



Mongolia is a developing country which is benefiting from a growing economy all the while improving living conditions and human development of its population. However, significant disparities are arising between urban and rural areas. This has led to an important rural exodus as Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital, has had to adapt to extreme immigration as more than a third of Mongolian population now lives in the city.



While Mongolia's economy depends essentially on its mining resources, urban areas benefit from the activity of the private and the informal sector. However rural areas which relied mostly on agriculture to sustain them are faced with sombre prospects as the closure of agricultural collectives and de-industrialization left them with little make do with. Globalization and the low price of livestock has also considerably affected Mongolian farmer's exporting abilities. As a result, agricultural output which used to be the backbone of the economy has been divided by 5 leading to a rise in poverty.

Though poverty is more important in Urban areas than in rural areas, as the cost of living and housing is higher, rural households which rely mostly on its livestock holdings struggle to receive consistent income from it as it is subject to uncontrollable influences like draught or deceases. Furthermore, rural residents lack access to services and technology which help foster economic productivity in urban areas.

In terms of healthcare, rural communities suffer greatly from unequal access to health services. Urban areas concentrate public and private health services ranging from diagnostic, treatment centers and medical specialist whilst rural areas receive less quality care or none. Indeed, as it is the case with many developed nations, Mongolia is faced with an unequal distribution of its qualified doctors which tend to work in urban areas. Lack of investment in healthcare facilities in rural areas also translate into poor quality hospitals which often lack basic supplies of medicine or electricity and running water.

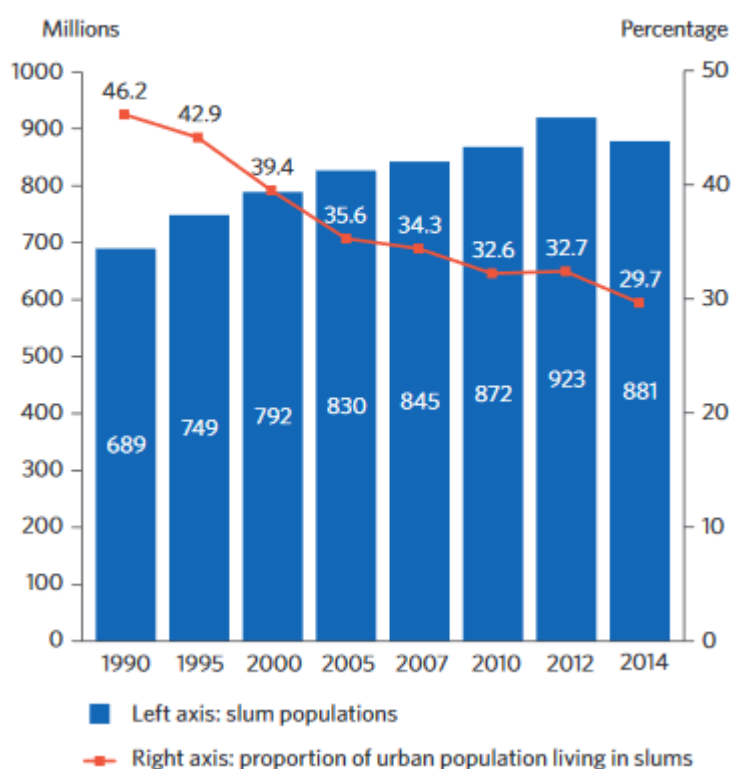
Though Mongolia benefits from a small economic growth which is essential to bridging the urban-rural divide, balanced redistribution of wealth is needed to ensure it benefits the poorer and translate in human development reforms in urban as well as rural areas.

## Discussion of the topic

Measures taken to address the urban-rural divide have been effective as poverty on the whole is receding, more and more rural communities have access to healthcare and other services though there is still an important digital divide: an estimated 450 million people living in rural areas still live out of reach of a mobile signal. However, the main factor in this issue remains the measures taken by the state to effectively tackle the gap.

Though much attention has been given to the gap between urban and rural areas, profound differences exist within urban areas. Indeed, the proportion of slum dwellers in cities continues to grow, creating important levels of poverty in cities. When disaggregating the data at the rural, urban, slum and non-slum levels, it becomes apparent that there are remarkable similarities between living conditions in rural areas and slums with regard to social indicators such as health and education.

**Urban population living in slums (millions) and proportion of urban population living in slums (percentage), developing regions, 1990–2014**



It is also essential to underline the considerable influence that urbanization exerts in the urban-rural divide. Less dense cities bring higher infrastructure costs, worsen mobility, and destroy agricultural land, damaging the only economic activity in rural areas.

Furthermore, environmental concerns are rising concerning pollution in urban areas, a danger from which rural communities are partly safe from. Indeed, cities have higher rates

of lung cancer and breathing issues caused by gas emissions. Urban areas also absorb significant climate risks and must be prepared to withstand the climatic extremes of global warming, which are currently predicted at 3 to 4 degrees Celsius

## Bloc positions

As the response to the urban-rural divide is largely influenced by the government at the head of each respective state, it is difficult to assert major differences in opinion regarding this issue.

Main points of interest In your country should be:

- The political and economic context as countries in a state of political turmoil or war will be less inclined to deal with societal issues than a peaceful country with a stable economy.
- The Ideology of the head of state: while some nations will be attached to the notion of a welfare state which should provide basic need for its population and therefore spending in infrastructure, other will rather prioritize economic interests as some centralized nations depend on their metropolis which accumulate wealth and power.

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# ECOSOC

## Introduction:

ECOSOC is a platform of debate concerning economic, social and environmental issues. It is one of the six main organs of the UN Charter signed On 26th June 1945 in San Francisco.

In the beginning, the UN was created to replace the League of Nations following WW2 and promote international cooperation. Today the UN is more than just an organisation, it is a real example of cooperation to help Nations, Humans, Lives all over the world.

ECOSOC is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Council has 54 members, elected for 3 years by the General Assembly and each July it holds a four-week session alternating between NY and Geneva.

“While the Security Council exists primarily for settling conflicts [...] the Economic and Social Council exists primarily to eliminate the causes of conflicts.” – Former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld

This year the Council is celebrating its 73rd anniversary, its first meeting was in London inaugurated by Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar of India.

On June 2019 the sessions have as the main theme: “The responsibility of effective, fair, humane and accountable criminal justice systems in preventing and countering crime motivated by intolerance or discrimination of any kind”

(If you are curious about any information based on the 2019 Sessions there is the link: [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/cmm/ECOSOC-Highlights\\_Subsiidiary-bodies\\_Management-Segment-July-23-24.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/cmm/ECOSOC-Highlights_Subsiidiary-bodies_Management-Segment-July-23-24.pdf) )

## **Topic: Improving living standards while protecting the climate.**

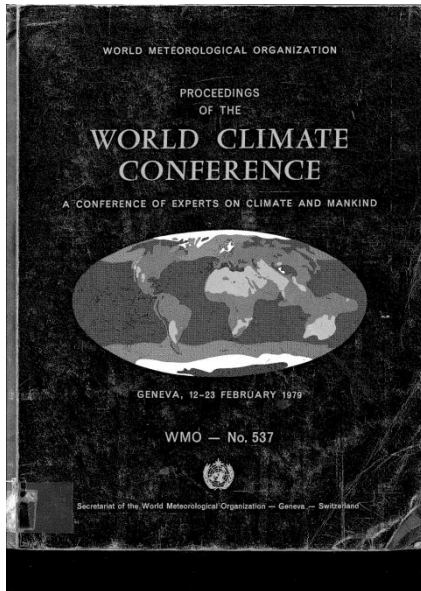
### *Introduction to the topic:*

**On August the 29th 2019 at 3 pm, we are exactly 7,726,726,235 and every second this number changes, people die and give birth...For ourselves and future generations, we have the responsibility to protect our planet, its biodiversity and environment.**

**Prior to today thoughts about our future were different from today, because chemistry, technology and countries started to develop themselves. It was the beginning of our planet’s deterioration, the Earth suffered from our progress.**

Unfortunately, nowadays damages cause to our planet is more visible and the main issue concerning everyone is climate change. We have the same task and goal: A sustainable future; to reach this goal we need to improve our living standards and protect the climate.

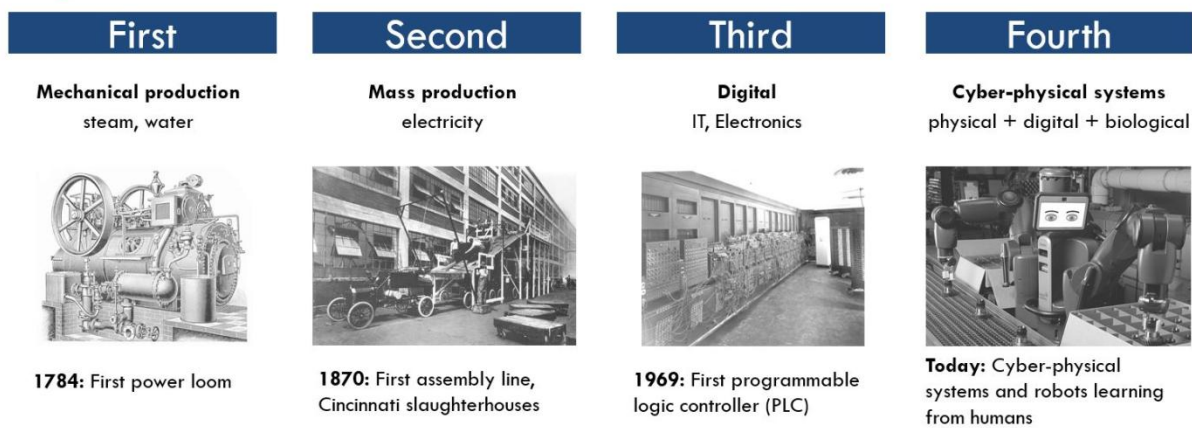
History of the topic:



-The First World Climate Conference took place in Geneva on 12 and 23 February 1979, it was essentially attended by scientists but global warming caught attention long before this conference.

Indeed, around 1800-1870 the First Industrial revolution increased greenhouse gas emission. At the time Mean Global temperature was 13.7-degree celsius.

**Figure 1: Industrial revolutions - innovation across industries**

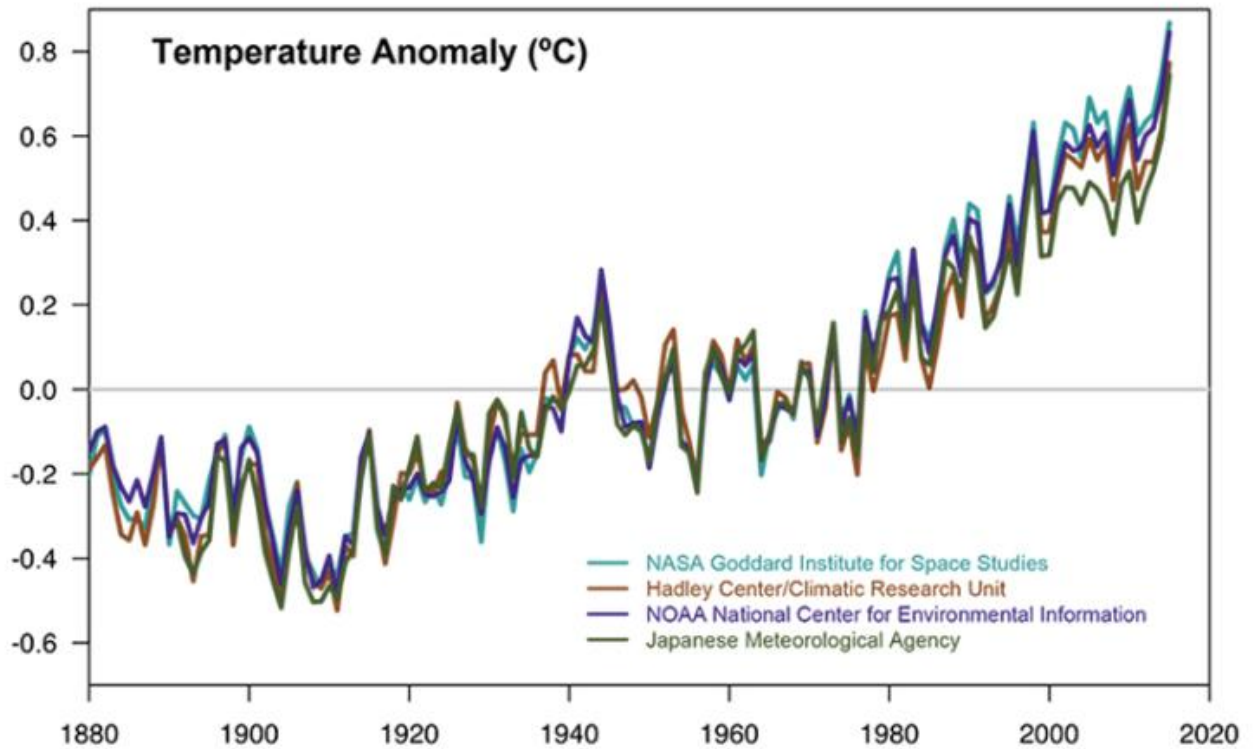


Source: Schwab, K. (2017) The Fourth Industrial Revolution

-The Second Industrial revolution deteriorated the situation with the invention of fertilizers and other chemicals.

In 1938 an engineer named Guy Stewart Callendar argues that CO2 greenhouse global is underway but no one took it seriously because everyone was recovering from War.





Temperature data from four international science institutions. All show rapid warming in the past few decades and that the last decade has been the warmest on record. Data sources: NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, NOAA National Climatic Data Center, Met Office Hadley Centre/Climatic Research Unit and the Japanese Meteorological Agency.

Title: Reconstructions of global mean surface temperature from four different international agencies.

-It is only in 1960 after that David Keeling detected an annual rise of the Co2 greenhouse and of the Global temperature, which was around 13.9 degrees Celcius, that scientists and governments from all around the world started to pay attention to global warming. Global warming caught the attention of the U.S. President's Science Advisory Committee. In 1965 they reported that "By the year 2000 the increase in atmospheric CO2 ... may be sufficient to produce measurable and perhaps marked changes in climate...".



-In 1970 the First Day of Earth was held, it marked the emergency to protect our planet. People started to believe that industries, governments and military armies were responsible for the pollution which lead to riots and attacks on authorities. Because of what was happening in Vietnam, a scandal was even created about the establishment of a massive cloud seeding program by the U.S military to exterminate communists. In the eyes of many around the world, this program modified the climate.



WORLD  
METEOROLOGICAL  
ORGANIZATION

-In 1971, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) organised the first world climate conference in collaboration with UNESCO(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organisation.), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), WHO (the World Health Organisation) and UNEP(United Nations Environment Programme). Following this conference, WMO established the World Climate Programme which has to help in understanding better the human impact on climate and how to resolve it.

-The discovery of an "ozone hole" in 1987 over Antarctica shocked officials and the public, showing that the problem was already urgent. An agreement named the Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention was signed by 20 nations to restrict emission of specific ozone-damaging chemicals.

-In 1988 the greenhouse emission mushroomed, the Toronto conference called again for strict limits. One of the first major leaders to call for action and react openly was Margaret Thatcher.

Lots of conferences followed such as The Second World Climate Conference(1990), The Rio de Janeiro Conference(1992), Kyoto Protocol(1997), Copenhagen Conference (2009), COP21 (2015), COP22(2016) etc...

They were all about limiting Co<sub>2</sub> greenhouse emission but unfortunately not all of them succeed.

**-Through years and even today countries and cities have been making significant efforts to reduce the amount of carbon emitted in the atmosphere but it is still insufficient. This is why we have to find efficient solutions and protect our dear planet without sacrificing but improving our living conditions.**

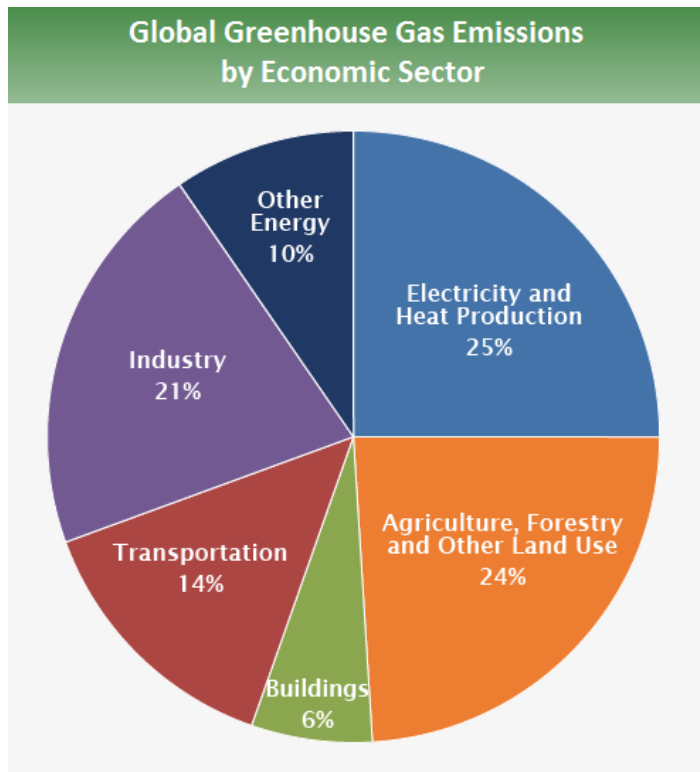
Discussion of the Topic:

As we can read in the History of the Climate Change, conferences took place and governments agreed on reducing the Carbon emissions but nothing solve Global Warming's issue.

In two centuries humans couldn't prevent Global Warming even if we knew since 1800 its main consequences.

**So why is it so difficult to reduce Co<sub>2</sub> emissions?**

-Firstly, almost everything essential around us contains Co<sub>2</sub> such as electricity(Energy), Meat(Food), fertilizers(Agriculture), plastic productions(commercial), Transportations. Even our breath contains Co<sub>2</sub>  
this is why reducing emissions isn't an easy task.



-This is a pie chart representing Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the world by Economic Sector. As we can see  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Global Greenhouse Gas emissions is from Electricity and Heat Production.

Every country has its own manner to produce Electricity or Heat, renewable energies exist for Electricity like wind power or solar energy.

Unfortunately, it cost a lot to maintain a wind turbine or a solar panel and to obtain as much energy as a traditional electric production.

-Agriculture, Forestry and other land use are responsible for 24 per cent Global Greenhouse gas emissions and as for Electricity Sustainable Agriculture exist but cost a lot to producers and consumers.

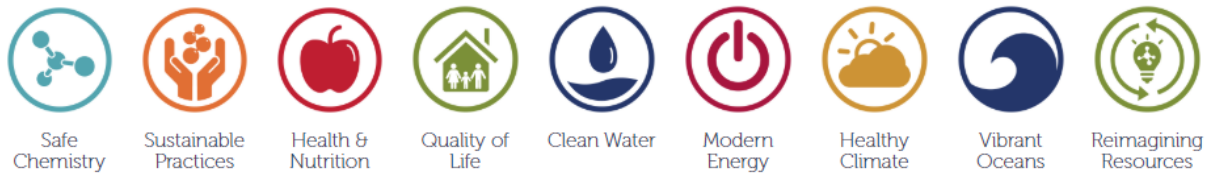
Other responsible have more or less the same issues, benefits are more significant compared to non-benefits for countries. Especially if a country can provide essential elements such as Electricity at a low price; or if a country depends on benefits from low price element.

-Fortunately, some organisations, industries and councils weren't and aren't discouraged by the cost of sustainable actions :

#### The example of the American Chemistry Council:

The Council was created in 1872, it is a group of industries fighting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They have 10 goals which are successful.

If we take the example of clean water: **“In 2017, 3D TRASAR™ cooling water technologies developed by Nalco, an Ecolab company, helped save 146.2 billion gallons of water, equivalent to the yearly drinking water needs of more than 505 million people.”**



Another example: Austin the greenest city in Texas:

After Earth Day in 2012, Austin a city in Texas decides to apply The Sustainable Action Agenda. The city dedicated more than 150 projects to find a balance between the needs of people, prosperity and planet.



-Since 2014, Austin is the Greenest City in Texas and top of the Greenest city in the USA. To protect the air, climate and its population, the city achieves project to reduce the electrical consumption in airports; Parks and Recreation use brush chipping and mulching of yard waste from landfills to promote organic material recycling; The City plants thousands of trees each year to ensure a healthy urban forest.





### Bloc Positions:

-While some cities and countries are slowly improving their living standards without damaging climate such as Norway/Oslo, Vancouver/Canada, Copenhagen/Danemark, Zurich/Switzerland... others such as Saudi Arabia , Algeria, Egypt, Ecuador depend on low price petrol or elements containing Co2.  
The biggest challenge in those countries is to find a balance and they can't do it alone if they depend on something essential to their economy.

### Questions a resolution must answer:

- How to find a balance between the needs of people, prosperity and planet?
- How to encourage cities and countries to apply Sustainable Actions?
- How to help countries depending on low price production responsible for greenhouse gas emissions?

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