Urban: An area of relatively large population density settled in an area surrounded by a less dense settlement. Depends on the county and often standardized at 100,000+ or 1 million+

Size and concentration of a pop settlement

Politically designated areas (e.g. towns, cities)

Location of central features in an urban lifestyle

A concentration of economic activities or occupations

Presence of specific local institutions

Urbanization

“Degree of urbanization”: % of total pop residing in places that are called urban

“Process of urbanization”: Rate of change over time in the % of pop residing in urban places

Urbanization =/= Urban Growth

Just bc a city’s (or even many cities’) pop is growing doesn’t mean that there is urbanization

Rural areas may be growing too

Urbanization has to do w/ the relationship b/w urban and rural pop, so urban growth only equals urbanization if it is happening at a faster rate than rural growth

Caused by

Higher pop growth in urban areas than rural areas

Relatively recent phenomenon

Historically, cities have had higher mortality rates than rural areas, but in the last century this has shifted. Infectious diseases used to spread quickly in cities, but now there is increased sanitation, access to clean water, hospitals, etc.

Net movement of people from rural areas to urban areas

AKA Rural-to-urban migration

Used to be the norm. Pop would move from rural to urban areas, first smaller urban areas, then on up to larger urban areas (called “movement up the urban hierarchy”). In the last 50 years, we have seen a shift in the other direction (“down the urban hierarchy”), with increased urban-to-urban migration, counterurbanization (or rural pops growing faster than urban ones), and decentralization (or suburbanization)

Reclassification of rural areas as urban areas

Urbanization through History

Urbanization was the product of industrialization. Industrialization provided livelihoods not tied to the ownership of land. Urbanization in the US mirrors the shift from steam power to electricity and the rise of the steel industry. **When such technologies produced an excess of labor, urbanization was the result.**

**First in the Global North**

**This development and urbanization was largely capital-intensive (money intensive; a concentration of wealth in urban areas)**

**Then in the Global South**

**Most urbanization is not for manufacturing jobs, but for service jobs producing a more service-intensive urbanization (concentration of service need in urban areas)**

Urbanization goes hand in hand with the demographic transition

1990 marked the transition to where more than half of humans now live in urban areas of more than 20,000 ppl

Today

75% of the pop in the Global North is urban

46% of the pop in the Global South is urban

Globally, 37% of the pop lives in cities with over 1 million

Globally, 21% of the pop lives in cities with over 10 million

What size cities are accounting for the most urbanization?

Historically in the Global North and today in the Global South: Mega-cities

Today this is happening primarily in Asia, but also Africa. We see rapid urbanization to a single or small number of cities or city systems

Today in the Global North: Small cities

“Down the urban hierarchy”: Shift started in the 70s, strengthened in the 90s

But depends on the location. In the US, the NE urbanized first. The sunbelt didn’t start urbanizing until later and continued urbanizing longer

Mega-Cities tend to be geographically concentrated

Global North

Eastern Seaboard (Washington, DC to Boston)

Southern California (San Francisco to San Diego)

Global South

Coastal China (Beijing to Shanghai, and arguably further south)

Northern India (New Delhi to Calcutta)

Mega cities often function as city systems, producing an uneven distribution of urban growth and wealth; this increases disparity within nations

Most migration for jobs or education

Produces brain drain from rural areas: those who are most educated and ambitious leave

Remittances (money sent back to families left behind) sent back to rural areas affect rural economies

Migration is an investment

Initial cost, but long term reward in opportunities/pay

Suburbanization: Process of residential, commercial, and industrial growth and development beyond a central city

The movement of ppl out of the cities into new neighborhoods surrounding the city

What lead to suburbanization?

Housing boom following depression and WWII

Too few houses

High demand for single family homes

House building industry took off

In 1938 only 5% of houses were built by large builders. By 1959, 64% of houses built by large builders

After WWII suburbs growing faster than cities ever did

Federal Gov’t Involvement

Mortgages lasted longer, required smaller down payment

GI Bill created low interest loans

Road construction

Automobile

Pre 1880s: Most ppl walked

1880s – 1920s: Rise of the Electric Street Car

1920s – Present: Dominance of the Automobile

Suburbanization could not have happened w/o Henry Ford

What does suburbia look like?

Limited access highways linking metro regions and suburbs (for commuters)

Block pattern of detached houses designed for nuclear families

Large lots (+/- 0.5 acre of land)

Concentration of economic activity into shopping malls and plazas

White

Suburbanization was historically a white phenomenon (largely due to racial covenants, also other forms of discrimination (who could and could not secure a loan, car, etc.)) This trend is slowly shifting.

Suburban lots have gotten bigger with new development over time

Why does anyone want to live there?

Larger lots

Less pollution

Less traffic

Lower house prices

More homogenous

What motivates decentralization today?

Rise in telecommunications

More working from home

Company headquarters / offices no longer have to be downtown

Displacement (gentrification is forcing some ppl out)

Gentrification: Influx of businesses and individuals with generally higher educational and income levels settling in traditionally poorer neighborhoods, then displacing the pop that was living there

Baby boomers grew up in the suburb smore than any previous cohort

As they reached financial maturity, they began to purchase and renovate cheap housing in older parts of central cities

White and upwardly mobile pops who maybe grew up in the suburbs moving back to the city

Causes rent and property values (taxes) to increase, pushing low income families and individuals out

What does gentrification look like?

“Urban revitalization”: money being invested in areas where it wasn’t before

Neighborhood turnover: a lot of ppl moving in and out

Pop of the neighborhood shifting: change in pop composition

Increased ownership: shift of rental property to owned housing

Increase in property values (or rents): costs more to live there

Why gentrification is happening in America (seems to be accelerating)

Demographic

Effect of baby boom

Childless couples (need less space, have more income)

Cultural

Pro-urban mindset (urban is hip)

Pro-green mindset (walking / biking to work is hip)

Economic

As rent goes up throughout the city, produces cascading effect

Increase in transit options; rise in the cost of gasoline