

# Urban geography

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



Urban geography is a branch of human geography concerned with various aspects of cities. An urban geographer's main role is to emphasize location and space and study the spatial processes that create patterns observed in urban areas. To do this, they study the site, evolution and growth, and classification of villages, towns and cities as well as their location and importance in relation to different regions and cities. Economic, political and social aspects within cities are also important in urban geography.

In order to fully understand each of these aspects of a city, urban geography represents a combination of many other fields within geography. Physical geography for example is important in understanding why a city is located in a specific area as site and environmental conditions play a large role in whether or not a city develops. Cultural geography can aid in understanding various conditions related to an area's people, while economic geography aids in understanding the types of economic activities and jobs available in an area. Fields outside of geography such as resource management, anthropology and urban sociology are also important.

Urban geography is the study of areas which have a high concentration of buildings and infrastructure. These are areas where the majority of economic activities are in the secondary sector and tertiary sectors. They often have a high population density. Urban geography is that branch of science, which deals with the study of urban areas, in terms of concentration, infrastructure, economy, and environmental impacts. It can be considered a sub-discipline of the larger field of human geography with overlaps of content with that of Cultural Geography. It can often overlap with other fields of study such as anthropology and urban sociology.

Urban geographers seek to understand how factors interact over space, what function they serve and their interrelationships. Urban geographers also look at the development of settlements. Therefore, it involves planning city expansion and improvements. Urban geography, then, attempts to account for the human and environmental impacts of the change. Urban geography focuses on the city in the context of space throughout countries and continents. Definition of a City An essential component within urban geography is defining what a city or urban area actually is.

Although a difficult task, urban geographers generally define the city as a concentration of people with a similar way of life based on job type, cultural preferences, political views and lifestyle. Specialized land uses, a variety different institutions and use of resources also help in distinguishing one city from another. In addition, urban geographers also work to differentiate areas of different sizes. Because it is hard to find sharp distinctions between areas of different sizes, urban geographers often use the rural-urban continuum to guide their understanding and help classify areas.

It takes into account hamlets and villages which are generally considered rural and consist of small, dispersed populations, as well as cities and metropolitan areas considered urban with concentrated, dense populations. History of Urban Geography The earliest studies of urban geography in the United States focused on site and situation. This developed out of the man-land tradition of geography which focused on the impact of nature on humans and vice versa. In the 1920s, Carl Sauer became influential in urban

geography as he motivated geographers to study a city's population and economic aspects with regard to its physical location.

In addition, central place theory and regional studies focused on the hinterland (the rural outlying area supporting a city with agricultural products and raw materials) and trade areas were also important to early urban geography. Throughout the 1950s and 1970s, geography itself became focused on spatial analysis, quantitative measurements and the use of the scientific method. At the same time, urban geographers began quantitative information like census data to compare different urban areas. Using this data allowed them to do comparative studies of different cities and develop computer based analysis out of those studies.

By the 1970s, urban studies were the leading form geographic research. Shortly thereafter, behavioral studies began to grow within geography and in urban geography. Proponents of behavioral studies believed that location and spatial characteristics could not be held solely responsible for changes in a city. Instead, changes in a city arise from decisions made by individuals and organizations within the city. By the 1980s, urban geographers became largely concerned with structural aspects of the city related to underlying social, political and economic structures.

For example, urban geographers at this time studied how capital investment could foster urban change in various cities. Throughout the late 1980s until today, urban geographers have begun to differentiate themselves from one another, therefore allowing the field to be filled with a number of different viewpoints and focuses. For example, a city's site and situation is still

regarded as important to its growth, as is its history and relationship with its physical environment and natural resources.

People's interactions with each other and political and economic factors are still studied as agents of urban change as well. Themes of Urban Geography  
Although urban geography has several different focuses and viewpoints, there are two major themes that dominate its study today. The first of these is the study of problems relating to the spatial distribution of cities and the patterns of movement and links that connect them across space. This approach focuses on the city system. The second theme in urban geography today is the study of patterns of distribution and interaction of people and businesses within cities.

This theme mainly looks at a city's inner structure and therefore focuses on the city as a system. In order to follow these themes and study cities, urban geographers often break down their research into different levels of analysis. In focusing on the city system, urban geographers must look at the city on the neighborhood and citywide level, as well as how it relates to other cities on a regional, national and global level. To study the city as a system and its inner structure as in the second approach, urban geographers are mainly concerned with the neighborhood and city level.