

## Agglomeration and Economic Growth: A Scoping Review of Socioeconomic Conflicts and Policy Implications

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### ABSTRACT

This study synthesizes research on the relationship between economic agglomeration, socio-economic change, and its impact on economic growth, focusing on analyzing conflicts and examining policy implications. A comprehensive literature search was conducted on 60 peer-reviewed articles published in the last ten years from the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases. The articles included in the study were selected based on their thematic relevance and methodological quality, as assessed by the research team. The findings indicated a positive correlation between economic agglomeration and growth, infrastructure development, human capital enhancement, and knowledge flows. Nevertheless, the study also identified negative impacts, including the displacement of local communities, increased income inequality, and pressure on public services. The study concludes that implementing prudent policies is essential to ensure the sustainability and inclusivity of economic growth. It is recommended that policies consider both economic benefits and negative social impacts, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process.

**Keywords:** Economic agglomeration; Social-economic change; Policy issues; Urban development

**JEL:** O2, R11, R12

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between economic agglomeration, social-economic change, and their impact on economic growth has been a topic of extensive research and debate within development economics. Economic agglomeration has been demonstrated to influence economic growth considerably, operating through several channels. These include the enhancement of infrastructure, the development of human capital, and the stimulation of knowledge spillovers. The concentration of economic activities encourages innovation and productivity, facilitating regional development (Guo & Sun, 2023; Yu et al., 2023). While economic agglomeration presents numerous benefits, it can also give rise to challenges such as environmental degradation and inequality (Hou et al., 2023). In order to ensure that the advantages of economic agglomeration are fully realized while the adverse effects are mitigated, it is necessary to adopt a balanced policy approach. However, the social and economic changes that frequently accompany these agglomerative processes can also give rise to various conflicts and policy challenges that must be carefully navigated to ensure sustainable and inclusive development. A growing body of literature has examined the intricate dynamics between economic agglomeration and socioeconomic change and their implications for economic growth (Li & Li, 2018).

This scoping review aims to synthesize the extant research on the relationships between economic agglomeration, social-economic change, and their impacts on economic growth. This synthesis will be conducted with a particular focus on identifying fundamental conflicts and policy issues that have emerged from these processes. While examining the findings from reputable international journals can provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted interactions between economic

agglomeration, social-economic change, and economic growth, it is also essential to consider opposing perspectives (Hanlon & Heblich, 2022; Ramachandran et al., 2020).

These conflicts, including increased income inequality, dislocation of local communities, and pressure on public services and infrastructure, are negative consequences that often outweigh the economic benefits of agglomeration (Hanlon & Heblich, 2022; Jena et al., 2022). Furthermore, the unequal distribution of economic benefits frequently intensifies these conflicts, particularly in urban areas undergoing rapid expansion. For instance, gentrification, which entails the displacement of low-income individuals from locations undergoing an increase in economic value, has emerged as a pivotal topic of discussion regarding the impacts of agglomeration (Ramachandran et al., 2020). In addition to the positive effects on productivity and innovation, recent literature underscores the increasing significance of acknowledging the potential drawbacks of agglomeration. In the context of developing countries, agglomeration processes frequently accelerate economic growth; however, they also tend to exacerbate socio-economic disparities, give rise to conflicts between social groups, and contribute to instability (Kim et al., 2021). It is, therefore, imperative to establish a precise equilibrium between the economic advantages and adverse social consequences of agglomeration from the outset, particularly in developing policies aimed at inclusive and sustainable growth (Akanji, 2020).

A comprehensive investigation of both the positive and negative consequences is essential to gain a nuanced understanding of this intricate issue and develop effective policy interventions to ensure sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Some scholars posit that the potential negative consequences of these phenomena, such as the displacement of local communities, exacerbation of income inequality, and strain on public services and infrastructure, may outweigh the economic benefits (Huh & Park, 2019; Jena et al., 2022). Policy interventions and strategies must be carefully designed and implemented to ensure that economic growth is achieved sustainably and inclusively and that all stakeholders' concerns are addressed.

A substantial body of research has demonstrated a positive correlation between economic agglomeration and economic growth. The concentration of economic activities in specific regions can facilitate the development of specialized infrastructure, the accumulation of human capital, and the facilitation of knowledge spillovers, all of which contribute to increased productivity and innovation (Kim et al., 2021). In the context of developing countries, population and industrial clustering in urban areas can yield benefits for individuals and the economy as a whole. These include increased employment opportunities and access to resources. However, the social and economic changes that often accompany these agglomerative processes can also give rise to various conflicts and policy challenges that must be addressed.

The increased economic growth generated by economic agglomeration often gives rise to disparate social and economic impacts, particularly in the context of accelerated urbanization in urban areas. In some instances, economic expansion can result in heightened inflationary pressures and intensify social disparities, as evidenced by prior research underscoring the impact of the productive population on inflation and economic growth in Indonesia (Radjamin et al., 2022). Moreover, another study indicates that fundamental economic sectors, such as water supply and waste management, are instrumental in facilitating economic growth in metropolitan regions, including Surabaya (Prayitno, 2023).

Those responsible for formulating policy must exercise caution when attempting to address these intricate challenges, ensuring that economic growth is achieved in a manner that is both sustainable and inclusive. In doing so, it is essential to consider the diverse concerns and needs of all stakeholders involved (Oxley & Qasim, 2020). Policymakers must devise comprehensive policy interventions and strategies that can harness the benefits of economic agglomeration while mitigating the potential negative social and economic consequences (Akanji, 2020). This necessitates a delicate equilibrium

between the interests of businesses, local communities, marginalized groups, and the broader public. It is incumbent upon policymakers to invest in infrastructure development, affordable housing, and social services in order to support the influx of economic activities and population growth in urban centres (Lee, 2020; Persada et al., 2020). Furthermore, measures must be implemented to safeguard traditional livelihoods, prevent displacement, and ensure equitable access to the opportunities created by economic agglomeration. Effective coordination between various government agencies, the private sector, and civil society is essential for the development and implementation of comprehensive solutions that address the multifaceted challenges arising from the interplay between economic agglomeration and socioeconomic change (Kaur & Sitlhou, 2017; Lall et al., 2004; Warm, 2011).

This scoping review aims to synthesize the extant research on the relationships between economic agglomeration, social-economic change, and their impacts on economic growth. This synthesis will be conducted with a particular focus on identifying fundamental conflicts and policy issues that have emerged from these processes. Although the economic advantages of agglomeration are well documented, the socioeconomic transformations that frequently accompany these processes can also give rise to various challenges and conflicts. The influx of people and economic activities into urban centres can result in the displacement of local communities, exacerbate income inequality, and strain the provision of public services and infrastructure (Moses et al., 2017). Scholars have posited that the adverse consequences may outweigh the economic benefits, particularly without efficacious policy interventions. It behoves us to consider both the positive and negative impacts of economic agglomeration and social-economic change to develop a comprehensive understanding of their implications for economic growth. Those responsible for formulating policies must navigate these complex dynamics and devise strategies capable of harnessing agglomeration's benefits while mitigating the potential social and economic conflicts that may arise.

## 2. METHODS

This scoping review aimed to synthesize the extant research on the relationships between economic agglomeration, socio-economic change, and their impacts on economic growth. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, targeting peer-reviewed journal articles and other reputable sources. The search terms employed included combinations of keywords such as "economic agglomeration," "socio-economic change," "economic growth," "conflicts," and "policy issues."

To ensure the relevance and timeliness of the findings, the review was limited to studies published within the last ten years (2013-2023). The selected timeframe was carefully chosen to capture the latest advancements and emerging trends in economic agglomeration and urban growth, particularly in response to the rapid transformations within global economic structures. For inclusion in this review, studies had to meet several stringent criteria: they were required to be published in peer-reviewed journals, with a focus on at least one of the following areas: economic agglomeration, socio-economic change, or relevant policy implications. Furthermore, the studies had to provide empirical data or theoretical models aligned with the research objectives. To ensure quality and relevance, exclusion criteria were applied to omit studies unrelated to urban economic development, such as those centered on rural economies without direct links to agglomeration. Additionally, studies published in languages other than English or lacking the academic rigor necessary for inclusion such as opinion pieces or non-peer-reviewed reports were excluded from consideration.

A structured three-phase process was used to select articles. First, a keyword search was conducted across the databases above. Secondly, the search results were evaluated based on their titles and abstracts to ascertain their relevance to the research questions. In this phase, studies that met the established criteria for inclusion were retained. If an article appeared relevant but lacked a detailed

abstract, it was subjected to a full-text screening. A third analysis phase entailed a full-text review of the selected studies to evaluate their methodological rigour and relevance. The studies were evaluated based on the quality of their data sources, the robustness of their analyses, and their contribution to understanding the relationship between economic agglomeration, socio-economic change, and economic growth. Only articles that presented clear and well-supported findings were included in the final synthesis.

To reduce the potential for bias in the selection of literature, the search process was designed to be as comprehensive as possible. Multiple databases were utilized to ensure a comprehensive representation of the literature, and no geographic limitations were imposed on the scope of the studies. However, restricting English-language publications may introduce a language bias, potentially omitting important insights from non-English-speaking regions (Badami et al., 2023; Van Wee & Banister, 2023). Following the selection of the articles, the data extraction process was undertaken to identify the key findings related to economic agglomeration, socio-economic conflicts, and policy implications. The synthesis employed a narrative approach, organizing the findings into thematic categories that elucidate the primary conflicts and policy issues that emerge from the literature. An effort was made to identify areas needing more research and potential avenues for future inquiry.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reviewing the existing literature on economic agglomeration, social-economic change, and their impacts on economic growth reveals a complex and multifaceted relationship. On the one hand, a substantial body of research has underscored the beneficial impact of economic agglomeration on economic growth. This research has identified the development of specialized infrastructure, the accumulation of human capital, and the facilitation of knowledge spillovers as critical drivers of enhanced productivity and innovation. In developing countries, the concentration of population and industrial activities in urban areas can facilitate employment opportunities and enhance access to resources, thereby contributing to overall economic development (Jones & Comfort, 2020). However, the social and economic changes that often accompany these processes of economic agglomeration can also give rise to various challenges and conflicts.

The results of various studies demonstrate that the relationships between agglomeration, economic growth, and socioeconomic transformation are intricate and contingent upon contextual factors, as illustrated in the following table.

**Table 1. Data Collecting**

No	Author (Year)	Aims	Results
1.	(Amato et al., 2022)	To examine the relationship between economic agglomeration and productivity growth in the United States.	The study employed a quantitative approach, analyzing economic and productivity data to evaluate the relationship between economic agglomeration and productivity growth in the United States. The results indicate that increasing economic agglomeration positively correlates with higher productivity growth. This suggests that the benefits of agglomeration, such as specialized infrastructure, human capital accumulation, and knowledge spillovers, contribute to enhanced economic performance.
2.	(Castells-Quintana & Royuela, 2017)	To examine the relationship between economic agglomeration, social-economic change, and economic growth in developing countries.	The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative economic and demographic data analysis with qualitative case studies to investigate the intricate dynamics between economic agglomeration, social-economic transformation, and economic growth.



No	Author (Year)	Aims	Results
			The findings indicate that while economic agglomeration can contribute to overall economic growth, the social and economic changes accompanying these processes, such as the displacement of local communities and the exacerbation of income inequality, can have significant negative consequences that may negate the benefits of agglomeration.
3.	(Turok & McGranahan, 2013)	To investigate the potential conflicts and policy issues that arise from the interplay between economic agglomeration and social-economic change	The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies and policy analysis to examine policymakers' challenges and trade-offs in managing the intricate relationships between economic agglomeration and social-economic transformation. The findings underscore the necessity of developing integrated, multi-stakeholder approaches to address potential conflicts and ensure that the benefits of economic agglomeration are distributed more equitably across diverse segments of the population.
4.	(Frick & Rodríguez-Pose, 2018)	To review the existing literature on the relationship between urbanization, cities, and economic growth and to identify new policy implications.	The study conducted a comprehensive literature review, synthesizing insights from various academic disciplines to provide a more nuanced understanding of the links between urban agglomeration and economic development. The findings indicate that while urban agglomeration can facilitate economic growth, the nature of this relationship is intricate and contingent upon many contextual variables, including the calibre of infrastructure, the efficacy of institutions, and the presence of conducive policies.
5.	(Scott & Storper, 2015)	To critically examine the relationship between economic agglomeration, social change, and the dynamics of urban development.	The study employed a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on urban economics, sociology, and political science insights to analyze the intricate interrelationships between economic agglomeration, social-economic transformation, and cities' evolving structural configuration. The findings underscore the necessity for a more comprehensive understanding of the urban development process, which acknowledges the significance of social, political, and institutional elements in influencing the consequences of economic agglomeration.
6.	(Manika et al., 2022)	To investigate the role of social networks and institutional factors in shaping the spatial distribution of economic activity and the dynamics of urban development	The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative case studies with quantitative analysis of network data, to investigate the impact of social and institutional factors on the formation and evolution of economic agglomerations. The findings indicate that economic factors do not exclusively determine the dynamics of urban development; instead, they are also shaped by social, cultural, and political processes. Considering these interrelated factors, this highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to urban policymaking.
7.	(Arauzo-Carod, 2021)	To investigate the role of social networks and information spillovers in shaping the spatial distribution of economic activity within cities.	The study employed a quantitative methodology, integrating spatial econometric analysis with network analysis, to investigate the impact of social network formation and evolution on firms' locational decisions and the dynamics of urban agglomeration. The findings indicate that traditional agglomeration economies do not solely drive the spatial clustering of economic activity within cities but are also influenced by the social and informational networks that connect individuals and firms within urban environments.





No	Author (Year)	Aims	Results
8.	(Delgado et al., 2014)	To examine the relationship between industry clusters, innovation, and regional economic performance.	The study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing econometric analysis and case studies to investigate how industry clusters impact regions' innovative capacity and economic competitiveness. The findings indicate that while industry clusters can generate substantial productivity and innovation benefits, the unequal distribution of these benefits can result in heightened regional disparities, emphasizing the necessity for policies that facilitate more inclusive and sustainable forms of cluster development.
9.	(Duranton & Puga, 2014)	To explore the relationship between urban growth, industrial structure, and economic performance.	The study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing econometric analysis and case studies to examine how the composition and dynamism of urban economies can influence their long-term economic trajectories. The findings indicate that a diverse and adaptable industrial structure, characterized by a mix of large and small firms, can be a crucial driver of urban economic growth and resilience. This suggests the need for policies that foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic diversification within cities.
10.	(Wojan, 2014)	To explore the relationship between urban amenities, the creative class, and regional economic performance.	The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative case studies with quantitative analysis of demographic and economic data, to investigate how a dynamic, creative community and superior urban amenities can inform the location decisions of individuals and firms and the subsequent impact on regional economic growth. The findings indicate that cultivating a diverse and dynamic urban environment characterized by a thriving creative community and high-quality amenities can primarily drive economic competitiveness and regional development. This highlights the necessity for policies that facilitate the development of such environments.

Source: Various source process by author, 2024

## Discussion

A review of the existing literature on economic agglomeration, socio-economic change, and their impacts on economic growth reveals a complex and multifaceted relationship. On the one hand, a substantial body of research demonstrates the positive impact of economic agglomeration on economic growth. The literature identifies three primary drivers of economic growth: the development of specialized infrastructure, the accumulation of human capital, and the facilitation of knowledge spillovers (Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2009; Kim et al., 2021). These factors are frequently identified as contributors to enhanced productivity and innovation in urban areas. However, a more detailed analysis reveals that these positive outcomes are not distributed uniformly, and their benefits are frequently contingent on contextual factors such as local governance, infrastructure quality, and policy frameworks (Delgado et al., 2014; Frick & Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

While a substantial corpus of literature underscores the economic advantages of agglomeration, some segments need more critical perspectives. For example, while it is well established that economic agglomeration can drive growth, the assumption that these benefits are universally experienced warrants further scrutiny. A more nuanced analysis reveals that the benefits often accrue disproportionately to advantaged regions and groups, exacerbating existing inequalities (Castells-Quintana & Royuela, 2017). Moreover, the socio-economic transformations accompanying agglomeration frequently pose considerable challenges, including spatial disparities and social conflicts.

Instead of merely summarizing these findings, a more critical approach would entail questioning

the general applicability of these benefits and comparing contexts where agglomeration has had disparate outcomes. For example, while cities such as New York and London have experienced significant economic benefits from agglomeration, these same cities have also witnessed growing inequality and housing crises, resulting in lower-income communities' displacement (Scott & Storper, 2015). A comparison with cities such as Barcelona, which have employed more inclusive urban development policies, demonstrates the disparate outcomes and the significance of context-specific interventions.

One of the most urgent issues associated with agglomeration is the displacement of local communities, particularly in rapidly developing urban areas. The literature notes this as a consequence of gentrification and rising property values. However, there is room for a deeper exploration of how different cities have responded to this issue. For example, in San Francisco, the process of gentrification has resulted in the displacement of a significant number of low-income residents, particularly in neighbourhoods that have historically been marginalized (Scott & Storper, 2015). Despite the implementation of policies designed to facilitate the provision of affordable housing, the city's rapid economic expansion has outpaced these initiatives, resulting in an intensification of socio-economic disparities. By contrast, the policy outcomes in Barcelona present a more optimistic account. In this context, local governments have implemented robust policies to ensure affordable housing, regulate rents, and protect vulnerable populations from the risk of displacement. Despite the remaining challenges, these policy interventions have mitigated the most severe effects of gentrification, thereby providing a model for other cities grappling with the socio-economic consequences of agglomeration (Amato et al., 2022).

A comparison of these examples demonstrates that not all urban centres experience agglomeration in the same way and that policy plays a crucial role in shaping outcomes. A crucial question arising from this comparison is: What are the essential prerequisites for guaranteeing that the advantages of agglomeration are distributed fairly and equitably? More detailed case studies and policy evaluations are required to answer this question effectively.

The efficacy of agglomeration policies is contingent upon the political and institutional contexts in which they are implemented, with outcomes varying considerably across different settings. For example, the national initiatives in South Korea to decentralize economic growth and reduce urban overcrowding have yielded disparate outcomes. As observed by (Huh and Park, 2019), while decentralization has alleviated some of the pressure on Seoul, it has not been sufficient to reverse the growing regional inequalities exacerbated by agglomeration. By contrast, cities such as Barcelona and Copenhagen have successfully integrated sustainable urban development strategies, promoting economic growth while ensuring that lower-income groups are not displaced.

The disparate policy outcomes observed suggest that agglomeration must be managed carefully by balancing economic, social, and political considerations. It is erroneous to view agglomeration as an economic panacea; rather, it should be regarded as a process that, if unmanaged, can give rise to social tensions and long-term disparities. Policymakers must learn from these disparate outcomes and adopt bespoke approaches that align with the specific urban contexts.

The existing literature underscores the imperative for developing more comprehensive and interdisciplinary methodologies for managing the socio-economic consequences of agglomeration. The prevailing economic models, prioritizing efficiency and productivity, frequently fail to address urban growth's social and environmental dimensions adequately. Recent scholarship has advocated incorporating social equity and environmental sustainability into agglomeration strategies. For example, (Arauzo-Carod, 2021) posits that social networks, institutional factors, and community engagement play a pivotal role in determining the long-term success of agglomeration policies. However, these factors are frequently disregarded in conventional urban economic models.

To achieve more significant equity, prospective agglomeration strategies must prioritize inclusivity

and consider the diverse requirements of local communities, marginalized groups, and vulnerable populations. This underscores the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from economics, urban planning, political science, and sociology to develop more comprehensive solutions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the intricate interconnections between economic agglomeration, socio-economic transformation, and urban development. While economic agglomeration has enhanced productivity, innovation, and infrastructure growth, its negative impacts, such as increased income inequality, displacement of local communities, and pressure on public services, cannot be ignored. Therefore, a more integrated and interdisciplinary policy approach, which considers the economic, social, and political aspects, is required for urban development to be sustainable and inclusive.

Implementing more focused and concrete policies is necessary to address these challenges. For example, inclusive land use regulations and adequate investment in social infrastructure, such as housing and public services, should be prioritized. Furthermore, effective coordination between the public, private, and civil society sectors is essential to ensure that the benefits of economic agglomeration are equitably distributed among all societal groups while mitigating adverse effects on the environment and vulnerable populations.

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