Region Landscapes of the United States and Canada

MEGALOPOLIS

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MEGALOPOLIS

• Term used to describe any large urban area created by the growth toward each other and eventual merging of two or more cities.

• The French geographer Jean Gottman adopted the term in 1961 for the title of his now famous book, "Megalopolis: The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States."

Megalopolis

When used with a capital "M", the term denotes the almost unbroken urban development that extends from north of Boston, MA to counties south of Washington, DC (from Portsmouth, NH to Richmond, VA).

With a lower case "m" the term is applied to any string of adjoining very large cities.

Landscapes of Megalopolis

Includes large cities, small towns and rural areas where most of the people reside in an urban place.

Megalopolis at Night

From the beginning: SETTLEMENT

A place where one person or a group of people live.

Settlements are differentiated on the basis of:

- size = number of people present
- spacing = distance from each other
- function = reason for people grouping there
**Hierarchy of Settlement**

As the number of settlers (people) increase from the individual dwelling to **hamlet** to **village** to **town** to **city**, a hierarchy of **form and function** is created.

**HIERARCHY of SETTLEMENT**

The **smallest settlements** are greatest in number and located relatively close to each other. They provide residents with **basic necessities**.

The **larger settlements** (cities) are more complicated, offer a **variety of goods and services** and are located at greater distances from each other.

People will travel to get the goods and services they need.

**URBAN SETTING**

Large number of people.
High concentration (density) of people.
Many functions (activities) are present.

Cities are surrounded by a **suburb** (less than urban) that is dependent on the urban area and an **exurb** (beyond the city) where residents live in a rural setting but are city-oriented.

**URBANIZATION**

Urbanization is tied to changes in economic activities away from agriculture.

It allows people to develop a social order with a division of labor – specialists, craftsmen, merchants, etc. – that supports the activities of other people.

Service sector of economy grows.

**Urban Landscape Development**

The development of an urbanized area takes on a life cycle.

- **Creation**
- **Growth**
- **Stagnation**
- **Demise**
- **Resurgence**

Resurgence leads to the creation of a new identity.

**Urbanized Area**

- Exhibits unique activities or “functions” that draw people to it.
- Intense and complex spatial organization.
- Reasons for location (site/situation advantages).
- Reasons to concentrate people (pull factors).
- Economic advantages associated with accessibility and movement (as both a collection and distribution point).
Historic Unique Functions
(remember these when we look at other regions)

Activities that draw people include:
– Defense (fort)
– Government (administration)
– Transportation conveniences (ford, crossroads, fork)
– Commerce and trade (market)
– Manufacturing (raw materials to finished product)
– Recreation (resorts)
– Culture (education/religion/the arts)
– Special activity (mining/forestry/fishing)

Site & Situation

The original location aspects of an urban place’s physical and cultural environments are related to function (reason for being; why there?), accessibility to resources, and pattern of growth.

BUT

The quality of location changes with time.

The rise and fall of urban places can be documented by the changing quality of their location.

Historic Favored Site Factors
(remember these when we look at other regions)

• Fertile river valley
• Island
• River crossing
• Crossroads
• Sheltered bay
• Head of navigation
• Portage point
• Confluence of two rivers
• Source of waterpower
• Mineral location
• Hilltop
• Strategic overlook
• Area near entrance to a mountain pass
• Freshwater source

Site Characteristics of Selected Cities in Megalopolis

• Protected harbor: an inlet of that affords a large, safe anchorage. (New York, Baltimore, New Haven, Providence)
• Head of navigation: The farthest point inland from its mouth to which a river is navigable by deep-draught vessels. (Washington, Trenton, Baltimore)
• Peninsula: A site connected to the mainland by a narrow neck of land; affords protection from landward attack. (Boston)
• Confluence: A point where two rivers meet; affords protection and access. (Philadelphia, Wilmington)
A city can only survive if it has an economic base. Economic base of a city is a mix of manufacturing and service activities that satisfy the needs of the city and earn income for the city.

The economic base consists of a basic sector and a non-basic sector.

The basic sector earns money from outside the city by selling products. The non-basic sector services the resident working population with grocery stores, retail shops, repair shops, schools, local transit, health care, etc.

Multiplier Effect: On average, 2 non-basic workers are needed for every 1 basic worker. Non-basic workers are needed to support other non-basic workers. (But the reverse happens, too.)

Megalopolis Today

- Urban landscape is the dominant.
- Urbanization has expanded into the surrounding farmland.
- Rural areas persist but are getting smaller.
- 10 major metropolitan areas of over 1 million people, plus numerous smaller cities with large populations.
- Has 17% of the total U.S. population but only 1.5% of the total land area
- 17% of all U.S. export trade moves through its six major ports.
- It is a region of international significance.
- Higher than average proportion of white-collar employment.

General Regional Site Characteristics of Megalopolis

- Coastal location allowed for regional trade and interaction with the world, esp. Europe.
- Numerous estuaries (drowned river mouths) which form good harbors.
- Moderate climate.
- Variable soils that tend to be less productive; better in the portion south of Philadelphia.
- Relatively flat to gently rolling terrain.
- Straddles 2 physiographic regions and includes the Fall Line.
Fall Line

- The border between the Piedmont and the Atlantic Coastal Plain.
- Rapids and waterfalls are present. Rivers flow from hard rocks of the Piedmont’s higher elevation onto the coastal plain.
- These were the sites for the first watermills that were the catalyst for urban development.

Regional Situation of Megalopolis

Good location relative to Europe for trade and immigration.

Accessible.
- Along the Europe, Caribbean and South American trade routes.
- Good harbors.
- Routes to the interior (hinterland). Natural and man-made, esp. Hudson-Mohawk corridor and the Erie Canal
- Convenient stop-off/service point for ships sailing the North Atlantic route.

Hinterland

A tributary or service area defined as:
1. The inland area lying beyond a coastal district.
2. The land surrounding a city that
   a) gets goods and services from that city.
   b) supplies the city with goods and resources.

Access to the Interior (hinterland)

Of all the cities of Megalopolis, only NYC had direct access to the interior of North America. The Hudson-Mohawk corridor provided an easy and fast route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes. The Erie Canal enhanced this route and led to the rapid growth of NYC and NYS.

Urban Environment Generalizations

- Visible characteristics of urbanism
  – Tall buildings
  – Many people
  – Busy streets; crowding
  – Industrial plants
  – Cultural institutions
- Metropolitan coalescence
  – Merging of urbanized areas of separate metropolitan centers occurring early in their history
  – A process of channeled growth (esp. along transportation corridors)

Components of Urban Landscape

- Spatial interaction: movement between places
  – People
  – Information
  – Utilities
- Spatial complementarity:
  – Places import what they lack from outside the region; money economy
  – Places provide services to surrounding areas
  – Closer places have the advantage for filling needs
- Functional complexity: land use variations and conflict
  • Residential
  • Commercial
  • Industrial
  • Recreational
Needs of the Urban Landscape

- **Public services**
  - Water, sewage, garbage pickup
  - Public safety
  - Welfare
- **Accessibility/mobility**
  - Early cities less concerned with accessibility
  - Demand increased by high level of interaction
  - Shaped by spatial arrangement of land uses
  - Highways, parkways, beltways, expressways, mass transit created to move people and goods quickly.

Changing Urban Landscape

- Dynamic nature of the urban landscape.
- Seems to be always changing; evolving.
- Things are done on a large scale.
- **Vertical use replaces horizontal use**
  as space runs out
- Seems to be less “natural” and more of an artificial environment.

Agriculture and Megalopolis

- Changes related to **land availability**: shift to table or specialty crops:
  - High value, perishable: dairy products, fruits, and vegetables; horticulture; floriculture
  - Require considerably less land
- Changes in **land value**
  - Valued for more intense uses
  - Rise in property taxes
  - Greatest impact along lines of interurban access

Changes in Population: Composition

- An urban area needs workers.
- **Immigration from Europe**
  - Mid-1800s: northern and western Europe, esp. Ireland and Germany
  - Late 1800s: southern and eastern Europe
- Establishment of ethnic neighborhoods
- **African American internal migration**
  - With cutoff of European immigrants during World War I increased migration to northern cities for jobs.
  - Settlement created high-density neighborhoods
  - From 1960s: dispersal to other areas of the city

Changes in Population: Redistribution

- **1950-60s**: Movement of all groups from central city to suburbs.
- **1970s to present**
  - Immigrants’ origin is worldwide
  - Migration out of metro areas to small, distant towns, especially between cities
  - High-rise office clusters in central business districts (CBD), downtown areas
  - Growth of suburbs
  - Slowing of movement out of central cities
  - Movement back to cities (gentrification)
    - Attraction of jobs and amenities to higher-income workers
    - Displacement of low-income residents

Gentrification

The process of socio-economic and cultural change that occurs when wealthier people (the “gentry”) buy and move into housing property in urban areas where the existing population is less prosperous.
Includes the conversion of other properties (as warehouses and factories) into other upscale uses.
**Gentrification Consequences**

- Influx of buying power and renovation leads to rising housing costs and commercial rentals.
- Low-rise buildings are demolished; high-rises are built.
- Rising rents cause displacement of long-term commercial and residential tenants.
- "Mom and Pop" stores become boutiques.
- Distinctive neighborhoods become "placeless" although some take on a new character (are reinvented).
- The urban tax base rises.
- Homelessness increases.

**Urban Problems**

- **Congestion:** large numbers of people, local transportation, housing
- **Health Issues:** food, water supply waste management, controlling disease, dealing with dying and dead people
- **Quality of Life Issues:** crowding, crime, poverty, health care, pollution
- **Pollution:** air, water, land, noise
- **Hazards:** storms, earthquakes, flooding, fire, terrorism

**The Suburbs**

Suburbanization began in Nassau Co., NY. 60 yrs later all suburbs have problems:

- Aging infrastructure.
- Political fragmentation.
- Sprawl.
- Need for more commuter and mass transit connections.
- Need for municipal and services.

**Growth of Megalopolis**

Expansion in spatial extent, vertical development and density of land use. Rural gaps are quickly being filled.

**The Jersey Pine Barrens**

**Amish Country Scenes**