CHAPTER 13

Urban Patterns
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU THINK OF CITIES? CREATE A LIST OF WORDS.

Let’s discuss the list you created by answering the following questions:

• Why do people live in cities?
• What problems do we associate with cities?
• What differences are there between the city and the countryside, e.g. politics, recreation, cost of living?
• How is the city changing?
DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES FREEWAYS
URBAN PATTERNS

A large city is stimulating and agitating, entertaining and frightening, welcoming and cold.

A city has something for everyone, but a lot of those things are for people who are different from you.

Urban geography helps to sort out the complexities of familiar and unfamiliar patterns in urban areas.
KEY ISSUES

1. Where have urban areas grown?
2. Where are people distributed within urban areas?
3. Why do inner cities have distinctive problems?
4. Why do suburbs have distinctive problems?
Geographers help explain what makes city and countryside different places.

Urban geographers are interested in the where question at two scales.

First, geographers examine the global distribution of urban settlements.

Geographers are also interested in where people and activities are distributed within urban spaces.

Models have been developed to explain why differences occur within urban areas.

The major physical, social, and economic contrasts are between inner-city and suburban areas.

We all experience the interplay between globalization and local diversity of urban settlements.
Many downtowns have a collection of high-rise buildings, towers, and landmarks that are identifiable even to people who have never visited them.

On the other hand, suburban houses, streets, schools, and shopping centers look very much alike from one American city to another.

In more developed regions, people are increasingly likely to live in suburbs.

People wish to spread across the landscape to avoid urban problems, but at the same time they want convenient connections to the city’s jobs, shops, culture, and recreation.

Geographers describe where different types of people live and try to explain the reasons for the observed patterns.

Although different internal structures characterize urban areas in the United States and elsewhere, the problems arising from current spatial trends are quite similar.
URBAN SETTLEMENTS

Urbanization
- Increasing urban percentage
- Increasing urban populations

Defining urban settlements
- Social differences between urban and rural settlements
- Physical definitions of urban settlements
Percent of the population living in urban areas is usually higher in MDCs than in LDCs.
INCREASING PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE IN CITIES

The world map of percentage urban looks very much like the world map of percentage of workers in services.

The percentage of urban dwellers is high in more developed countries because over the past 200 years rural residents have migrated from the countryside to work in the factories and services that are concentrated in cities.

In more developed countries the process of urbanization that began around 1800 has largely ended, because the percentage living in urban areas simply cannot increase much more.

As in more developed countries, people in less developed countries are pushed off the farms by declining opportunities.

However, urban jobs are by no means assured in LDCs experiencing rapid overall population growth.
Cities with 2 million or more people. Most of the largest cities are now in LDCs.
Although under half of the people in most less developed regions are urban, Latin America and the Middle East have urban percentages comparable to MDCs.
Defining where urban areas end and rural areas begin is difficult.

Geographers and other social scientists have formulated definitions that distinguish between urban and rural areas according to social and physical factors.
Louis Wirth argued during the 1930s that an urban dweller follows a different way of life from a rural dweller, (and) defined a city as a permanent settlement that has three characteristics:

- large size,
- high population density,
- and socially heterogeneous people.
If you live in a rural settlement, you know most of the other inhabitants and may even be related to many of them.

In contrast, if you live in an urban settlement, you can know only a small percentage of the other residents.

You meet most of them in specific roles.

Most of these relationships are contractual.
HIGH DENSITY

According to Wirth, high density also produces social consequences for urban residents.

Each person in an urban settlement plays a special role or performs a specific task to allow the complex urban system to function smoothly.

At the same time, high density also encourages people to compete for survival in limited space.

Social groups compete to occupy the same territory, and the stronger group dominates.
SOCIAL HETEROGENEITY

A person has greater freedom in an urban settlement than in a rural settlement to pursue an unusual profession, sexual orientation, or cultural interest.

Regardless of values and preferences, in a large urban settlement individuals can find people with similar interests.

Yet despite the freedom and independence of an urban settlement, people may also feel lonely and isolated.

Wirth’s three-part distinction between urban and rural settlements may still apply in LDCs.

But in more developed societies, social distinctions between urban and rural residents have blurred.
PHYSICAL DEFINITIONS OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS

The removal of walls and the rapid territorial expansion of cities have blurred the traditional physical differences.

Urban settlements today can be physically defined in three ways:

- by legal boundary,
- as continuously built-up area,
- and as a functional area.
The term city defines an urban settlement that has been legally incorporated into an independent, self-governing unit.

In the United States, a city that is surrounded by suburbs is sometimes called a central city.
An urbanized area consists of a central city plus its contiguous built-up suburbs where population density exceeds 1,000 persons per square mile (400 persons per square kilometer).

Approximately 60 percent of the U.S. population lives in urban areas, divided about equally between central cities and surrounding jurisdictions.

Working with urbanized areas is difficult because few statistics are available about them.

Urbanized areas do not correspond to government boundaries.
The metropolitan area of St. Louis is spread over several counties and two states. It is also a diversified trade center, given its position on the Mississippi River.
OVERLAPPING METROPOLITAN AREAS

Urban areas can overplay making one continuous urban complex: North of Boston to South of Washington D.C (Boswash corridor) or call a megalopolis.

Within Megalopolis, the downtown areas of individual cities such as Baltimore, New York, retain distinctive identities and the urban areas are visibly separated from each other by open spaces.
The Boston–Washington corridor contains about one-quarter of U.S. population.