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An Urban World

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- A dominant phenomenon affecting settlement patterns is urbanization.
- After 2007, the majority of the global population now lives in urban centres rather than rural areas.
- Comparing the population of urban centres is difficult since countries define urban centres differently (particularly in terms of varying population thresholds).
- Urban centres have very specific ways of developing, serve various social and economic functions, and are proximate to fairly specific phenomena.
- Megacities are those cities with populations greater than 10 million people.
- Between rural and urban areas are transition zones that host numerous types of populations and activities.
- Human geographers have also found that ways of life differ between rural and urban settings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- define and differentiate between urban and rural areas;
- explain how urban centres are defined and located, and the factors and processes involved in urbanization;
- discuss the differences between urban and rural settlement patterns and how these relate to economic and political structures and patterns, as well as between various ways of life;
- describe the various theories that explain urban location, growth, and the relationships between cities; and
- explain the hierarchical nature of world (global) cities.

KEY TERMS

Acropolis The fortified religious centre of cities in ancient Greece; the literal translation is “highest point in the city.” (p. 266)

Agora The centre of ancient Greek civic life; the place where public meetings, trials of justice, social interaction, and commercial exchange took place. (p. 266)

Agricultural surplus Agricultural production that exceeds the sustenance needs of the producer and is sold to or exchanged with others. (p. 263)

Business services Services that are provided primarily for other businesses, including financial, administrative, and professional activities such as accounting, advertising, banking, consulting, insurance, law, and marketing. (p. 277)

Central place An urban centre that provides goods and services for the surrounding population; may take the form of a hamlet, village, town, city, or megacity. (p. 217)

Central place theory A theory to explain the spatial distribution of urban centres with respect to their size and function. (p. 271)

City A legally incorporated self-governing unit; an inhabited place of greater size, population, or importance than a town or village. (p. 254)

Consumer services Services that are provided primarily for individual consumers, such as retail, hospitality, food, leisure, health care, education, and social welfare; represents approximately 50 per cent of employment in most countries of the more developed world. (p. 271)

Donut effect A popular but colloquial term that refers to a pronounced difference in the growth rates between a core city (slow growth or no growth) and its surrounding areas (faster growth), in a pattern that resembles the North American deep-fried confection; usually characterized by people moving out of the core or inner suburbs of a city and moving to newer peripheral suburbs. (p. 259)

Entrepot A city, usually a port, that functions as an intermediary for trade and trans-shipment and that exports raw materials and manufactured goods. (p. 267)

Forum The centre of Roman civic, commercial, administrative, and ceremonial life; combined the functions of the ancient Greek acropolis and agora. (p. 266)

Gateway city A city located at a key point of entry to a major geographic region or country, often a port or major rail centre, through which goods and people pass and in which several different cultural traditions are absorbed and assimilated. (p. 278)

Global city A city that is an important node in the global economy; a dominant city in the global urban hierarchy; sometimes referred to as a world city. (p. 277)

Hinterland The market area surrounding a central place; the spatial area from which the providers of goods and services in a central place draw their customers. (p. 271)

Megacity A metropolitan area with a population of more than 10 million. (p. 258)

Mercantilism A school of economic thought dominant in Europe in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that argues for the involvement of the state in economic life so as to increase national wealth and power. (p. 267)

Metropolitan area A region comprising two or more functionally connected urban areas and the less densely populated (or built-up) areas in between; examples include metropolitan New York and the Greater Toronto Area. (p. 256)

Primate city The largest city in an urban system, usually the capital, which dominates its political, economic, and social life; a city that is more than twice the size of the next-largest city in the system. (p. 275)

Range The maximum distance that people are prepared to travel to obtain a particular good or service. (p. 272)

Rank-size distribution A descriptive regularity among cities in an urban system; the numerical relationship between city size and rank in an urban system; sometimes referred to as the rank-size rule. (p. 275)

Suburb A residential or mixed-use (residential and employment) area on the periphery of the city, typically displaying some degree of homogeneity in terms of economic status, socio-cultural characteristics, or built form. (p. 254)

Supranational organization A multinational grouping of independent states, where power is delegated to an authority by member governments. (p. 278)

Threshold The minimum number of people (market size) required to support the existence of a particular economic function. (p. 272)

Urban area The spatial extent of the built-up area surrounding and including an incorporated municipality, such as a city; typically assessed by its population size and/or population density and/or nature of residents' employment. (p. 255)

Urban sprawl The largely unplanned expansion of an urban area into rural areas (p. 256)

Urbanism The urban way of life; associated with a declining sense of community and increasingly complex social and economic organization as a result of increasing size, density, and heterogeneity. (p. 263)

Urbanization The spread and growth of cities; an increasing proportion of a population living in urban areas (cities and towns). (p. 252)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Research and discuss the value of central place theory. To what extent is it useful? Does it neglect any major criticisms or factors?
2. What is the history of development of the region in which you live? How has this affected local culture, economic development, and ways of life?
3. Is there a universally agreed-upon definition of a world city? What are some of the debates surrounding the definition and classification of world cities?
4. What research exists to date comparing rural and urban ways of life?

5. The number of megacities has grown over the past few decades and their relationships to each other and the regions they occupy are changing. Research and discuss the emergence and growth of megacities and how these cities alter the relationship of their populations to the surrounding areas and to other cities.

LINKS OF INTEREST

- Canadian Urban Institute
<http://www.canurb.org/>
- The Megacity Initiative
<https://pulitzercenter.org/project/asia-india-mumbai-megacity-population-shift>
- United Nations Habitat
<http://www.unhabitat.org/>
- Rural Assistance Centre
<http://www.raonline.org/>
- Future Megacities
<http://www.future-megacities-2013.org/home.html>
- World Urbanization Prospects
<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/>

SUGGESTED READINGS

Abrahamson, M. 2004. *Global Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book examines global cities of the contemporary world and their close connection to many aspects of globalization, such as, the emergence of modern telecommunications, multinational corporations and global economic activities.

Bunting, T., P. Filion, and R. Walker, eds. 2015. *Canadian Cities in Transition: Perspectives for an Urban Age*, 5th edn. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

A major contribution to Canadian urban geography, this book looks at cities as systems and at the city as a system. A well-conceived and structured volume that is also full of detailed information on the full range of urban geographic topics.

Burdett, R. and D. Sudjic, eds. 2007. *The Endless City: The Urban Age Project by the London School of Economics and Deutsche Banks Alfred Herrhausen Society*. London: Phaidon Press.

A comprehensive exploration of the challenges facing cities, in all parts of the world, as cities grow larger, more diverse and more unequal.

Hiller, H. H. 2014. *Urban Canada*, 3rd edn. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

A sociology text that is of great interest to human geographers. Covers such topics as homelessness, gender, and consumption. The value of this text to human geographers highlights the fact that the study of cities is an interdisciplinary endeavour.

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Seeker Daily. 2015. “What are the World’s Largest Cities?” YouTube video, 2:50. Posted April 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqKe7ygkkzs>

1. What is the definition of a megacity and, according to the United Nations, what is the world’s largest city by population and what is its population?
 - A megacity is an inhabited area with a population in excess of 10 million people. The world’s largest city as measured by population is Tokyo, Japan, with a population of 38 million people and has been the largest city since 1955.
2. What are the three non-Asian megacities on the list?
 - The three non-Asian cities in the top 10 are New York, USA; Mexico City, Mexico; and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

TEDx Talks. 2014. “Through Connection to rural and urban spaces we can overcome sprawl | Brad Buchanan | TEDxMile High.” YouTube video, 13:54. Posted October 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEZmFR1WS7g>

1. How is the agrarian, rural community described as ultimate innovator?
 - The speaker discusses share cropping. The ways that farmers help each other and their unique tie to sustainability. The speaker argues that farmers are the original sustainability fighters—adapters and reusers.
2. How has the speaker been influenced by what he describes as his “urban life” in his “rural life”?
 - The speaker discusses access to information and knowledge as the ideas that influence his sustainable lifestyle and goes on to mention grass fed versus grain fed operation, hypersensitive to water use. He makes the argument that the rural is influenced by the urban as much as the urban is influenced by the rural. He argues for a strong relationship.