

Problems and Solutions

In some parts of the world traditional festivals and celebrations have disappeared or are disappearing.

What problems is this causing?

What measures could be taken to counter this situation?

Around the world, many traditional festivals these days are at risk of becoming outdated and irrelevant. In my opinion, this contributes to issues concerning cultural disintegration and should be countered by citizens in concert with governments.

The main issues resulting from abandoning traditional festivals concern culture. More commercial holidays such as Black Friday and Christmas are gaining in popularity which naturally threatens smaller cultural groups and their festivals. For example, in China there are numerous ethnic groups living in remote areas that struggle to preserve their traditions over time as locals learn more about the outside world and leave their hometowns. As these groups disperse further both physically and virtually it will be a challenge for old traditions to persist and the results may impact the stories they hand down through generations, their language, traditional dishes and other aspects of culture.

The optimal remedies for the weakening of traditional cultures are for governments and individuals to actively encourage traditional festivals. Governments can make the greatest difference. For instance, states could fund organizations that aim to promote traditional festivals by staging local events and reaching out to older members of the community. Younger people could likewise attempt to engage more with their roots and connect with the sources of their culture. This occurs to some extent already when traditional festivals are advertised on social media to bring in a wider audience and greater attention.

In conclusion, the loss of traditional festivals is a boon to globalization and injures the cultural identity of various groups. This development must be confronted by locals of their own individual initiative and encouraged by governments.

Standards of Living

A rise in the standard of living in a country often only seems to benefit cities rather than rural areas.

What problems can this cause?

How might these problems be reduced?

When standards of living increase, it is primarily urban residents, not those in the countryside, who benefit. In my opinion, this can lead to opposite problems related to population density and is best mitigated by governmental action.

Inequality in terms of standard of living engenders population problems for cities and rural regions. Cities have become over-populated in the last century as they offer a wider range of educational, occupational, and recreational options. Elevated population density means that although residents can enjoy a higher standard of living generally, they must also overcome concomitant effects from overcrowding such as more traffic, less sanitary conditions, and higher crime rates. The inverse problem exists outside cities as residents leave and locals struggle to earn a living in sparsely populated towns and villages.

These related problems can best be countered by the authorities. There are various initiatives that could be implemented. One real-world example of this would be in Japan where the government in recent years has addressed dwindling population numbers in the countryside by auctioning off country homes cheaply. Prospective home-owners are often able to buy houses nearly for free if they agree to live and work in a town with few residents. Another possible measure would be for governments to invest more in urban infrastructure. Since migrations to cities are likely inevitable, this is a more pragmatic tactic.

In conclusion, the inverse issues created for rural and urban areas by rising standards of living can be effectively controlled if governments intervene. This issue will only become more pressing as the global middle class continues to grow.

Neighbors in Large Cities

Today, many people do not know their neighbors in large cities.

What problems does this cause?

What can be done about this?

It is increasingly common in large urban areas for neighbors to interact less. In my opinion, this results in a declining sense of community and the solutions must be individually motivated.

In most cities today, the lack of connection between neighbors has caused less culturally unique neighborhoods. An illustrative counter-example to this would be famous neighborhoods such as Venice Beach in Los Angeles and Greenwich Village in New York City. In the past, individuals living in these areas shared similar values and that led to a flourishing of a unique culture. One result of such a sense of community was the “Beat Poets” of Greenwich. Related to this is the fading distinctiveness of communities that have value for locals and tourists alike. An individual living in a district in a major metropolis today feels little sentiment for its streets, buildings and other inhabitants and therefore derives nearly nothing in the way of a singular shared identity.

Remedies for the problems detailed above involve individual initiative. Governments attempting to contrive a sense of community will likely only provoke backlash. Instead, individuals could choose to live in parts of a city with a heritage that suits them and not join mass movements toward gentrification. A standout example of this would be expatriate enclaves in developing nations. These communities are able to preserve some of their cultural traditions and are entirely the result of individuals choosing to live together with those who represent their values and interests. This could be replicated on a larger scale if city residents choose their homes more thoughtfully and are more respectful of the traditions of any given community.

In conclusion, the problems stemming from less involvement between neighbors affect the community at large and should be dealt with by those most impacted by the ramifications. In this way, some cultural integrity can be preserved in a globalized world.

Competition between Older and Younger People

Nowadays more and more older people who need employment have to compete with younger people for the same jobs.

What problems does this cause?

What are the solutions?

In many workplaces, there is a natural conflict between younger and older employees. In my opinion, this can impact staff morale in a number of ways and the best solutions involve competent management and hiring practices.

The ramifications of an age-diversified workplace relate to the environment. When new employees join, there is often resentment from older workers who feel threatened or must compensate for their new colleagues' inexperience. If the younger workers are arrogant, this conflict will grow into animosity and result in a toxic workplace culture. Similarly, if they are unable to quickly adapt to the company, older workers will likely become frustrated. Conversely, there is also the possibility, particularly if the work involves emerging technologies, that the more experienced workers will lag behind and younger workers will feel hampered. This can also lead to an unhealthy workplace atmosphere.

The solutions for the problems detailed above relate to management and hiring. A company that selects a qualified young employee with a positive mindset does not have to fear negative effects on morale. After hiring, management also plays a key role in dissolving tensions and preventing their initial occurrences. For example, managers who know the strengths and weaknesses of their employees well will not team up workers with contrary personalities. Additionally, by ensuring older employees stay current with new technology, managers will avoid the potential conflict arising from changes in their field. Finally, the manager must also take steps to guarantee the workplace has strong cohesion by valuing contributions from all employees, setting a relaxed atmosphere, being transparent, and ensuring there are no double standards due to age.

In conclusion, the issues stemming from a variety of ages working together concern the environment and the solutions involve strong management. In this way, these seemingly inevitable conflicts can be mitigated.

Taking Care of Parents

Fewer and fewer children are willing to look after their parents as they get older these days.

Do the advantages of this trend outweigh the disadvantages?

Many people today believe that since children are less and less likely to look after their parents, this has a negative impact on society. In my opinion, though there are decided social drawbacks, the advantages for both the elderly and younger people are greater.

Those who decry the perceived selfishness of children these days point out the vulnerability of the elderly. Firstly, many elderly people suffer from chronic, degenerative conditions such as declining eyesight, arthritis, dementia, and more serious diseases such as cancer. They therefore rely on the support of those around them and may not still have a spouse capable of looking after them. Secondly, those on fixed incomes might need financial assistance. In many countries, the social welfare systems are weak and elderly people who have not been able to save for retirement can find themselves living in destitute conditions or relying on soup kitchens and, in extreme cases, driven to homelessness.

However, the cases above are exceptions and it is more important for both parents and children to be independent. Many children end up in a situation where they must neglect their own plans and family in order to spend time and pay exorbitant medical bills for the elderly. This has an impact disproportionate with its benefits and younger people would be better off prioritising their own lives. Moreover, the elderly themselves may come to think of themselves as burdens. If they are constantly asking for help and impairing the progress of their children, then they have not done an adequate job as a parent to begin with. A greater degree of self-reliance will preserve their dignity and allow their children to prosper.

In conclusion, despite the necessity of aid from children in specific instances, most families benefit valuing independence. Therefore, looking after ones parents ought to be a last resort option.

Problems with Purchasing Cars (Real Test)

More and more people in developing countries are purchasing cars for the first time. What problems does this cause? What do you think are the possible solutions?

It is a pressing problem that increased automobile purchases in developing countries is leading to a host of problems that governments will have to deal with in the future. I believe that the biggest problems centre around traffic and governments can impose higher taxes and support public transport to minimise the impact.

The rise of the automobile as a popular means of travel in developing countries inevitably leads to worsening road conditions. This is because developing nations often have narrower roads and fewer lanes. Once the growing middle class in previously impoverished countries begins to replace buses, motorbikes, and bicycles with cars, there is often a concurrent rise in the number of gridlocked roads. For example, research from The Economist linked a 40% rise in traffic jams to a 15% rise in automobile purchases in 2017 in Vietnam.

To fully address this problem, there are two potential fixes that governments can apply. Firstly, governments should enact higher taxes on all automobile purchases to deter buyers. This has had a massive impact in cities like Singapore where purchasing a car is prohibitively expensive for most residents. Another solution would be to invest further in public awareness campaigns of alternative modes of travel. A standout example of this would be in Vietnam, where these campaigns coupled with reduced fares to make busing more affordable, have cut down drastically on the number of vehicles on the road.

In conclusion, traffic problems caused by cars are a serious issue that governments must work hard to combat. If efforts are made to reduce automobiles on roads in favor of more efficient transport they will see their initial investment returned many times over in improved, sustained economic growth.

Work-Life Balance (by Dave)

Many people try to balance work and other parts of their life. However, this is very difficult to do. What are the problems associated with this? What is the best way to achieve a better balance?

People today are increasingly concerned with individual happiness and work-life balance. The main problem for most people is that work takes up too much time and causes mental health issues and the best way to achieve this balance is to work more efficiently.

The primary issues associated with work-life balance are the amount of time people must spend working and how this impacts their mental health. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the job market around the world has become increasingly competitive. This means that old workers may get pushed out of their jobs by younger graduates willing to work for less and that new graduates have to put in enormous extra hours to catch up. The end result is more work, which eats away at a person's private life. Once your free time becomes restricted there are a variety of related mental health problems that can appear. For example, someone who is overworked can suffer from excessive stress, some forms of depression, and obesity because of the lack of time available to exercise. That is why there has been a sharp rise in the last decade in these problems.

The best way for people to combat being overworked and get more time for their personal life is to work more efficiently. In an ideal world, there would be ways to alleviate the burden that put less stress on individuals but making the most of your time is a more pragmatic solution. For example, smartphones allow people to get a lot of work done in what were previously wasted hours in the past. You can send emails, make phone calls, and use productivity applications when waiting for the bus, train, or standing in line. People will have to make the choice not to scroll through Facebook or read the news but that is a small sacrifice to have some extra time at the end of the day to do their hobbies or spend time with a loved one.

In conclusion, the problems associated with poor work-life balance are especially apparent because of the current economic climate and the best solution is to find ways to maximise efficiency. If more people changed their daily habits related to social media and using the internet, then they might be able to find more worthwhile passions and not feel as though their life is passing them by.

Cities

Living in large cities today poses many problems for people.

What are these problems? Should governments encourage more people to live in smaller towns?

More and more people live in cities today than at any point in the past and this trend will likely continue in the future. This has resulted in many problems including extreme overcrowding and governments should take measures to make living outside cities more attractive.

There are a wide range of drawbacks associated with the rise of modern cities but one of the most obvious issues is related to population density. The large number of people crammed into a relatively small area has caused expensive housing, increased traffic and severe pollution. For example, apartment prices in mega-cities like Tokyo and New York have soared to the point where only the wealthiest inhabitants can afford decent living standards. Regardless of financial status, all city dwellers have to deal with more and more traffic jams as the population increases while the area of cities remains fixed. Finally, all these people living and travelling in one place puts a tremendous strain on the environment and some cities, like Beijing in China, have become dangerously polluted.

In my opinion, governments have a duty to encourage citizens to move to more rural areas. If cities continue to expand unabated then the above problems will only get worse. We might one day find ourselves living in densely packed, heavily polluted cities that resemble scenes from a dystopian science fiction film. In order to prevent this from happening, the government can give tax breaks to companies that choose to locate offices and production facilities outside the city. This will provide more jobs for people who are willing to live in the countryside.

In conclusion, the concerns related to overcrowding in cities can and should be somewhat countered by governments incentivizing living in rural areas. If this is done then we may still face problems related to cities in the future, but at least they will not be as serious.