



TYPE of reading:
TEXT No.:

SKIM-READING
6

You are going to read a magazine article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A-G the one which fits each gap (1-6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

A One city that has managed this well is Seoul, Korea. Between 1960 and 2000, Korea's population more than tripled. It also went from being one of the world's poorest countries to one of its richest. Not long ago many of its population lived in shanties. Now most are densely homed in apartment blocks. Uninspiring perhaps, but friendly and convenient, and offering all the amenities that a modern population needs.

B In 1800, London was one of three cities in the world with populations greater than one million. In 1900, this figure had grown to 16, and the majority of these were in Europe and the United States. Over the next hundred years, the number of 'million-cities' surged and there are now over 442 of them. In the early half of the century, new million cities predominantly arose in Asia and South America. Now more are appearing in Africa.

C On the periphery of this fetid, overcrowded city lived Ebenezer Howard, a stenographer who sired six children in a cramped rental house. His response to the conditions which surrounded him was to publish a slim book which set out his own vision of how people should live; a book which, fifty years later was laying the foundation of urban planning.

D This is how western cities grew. They were designed around the car, so that people could live in spacious surroundings and breathe fresh air. This now is seen somewhat as a historical downturn, as many US cities are trying to redensify the urban centres. According to Glaeser, the future city should be based around the elevator, not around the car.

E Cities can be seen as advantageous not only from an economic point of view, but from an environmental one as well. They mainly appear as concentrated piles of damage, but the alternative – widespread damage, is unthinkable. Cities require fewer resources to build roads, sewers and power lines. Apartments need less energy to heat. People drive less and higher populations make mass transit options more viable.

F Interestingly, something else is changing too. Expert opinion now states that urbanization is no longer being seen as bad news, but as an advantage. Cities are considered the best hope of lifting countries out of poverty. After all, according to Harvard economist Edward Glaeser, 'there is no such thing as rich rural country'.

G The first of these to be built was Letchworth, constructed in the early nineteen hundreds in the United Kingdom. It went on to influence future towns and cities including Canberra in Australia and Hellerau in Germany. Interestingly, its design ignored the new invention of the time, the motor car, meaning that everywhere was accessible on foot. These days, it can hardly be described as self-contained, as Howard originally conceived. The surrounding farmers sell their produce to national companies, and the majority of its citizens commute to London, but in essence, Howard's dream was realised.

Reading passage

1880s London was bursting with people. They lived a squalid existence, one or more families crammed into a single room. The place reeked. One sanitary inspector at the time reported finding a father, mother, three children and four pigs in one tenement. Elsewhere was a widow and a child who had been dead for thirteen days.(1)

His proposal was to draw people away from sordid metropolises to garden cities. These would be new, self-contained urban regions set in the countryside, where there was plenty of space. Citizens would live in houses with gardens and work in factories at the periphery. They would be fed from farms on the greenbelt, which would prevent the town from getting too large. When populations grew too large, a new city would be built.(2)

Yet Howard was wrong about the future of cities. The global trend is still for people to move into urban areas. In Latin America, the number of people living in cities is now 70



percent. Most cities around the world consist of about half a million people, but the number of cities with populations in excess of five million continues to grow. There are now 54 of these, mostly in Asia.(3)

Mumbai's slums and Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* are signs of vitality, he says. The cities are where the money is. In the modern cities, there are increased returns on being educated. Information is passed on more effectively from one person to another. Even the uneducated earn more, as capital spills over from the wealthy to the poor.(4)

The reality, though, echoes the conditions of Victorian Britain. Many city dwellers worldwide lack safe drinking water, proper sewage and garbage collection. Municipalities' response to urban growth is also the same: they attempt to stem or even reverse the trend. But it is a mistake to see urbanization as an evil as opposed to an inevitable part of development. The challenge is not how to stop urbanization, it is how to manage and govern the population as it arrives.(5)

The fear is that cities such as this will sprawl. Once people grow wealthier, they inevitably seek a better lifestyle: more space, a detached home, a garden, a car. This increases the size of the city. Howard's solution was to create a greenbelt, an area of land encircling the city which is never built on. The intention is that the greenbelt limits growth and prevents spread. In reality, however, it pushes people further out, and forces them to commute through the greenbelt, amplifying the amount of resources needed.(6)

Not that this is likely to happen. In China and India, for example, people are flooding to buy cars as soon as their incomes allow it. Whether people aspire to car ownership for status or convenience is immaterial. Cities will sprawl. What is important is that areas of urban expansion are planned well in advance; that land is reserved for transit corridors before it is too late. Growing cities need to be perceived as concentrations of human energy to be managed and tapped, not as a blight on society and growth.