The Spatial Organization of Urban Environments

**The three main models of urban environments are:**

1. The concentric-zone model - Applies to cities that have rings of development emanating outward from a core, or central business district. In theory, each ring contains different types of development and economic activities.
2. The multiple-nuclei model - Applies to a city that lacks a strong central core, but instead has numerous nodes of business and cultural activity.
3. The sector model - Tend to have corridors of different types of development that radiate outward like spokes from the central business district

It is worth pointing out, however, that no city matches any model perfectly and that each city's urban organization is tied to both its unique history and physical geography.

* Inner cities frequently surround the central business district and contain dynamic urban geographies.
* Many inner cities became dilapidated centers of poverty as afﬂuent whites moved out to the suburbs, or residential communities on the out-skirts of urban areas, and immigrants and people of color vied for scarce jobs and resources in the declining urban center.
* Urban revitalization, which usually includes the construction of new shopping districts, entertainment venues, and cultural attractions, has enticed young urban professionals, or "yuppies," back into the cities where nightlife and culture are more accessible. The process by which inner city neighbor-hoods turn into expensive and fashionable urban districts is called gentriﬁcation.

**Environmental Justice**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) deﬁnes Environmental Justice as the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

* Concerns about potential environmental injustices, such as disproportionate exposures to pollution in poor communities and communities of color, have existed for many decades.
* In recent years, studies of environmental justice have expanded to include more work on rural and suburban populations, as well as a growing focus on the uneven distribution of negative impacts associated with global climate change.

**Transportation**

According to the geographer John R. Borchert, American cities have under-gone ﬁve major epochs, or periods, of development shaped by the dominant forms of transportation and communication at the time.

* Sail-wagon epoch (1790-1830)
* Iron horse epoch (1830-1870)
* Steel rail epoch (1870-1920)
* Auto-air-amenity epoch (1920-1970)
* Satellite-electronic-jet propulsion and high-technology epoch (1970-present).

**Exurbanites and Edge Cities**

People who have left the inner city and moved to outlying suburbs or rural areas are called exurbanites. In some places, urban sprawl has taken the form of edge cities. Edge cities, which are located on the outskirts of larger cities, serve many of the same functions of traditional urban areas, but in a sprawling and decentralized environment often dominated by technology ﬁrms and service industries.

**Central- Place Theory, Rank-Size Rule, Megapolis', Megacities, and World Cities**

* Metropolitan areas are in part based on central-place theory, which provides a more explicit framework for looking at the relationship between cities and their surrounding communities, based on people's demand for goods and services. According to the central-place theory, large cities serve as the economic hubs of their regions because they provide a great variety of goods and services that are not available in smaller communities.
* Geographers have also noticed that, in any given region, there should be many small hamlets, some towns, and a few small cities, but only one central city. The proportion of small towns to large cities is called the rank-size rule. The rank-size rule says that there is a speciﬁc relationship between the relative abundance of settlements of different sizes, and that the smallest settlements should always be the most abundant.
* In some regions, many towns and cities have grown together and merged over time, creating a megalopolis. A megalopolis is an entire region that has become highly urbanized.
* Megacities are increasingly a phenomenon of the developing world, where high population growth and migration have caused some urban areas to explode in population since World War II. All megacities are plagued by chaotic, unplanned growth, terrible pollution, and widespread poverty.
* World cities are centers of economic, cultural, or political activity, and thus have an inﬂuence felt across the globe. World cities are commonly categorized into several tiers indicating the extent of their inﬂuence, but all world cities enjoy a signiﬁcant amount of economic inﬂuence and prosperity.