

# The growth of north american cities and suburbs

[Science](#), [Geography](#)



The Growth of Cities and Suburbs While the expansion of cities and the development of urban environments is affected by several sociological factors, Gordon (1978) as well as Harris & Lewis (2001) suggest that economic systems as well as the ideas of capitalism affect the growth of cities. Their ideas are well founded and the readers cannot help but come to an agreement with them regarding the effects that capitalism and economic systems have on the growth of towns and cities around the country.

For example, Gordon (1978) provides a Marxist perspective that contrasts with the capitalists views on the growth of cities. This view divides cities by class into areas occupied by those who control the means of production i. e. the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat who works for a living. The Marxist view of the development of cities certainly takes class very seriously as there are rich neighborhoods and poor areas which are demarcated quite strongly by the developments taking place in a city.

With time, the changes in the development of the city took factories out of the city centers and moved them to the outer edges of the city limits. Gary, Indiana is used as an example of that occurrence and the cause given for this change is that the factory owners wanted to avoid the presence of unions on their factory floors. Unions were difficult to form and maintain outside the city limits therefore unions could be avoided in this manner and control over the workers could be maintained with a capitalist agenda (Gordon, 1978).

The same ideas are supported by Harris & Lewis (2001) but they given other economic reasons for the changes in the cityscapes of North America. They suggest that polynucleation was the reason for these changes and this was

caused by the diversification of population and the lack of availability of workers of one type or another in a given location. Low prices for land as well as labor also helped the cause of those manufacturers that were ready to offset the cost of moving their production units by gaining access to cheaper tools for producing their goods. Thus the reasons for the development of our cities as they have are not based on social theory, but rather an economic agenda.

Perhaps the most important point made in the both the essays is the idea that technology will affect the development of cities in the future as it has done so in the past. For example, the advent of the automobile meant that people could easily cover a lot of distance on their own without the use of trains or other transport and that meant that they could afford to live in one part of the city and work in another. The addition to suburban sprawl which was created by the automobile is something that we are still contending with today and that is one factor which will probably become more important for the researchers of tomorrow rather than the effect capitalism has had on our cities.

#### Works Cited

Harris, R. & Lewis, R. 2001, *The geography of North American cities and suburbs, 1900-1950*.

Gordon, D. 1978, *Capitalist development and the history of American cities*, Oxford University Press.