CHAPTER 1

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CHANGING FIELD OF URBAN GEOGRAPHY

*Since it has taken more than five thousand years to arrive at even a partial understanding of the city's nature and drama, it may require an even longer period to exhaust the city's still unrealized potentialities.*

—LEWIS MUMFORD, 1938



The purpose of this chapter is, first, to introduce you to the field of urban geography within its historical and contemporary context. We begin by looking at the array of fields and disciplines that are interested in cities, noting how urban geography both overlaps with and is distinct from these fields. We will briefly describe some of the ways that urban geographers have studied the city. We then explore some basic but really important questions that confront anyone interested in the city: (1) how to define the city, especially in relation to other kinds of presumably nonurban places, and (2) how to define the spatial extent of the city and how to think about boundaries. At the end of the chapter we introduce you to the contents and approach of this book, to capture the excitement and dynamics of modern urban geography, a field of growing educational importance as more and more people live in cities, both in the industrial and nonindustrial countries of the world.

## WHY WE STUDY CITIES

Cities are incredibly exciting places and are home to an ever-increasing share of humanity. Although it has been reported dozens of times, the mid-2000s marked the first time that more than 50 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. By the mid-2020s, more than 4.6 billion out of roughly 8 billion people on the planet lived in cities, and more than 1 out of every 5 humans lived in cities larger than 1 million in population. The trend only magnifies when projected into the future – the United Nations predicts that by 2050 about two-thirds of the planet's 9 billion residents will call cities home.

The relatively recent transition into a majority urban world is all the starker when we recall that just over 120 years ago, at the beginning of the twentieth century, only 16 percent of the earth's population lived in cities. One hundred years before that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only 7 percent lived in cities. Figure 1.1 demonstrates how rapidly the planet has urbanized over the last several centuries.

*Urban Geography*, Fourth Edition. David H. Kaplan and Steven R. Holloway.

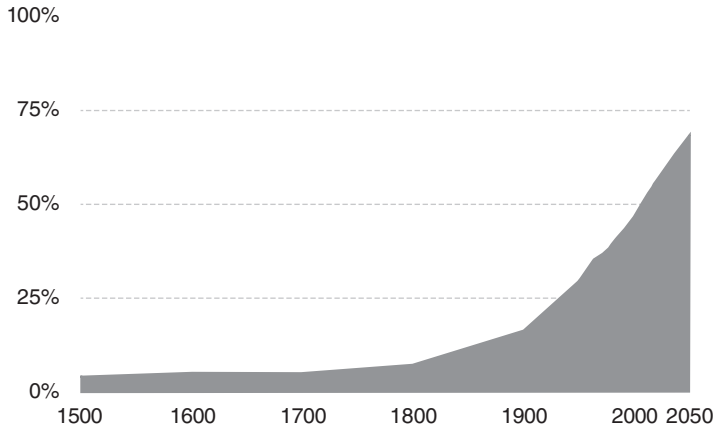


**Figure 1.1** Global urbanization, 1500–2050. *Source*: Authors. Data from OurWorldInData.org.

The urban population percentages are of course much greater in the wealthy capitalist economies of the world, such as the United States and Canada, the countries of Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and the rapidly emerging economies of Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. In the United States and Canada, over 80 percent of the population is classified as urban and virtually everyone is dependent on urban connections in everyday life. The world has become urban, and the wealthy capitalist countries – themselves strongly linked – are almost totally locked into the urban way of life. Even rural areas in North America are utterly dependent on large urban centers for their life sources, such as information, economic viability, social ties, entertainment and leisure activities, political expressions and attitudes, cultural attributes, and popular cultural manifestations of behavior. Prominent scholars Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid (2012) argue that we adopt the concept of "planetary urbanization." We are all part of the city, whether we physically live there or not.

In 2020, over 82 percent of Americans lived in a metropolitan area (2020 metropolitan population = 289,280,117). Metros are an extended form of urban area that consists of a large politically defined **central city** plus all the surrounding counties that contain **suburbs** economically interconnected with the central city. Micropolitan areas, which are small cities not part of larger metro areas, housed an additional 27,469,984 Americans in 2020. The US metropolitan population was concentrated into less than one-quarter of the US land area. The New York metropolitan area is by far the largest with 20.1 million people compared to second-ranked Los Angeles with 13.2 million and third-ranked Chicago with 9.6 million (Table 1.1). Twelve other metropolitan areas have between 4 and 8 million population: Dallas–Fort Worth, Houston, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Miami, Atlanta, Boston, Phoenix, San Francisco, Riverside, Detroit, and Seattle. Forty-two US metropolitan areas have between 1 million and 4 million people. The top 50 metropolitan areas each have more than 1 million and are collectively home to more than 55 percent of the total US population (183,842,440 out of 331,449,281).

Overall, metro areas grew by 8.47 percent between 2010 and 2020 (22,586,675 added to 266,693,442) and micro areas grew by only 0.7 percent from 2010 and 2020 (188,967 added to 27,281,017). Among the 20 largest US metropolitan areas (Table 1.1), the fastest growing between 2010 and 2020 are Houston (20.2%), Dallas-Fort Worth (19.9%), Seattle (16.8%), and Denver (16.5%). Phoenix, Atlanta, Tampa, Minneapolis, Miami, and Washington, DC all grew faster than 10 percent. Some metropolitan areas with population more than 1 million grew exceptionally fast. Austin grew by 33.3 percent and Orlando, Raleigh, and Nashville each grew faster than Houston. Note that all these fast-growth large metropolitan areas are predominantly located in the South and Southwestern United States.

**Table 1.1** Twenty Largest US Metropolitan Areas in Population, 2020, and Percentage Change, 2010–2020

| *Rank* | *Metropolitan Area* | *2020 Population (in millions)* | *Percentage Change, 2010–2020* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | New York, NY | 20.1 | 6.6 |
| 2 | Los Angeles, CA | 13.2 | 2.9 |
| 3 | Chicago, IL | 9.6 | 1.7 |
| 4 | Dallas–Fort Worth, TX | 7.6 | 19.9 |
| 5 | Houston, TX | 7.1 | 20.2 |
| 6 | Washington, DC | 6.3 | 13.1 |
| 7 | Philadelphia, PA | 6.2 | 4.7 |
| 8 | Miami, FL | 6.1 | 10.3 |
| 9 | Atlanta, GA | 6.1 | 15.2 |
| 10 | Boston, MA | 4.9 | 8.6 |
| 11 | Phoenix, AZ | 4.8 | 15.6 |
| 12 | San Francisco, CA | 4.7 | 9.5 |
| 13 | Riverside, CA | 4.6 | 8.9 |
| 14 | Detroit, MI | 4.4 | 2.2 |
| 15 | Seattle, WA | 4.0 | 16.8 |
| 16 | Minneapolis–St. Paul, MN | 3.6 | 10.8 |
| 17 | San Diego, CA | 3.3 | 6.6 |
| 18 | Tampa–St. Petersburg, FL | 3.2 | 14.1 |
| 19 | Denver, CO | 3.0 | 16.5 |
| 20 | Baltimore, MD | 2.8 | 4.9 |

*Source*: US Bureau of the Census, 2020; compiled by authors.

Of the 20 largest metropolitan areas, none lost population between 2010 and 2020 (Detroit lost 3.5 percent of its population between 2000 and 2010). Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles each grew at a very modest rate (< 4.0%).

The importance of cities extends well beyond the demographic fact that most people live in and depend on them. Noted urbanist Lewis Mumford wrote almost 90 years ago:

> The city, as one finds it in history, is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community. It is the place where the diffused rays of many separate beams of life fall into focus, with gains in both social effectiveness and significance. The city is the form and symbol of an integrated social relationship: it is the seat of the temple, the market, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here in the city the goods of civilization are multiplied and manifolded; Here is where human experience is transformed into viable signs, symbols, patterns of conduct, systems of order. Here is where the issues of civilizations are focused: here, too, ritual passes on occasion into the active drama of a fully differentiated and self-conscious society. (1938, p. 3)

What was true as Mumford looked back at the city in history is also true today. Cities, great and mundane, are sites of power and importance in almost every realm of life, including politics, economics, law, education and culture. Richard Florida (2011) argues: "Cities are our greatest invention. They generate wealth and improve living standards while providing the density, interaction, and networks that make us more creative and productive. They are the key social and economic organizing units of our time, bringing together people, jobs, and all the inputs required for economic growth."

Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley point out in their book *The Metropolitan Revolution* (2013) how disproportionately important metropolitan areas are to the national economy. The 100 top US metropolitan areas occupy only 12 percent of the nation's land mass, but house two-thirds of its population

and are responsible for three-quarters of the national total economic output. Katz and Bradley argue that metropolitan areas increasingly matter because they "embody concentration and agglomeration – networks of innovative firms, talented workers, risk-taking entrepreneurs, and supportive institutions and associations that cluster together in metropolitan areas and coproduce economic performance and progress. There is, in essence, no American (or Chinese or German or Brazilian) economy; rather, a national economy is a network of metropolitan economies" (Katz and Bradley 2013, p. 1).

Even for those who do not care for them, cities deserve respect and a sincere effort to answer basic questions. What is it that brings human beings together in such concentrated agglomerations that we call cities, urban areas, or metropolitan centers? Why do humans, who throughout almost all of their history lived in small, often migratory groups of kinship tribes at low population densities, have only in the past eight or nine millennia come to cluster in large settlements? Why was it only around 1900 that the total US urban population first exceeded 30 million, a figure easily surpassed today by metropolitan New York and Los Angeles combined? And why is it that in 1920 the percentage of urban Americans first came to exceed 50 percent of the total US population? And finally, why is it that more than 60 metropolitan areas in the United States and Canada with populations of more than 1 million people have emerged? What are these powerful, seemingly inexorable forces pulling human beings increasingly together in our metropolitan regions and at the same time pushing us apart in the suburbs? The purpose of this book, in large part, is to provide insight and answers to these fundamental questions of human settlement concentrations and diffusions.

## How We Study Cities

There are many fields and disciplines that have an interest in understanding and studying the city. You may be majoring in one of these fields! In Figure 1.2, "The City" is depicted at the center of the image surrounded by multiple boxes with the names of academic disciplines. Each of these disciplines has a branch that studies cities. For example, there is a long tradition in sociology of studying "The City" – urban sociology is one of the major subfields. Similarly, each of the other disciplines has an urban subfield. Some of these subfields have been around for a long time, like urban sociology, while others are more recent, like urban ecology, or the study of "environmental" systems in and as affected by cities.

You will note that geography does not appear in Figure 1.2. This is because geography is a synthetic discipline, which means that geography's core concerns require knowledge produced by ALL of the other disciplines! The dimension across which geography synthesizes is space. Urban history is also something of a synthetic discipline that integrates knowledge across the dimension of time.

Figure 1.3 depicts urban geography at the center of the image, connected with the other disciplines with arrows that point in both directions. This means that urban geographers use information and

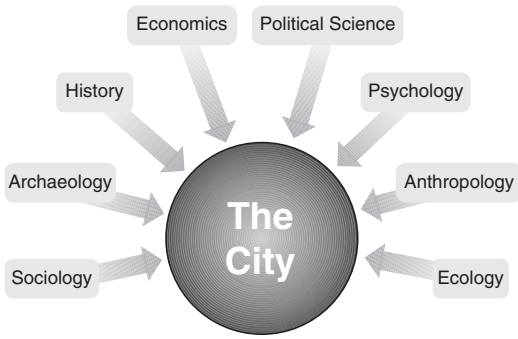


**Figure 1.2** Disciplines that study "The City." Since cities are such widespread and vital parts of contemporary human existence, many traditional academic disciplines have subfields that study cities. Urban sociology, for example, is a very important subfield of sociology, present from the origins of the discipline. Urban ecology, or the study of how cities affect and are affected by nonhuman environmental processes, is a relatively new subfield. *Source*: Authors.

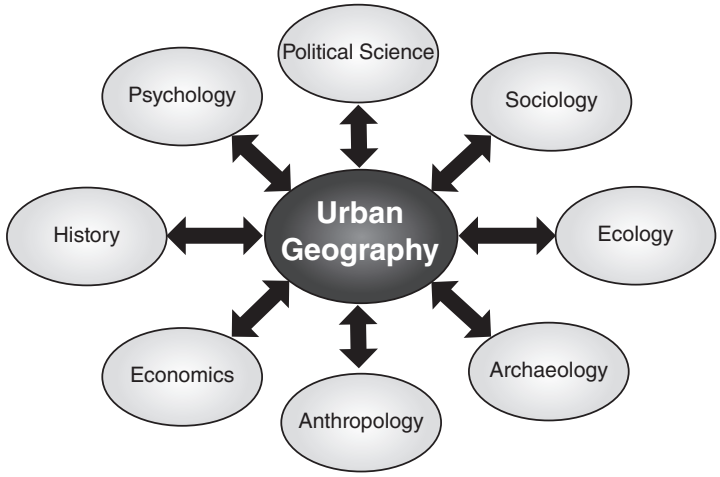


**Figure 1.3** Urban geography is a synthetic discipline that draws from and contributes to a variety of closely related fields. *Source*: Authors.

knowledge produced by the other disciplines, but also that urban geographers produce knowledge and understanding that is used by the other disciplines.

In addition to the traditional disciplines that provide understanding of cities and urban systems, there are multiple applied disciplines that provide training in professions where people need to understand cities and/or want to change cities. First, urban planning is the most closely related to urban geography and can lead to careers in government or the private sector. Second, urban design and related professions like architecture, landscape architecture, and environmental design are also very closely related to urban geography – many students from these disciplines take urban geography courses. Third, public administration (PA) provides training for students who want to work in the public sector. While not all PA relates to cities or urban areas, professionals with PA degrees often end up in jobs that have a significant impact over the urban environment. Fourth, the age-old maxim of real estate is "location, location, location." Given that urban geography provides great understanding of location within urban environments, real estate and development careers often provide opportunities to apply urban geographic knowledge. Fifth, engineering, civil engineering in particular, provides the practical skills that are needed in the construction and operation of urban environments. Sixth, there is a broad array of nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations (NGOs) that attempt to improve the city and its residents.

## THE FIELD OF URBAN GEOGRAPHY

Our discussion so far shows how urban geography relates to other urban-focused disciplines, but we haven't yet been very specific about urban geography's core substantive concerns. Geographers broadly study both the world's physical and human environments. They explore how humans have altered and are currently altering our natural landscapes, our atmosphere, our water, and our soils. Whereas physical geographers examine landforms (geomorphology), long-term weather trends and patterns (climatology), and the natural and human-modified spatial distributions of plant and animals (biogeography), human geographers focus their attention on the location of people and their activities over geographic space. This locational focus may emphasize economic activities and behaviors, social and cultural features of human society, and political and power relations as expressed in places or over spaces (regions). Urban geography is typically thought of as a subfield of human geography, a subfield that studies cities or

### BOX 1.1 Bright Lights, Big Cities

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has created a composite of satellite images that depicts the intensity of light at night (Figure B1.1):

This image of the continental United States at night is a composite assembled from data acquired by the Suomi NPP satellite in April and October 2012. The image was made possible by the satellite's "day–night band" of the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), which detects light in a range of wavelengths from green to near-infrared and uses filtering techniques to observe dim signals such as city lights, gas flares, auroras, wildfires and reflected moonlight.

The nation's largest metropolitan areas are clearly visible – New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta are labeled. See if you can find a city close to where you live. The image prompts the kinds of urban systems, or intermetropolitan location, questions that urban geographers like to ask. Why are the cities located where they are? Why are some cities larger than others? How did cities grow in the way they did? How do the cities interrelate with one another? If we had a similar image from 100 years ago, it would look much dimmer, of course, but some aspects of the basic structure and pattern of the system of cities would be similar. Why? The comparison would prompt us to ask why some cities, like Atlanta, have grown as much and as rapidly as they have over the last 50+ years?

Another thing you should note in this image is what occurs between cities. Linear arrays of lights almost look like strings connecting the large metropolitan blobs. These are highways, which suggests that we think about the ways in which cities are connected to one another. These connections can be via transportation infrastructure like highways or airlines routes, but linkages can also be in form of money, or information, or culture. All of these questions illustrate our concern with urban systems, and we will address these questions throughout the course.

It is interesting to note that this satellite image (when the colors are inverted) matches almost perfectly a detailed dot map – where the number of people living in a small area is represented on a map by dots – created from the 2020 Census (several versions are available, including one by CNN at https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2021/us/census-race-ethnicity-map/), which demonstrates the convergence of very different forms of data collection and analysis to reveal the extent and pattern of urbanization! There are features visible on the

urban areas. Today, however, urban geographers are increasingly concerned with the interrelationships between cities and climate and other bio-physical processes, and with concepts of sustainability and resilience, which represents a bridging between human and physical geography.

Urban geographers have centered their attention on the study of cities and metropolitan areas in two ways and at two scales. First, by stressing relationships *among* a system or group of cities at the regional, national, or global level, we adopt an ***inter*metropolitan**, or urban systems, approach. A satellite view of all the city lights in the United States (Box 1.1) stimulates many questions about urban systems.

The second approach that urban geographers use highlights the internal locational arrangements of humans, activities, and institutions *within* metropolitan areas, known as an ***intra*metropolitan** approach. Our questions shift to how space is structured within cites: Where is the downtown business district located? Where do rich people live? Where do Black people and/or immigrants live? Why and to what consequence? How does the city work in terms of internal transportation, including roads and highways, public transit, railroads, and a variety of other modes of getting around the city? Some of the topics that we consider using this approach include land use/land cover, land value, the evolving character of the built environment, the nature and health of the local economy, the nature of the social structure and how that is reflected in the spatial pattern of the city in terms of segregation, and

NASA image, however, that cannot be seen on the dot map. The bridges crossing San Francisco Bay and Tampa Bay can be seen clearly in the NASA image, for example. Also, lights from oil-drilling rigs along the Gulf Coast can be seen in the NASA image.

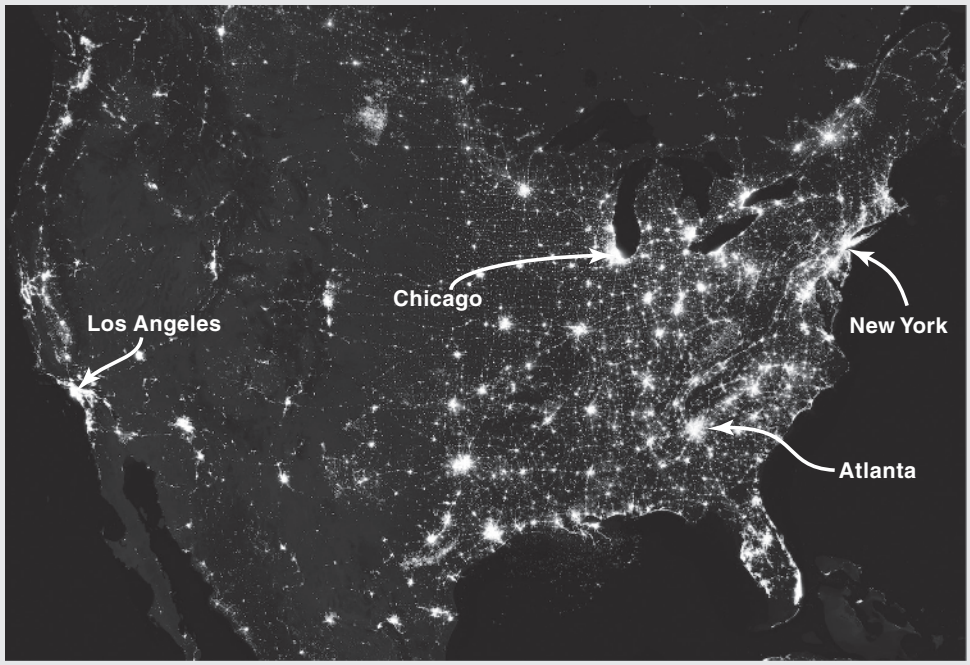


**Figure B1.1** NASA composite of satellite images that depicts the intensity of light at night. *Source*: NASA / https://science.nasa.gov/resource/earth-at-night/ / last accessed October 25, 2023.

nature – how do cities alter nonhuman environmental processes and how do cities govern and respond to these environmental processes? The impacts of global climate change in general, and sea level rise in particular, are of increasing concern to many cities, for example.

At the same time that urban geographers may organize their analyses based on the scale or level of the urbanization process (by following either the intermetropolitan or intrametropolitan approach), they also differentiate their work by either studying a specific city (a case study) or cities in a specific region of the world (Russian cities, cities in Arabic-speaking countries) or by examining topical issues (poverty, ethnicity) and attempting to fashion general explanations that apply to many cities in many regions.

An important additional way urban geographers study urban centers – whether at the intermetropolitan or the intrametropolitan scale – is by understanding the varying levels of interaction or linkages among places, either among cities or among places within cities. Figure 1.4, for example, shows how US urban areas are projected to be economically interconnected over the next several decades via the volume of freight carried by long-haul trucks. Some centers, because of their size, structural accessibility (interstate highways) and proximity to other centers, will experience a greater volume of traffic flows between themselves and the other centers. The volume of these flows is a measure of **spatial interaction**, defined as linkages over space among the centers. Likewise, at the intrametropolitan level,

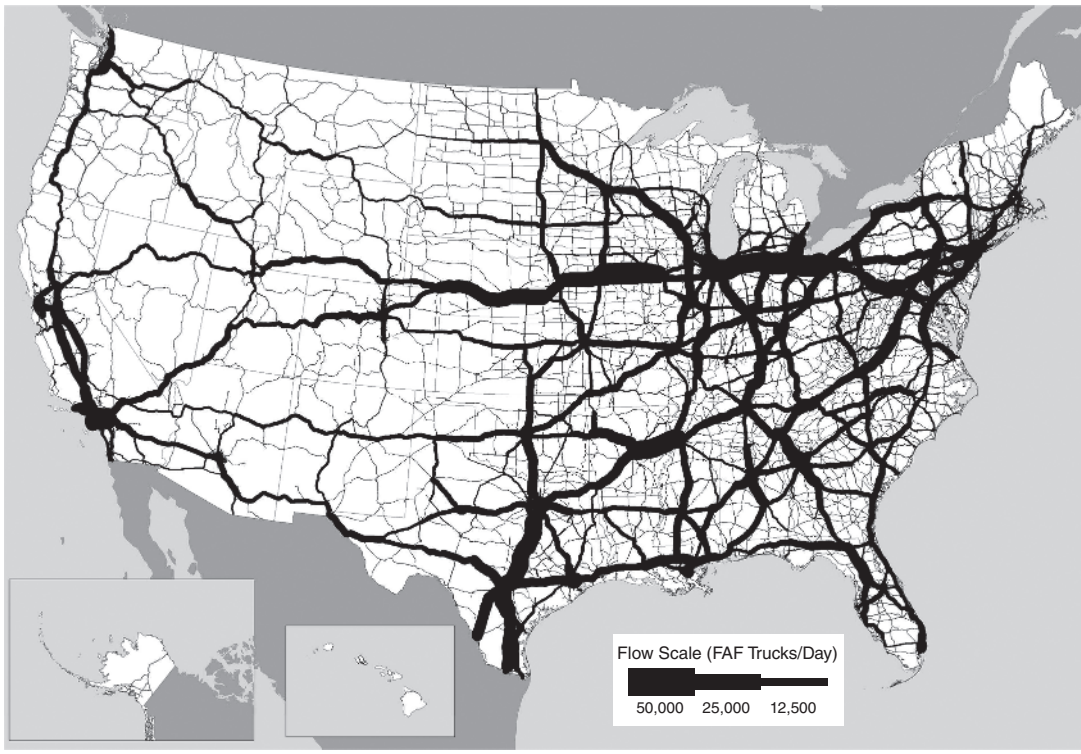


**Figure 1.4** Average daily long-haul truck traffic on the National Highway System projected for 2045. Major flows include domestic and international freight moving by truck on highway segments with more than 25 Freight Analysis Framework trucks per day and between places typically more than 50 miles apart. *Source*: US Department of Transportation / Public Domain.

places within a single metropolitan area are related to each other through spatial interaction. For example, car or bicycle traffic volume will be heavier between some parts of the metro area than others, indicating a stronger level of spatial interaction.

### *The Origin and Evolution of Urban Geography*

Urban geography as a subdiscipline of the field of geography is a twentieth-century development. In 1900, when only 40 percent of the US population lived in cities, geographers were primarily interested in the physical landscape, especially the study of landforms or geomorphology (then termed physiography). Urban geography emerged gradually over the first half of the twentieth century based around a few key concepts developed by a small number of scholars. Some of the earliest work articulated the difference between **site** (specific, mostly physical characteristics of a location) and **situation** (where a site is located relative to other locations) in explaining the initial location and subsequent growth of urban settlements into cities.

Mark Jefferson's conceptual work on the geographic structure of systems of cities (e.g., his 1939 "The Law of the Primate City") made him probably the best-known early urban geographer and foreshadowed a large body of research in the late 1950s and 1960s on city-size distributions (see Chapter 3). Chauncy Harris and Edward Ullman had a major impact on the field exemplified by their early postwar essay on the spatial structure of cities (1945), which became one of the three classic models of

intraurban spatial structure (see Chapter 6) and continues to appear in contemporary textbooks in urban geography and sociology (see Harris, 1997). The first formal urban geography courses were taught in the late 1940s, and urban geography grew into a major substantive subdiscipline a decade or so later and through the second half of the twentieth century (Berry and Wheeler, 2005).

### *Approaches to Urban Geographic Research*

Since emerging as a major substantive subdiscipline in the 1950s, urban geography has been characterized by multiple approaches to research. **Epistemology** is a branch of philosophy concerned with how and under what conditions knowledge comes to be produced – *how* the world can be known. Urban geographers often characterize their work as belonging to one or more of four major epistemological approaches – in other words, there are four major ways that urban geographers have sought to produce knowledge about and for cities: (1) positivism, (2) structuralism, (3) humanism, and (4) poststructuralism, which we will discuss in turn. Our use of these terms is not intended to conform to a strict understanding of the philosophical tenets of each approach, considered in abstraction. Instead, the terms are offered as broadly descriptive of the ways that urban geographers have understood their work.

***Positivism*** The epistemology of the scientific method is termed **positivism**. While most scientists do not spend a lot of time reflecting on the philosophical assumptions and convictions that undergird their work, it helps to do so here. This approach to urban geography assumes that a "reality" exists outside of our ability as students and researchers to comprehend it. It suggests that the only authoritative way to produce knowledge rests on rigorous empirical observation of repeatedly co-occurring events, connected with generalizing and theory-building through hypothesis testing. Researchers strive to be objective (let the facts speak for themselves) and to produce work that can be verified or disproved by other scholars. Knowledge is thought to be cumulative and to have a liberating impact on society. Several streams of research in urban geography roughly fit into the positivist approach. While positivism has received intense criticism in urban geography for reasons discussed below, most urban geographers who practice this approach to research simply think of what they do as "science" and do not explicit adhere to the philosophical tenets of positivism.

***Structuralism*** The epistemology of **structuralism** agrees with positivism on the existence of broad realities that can be understood via human inquiry. Structuralism disagrees with positivism over the ability of detached observation of repeatedly co-occurring events to produce that understanding. They argue instead that the forces that produce the observable characteristics of our world cannot themselves be directly observed – they are deep structural realities that resist easy measurement. Structural logic is most often equated with Marxism in urban geography, even though there are a variety of structural approaches. Marxism's structural logic argues that the urbanization process can only be understood in relation to a deeper understanding of capitalism in its various historical forms.

***Humanism*** **Humanistic geography** criticized spatial analysis based on its presumption that human behavior is rational and thus knowable. This epistemology also offered critiques regarding the de-humanizing impact of treating humans like clinical subjects and considering as valid only things that can be measured. Instead of scientifically verifiable knowledge, based on reproducible methods, humanism focuses on meaning and experience. It was less concerned with a theoretical perspective and hypothesis testing and more concerned with attitudes, perceptions, and values toward place and the landscape. One of the most widely known advocates of humanistic geography was Yi-Fu Tuan, who reflected on its meaning (1976, p. 266): "Humanistic geography achieves an understanding of the human world by studying people's relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place." Tuan coined the term **topophilia**, which is the love of the land and the title of one of geography's best-selling books. An example of a humanistic urban

geographer would be a geographer walking through downtown St. Louis. The geographer is not interested in numerical data or generalized models of downtown land use or structuralist explanations of the poverty observed. Instead, this geographer seeks to experientially interpret the surrounding smells and sounds as well as the nearby sights and longer views of downtown St. Louis.

***Poststructuralism*** Several streams of urban geographic research share epistemological critiques of positivism, structuralism, and humanism. While these research streams are quite distinct from one another, we think of them as sharing many **poststructuralist** characteristics, one of which is a rejection of the idea that ultimate generalizable truth can be discovered. Some argue that there is no such truth; others are agnostic about the existence of such truth but argue that it is not knowable. They levy this critique against both positivists and structuralists. They view humanists as being disengaged from pressing concerns with power and injustice. Instead, poststructuralists offer a variety of objectives for human inquiry. While not shared by all research streams that we call poststructuralist, many hold that there are realities, but that realities are contingent on the historical and geographic setting. Many also argue that realities are not essential but instead socially produced. The goal, then, is to understand how situated and socially produced realities operate, and with what consequences, in specific contexts. The goal is not to produce knowledge about truths that operate everywhere in the same way, which is how positivist inquiry is often understood.

## STREAMS OF URBAN GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

While most urban geographers have some sense of the broad epistemological approach in which they work, they typically identify more closely with specific streams of research (Figure 1.5). We describe several of the more prominent research strands that have characterized the subdiscipline of urban geography over the years. For the most part, these streams fit within the four research approaches just described, but several streams have shifted their approach over time.

### *Spatial Analysis*

**Spatial analysis**, also known as spatial science, was the first research stream to dominate urban geography. It belongs to the positivist approach, although some recent scholars argue that the methods of spatial analysis can be used to support critical research agendas. It largely relied on the tools and theories of neoclassical economics, especially regarding the presumed rationality of human behavior. Early postwar urban geography was greatly influenced by three German scholars, geographer Walter Christaller (1933) and economists August Lösch (1938) and Alfred Weber (1929). Christaller's and Lösch's work on urban settlement patterns in southern Germany came to be known as central place theory (see Chapter 3). Weber's simple but insightful theory explained industrial location based on three factors: minimizing transport costs, minimizing labor costs, and cost savings from agglomerative location (proximity to other firms, typically within cities or regions of cities). Torsten Hägerstrand's (1967 [1953]) *Innovation Diffusion as a Spatial Process* generated a firestorm of research activity in urban geography. British geographer Peter Haggett (1966) insightfully synthesized the early outpouring of spatial analysis research, most of which was conducted in the United States, and provided a more solid and confident foundation to the "new" quantitative spatial analysis that dominated urban geography through the 1960s.

A defining characteristic of spatial analysis research in urban geography is the use of statistical and mathematical models, a methodology also adopted in most other social, biological, and physical sciences. Taaffe (1974) characterized the introduction of these techniques into geography as a three-part revolution: (1) technical (statistical and mathematical), (2) theoretical, and (3) definitional. Basic statistical techniques were applied to urban data to establish generalizable relationships; theoretical models were advanced by setting forth and testing hypotheses; and geography became defined as a

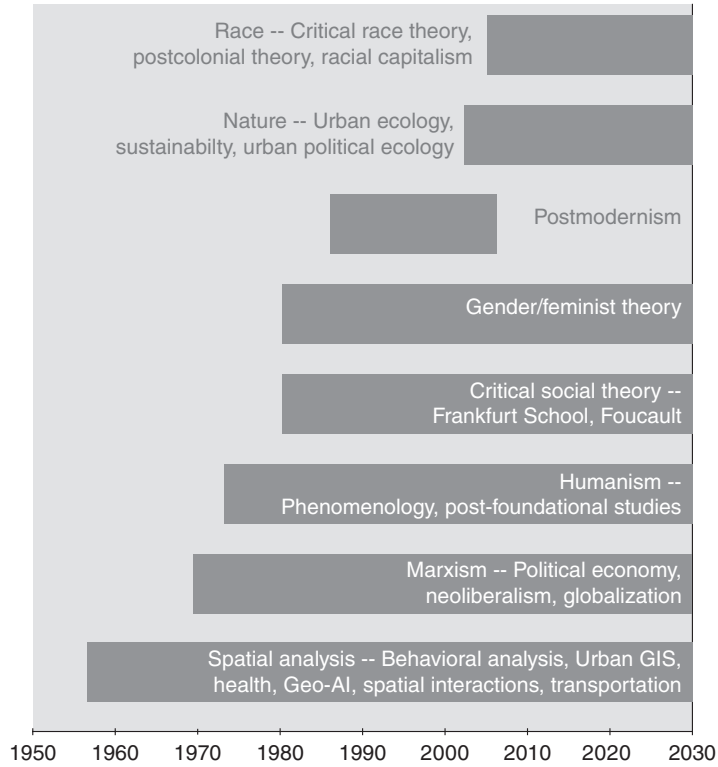


**Figure 1.5** Streams of urban geographic research, 1950–2030. Although here presented as distinctive research approaches, these research streams merge into one another, are derived from, and/or are critiques of earlier research styles. *Source*: Authors.

generalizing and scientific, rather than a descriptive, field. These changes in ideas led to a rejection of earlier approaches that emphasized describing unique places.

**Behavioral Urban Geography** argues that the aggregate-level analysis (examining large groups of people) – the approach used by most of the early spatial analysts – was too broad to explain how individuals and groups of people behave in urban settings. Behavioral urban geography follows the scientific/positivist approach used by spatial analysis but studies how individuals make spatial decisions; for example, where to buy a house or how to select the best route to work. Behavioral geographers questioned the assumption of rationality common to much early spatial analysis. They instead emphasized individual's attitudes and expectations of places; specifically, how they learn about different parts of the city, make geographic choices and decisions, assess risk and uncertainty, and the nature of their daily spatial behavior. There was overlap between behavioral urban geography and the discipline of psychology.

**Geographic Information Science (GISci)** captures much contemporary attention in the spatial analysis stream of urban geography. GISci evolved out of traditional subareas of geography such as cartography, remote sensing, and image processing of satellite data, as well as computer science and geodata coding. Following the wording adopted by the US Geological Survey, **GIS (Geographic Information Systems)** are defined as "system[s] of hardware, software, and procedures designed to support the capture, management, manipulation, analysis, modeling, and display of spatially referenced data for solving complex planning and management problems." GISci/GIS crystallized as a distinct

subfield in the mid-1980s and by the late 1980s had become a common offering in college and university curricula. GIS skills are often sought after by employers, and GIS continues today as one of the leading areas in geography in the twenty-first century Moreover, GIS and its associated technologies are increasingly present in daily urban life.

GIS has natural appeal to urban geographers, who routinely use it in planning, research, and teaching. Local, state, and federal government agencies, including those involved in urban and regional planning, and academic researchers in urban studies have greatly expanded the scope and possibilities for applications of GIS to urban issues and problems.

GIS utilizes geographic data, which are generally of two types. First, all the information in a GIS must have **location** – that is, the data must be registered in some way to a common referent. Longitude and latitude coordinates are a common *x–y* system that allow any point to be precisely located on the Earth's surface. Using such locational information, measurements can be made about the basic spatial entities of points, lines, and areas. Second, GIS almost always have multiple **attributes** – the data provide (usually quantitative) descriptions of various features as they vary across locations. One of the most powerful aspects of GIS are the way they allow analysts to look across and analyze multiple *layers* of attributes, often from a wide range of sources, all referenced to a single common locational system.

Figure 1.6 shows several data layers typical in an urban GIS. Some of the data, such as retail sales per establishment, will be referenced by the precise latitude and longitude coordinates for the establishments. Other data, such as roads, streams, or power lines, can be rendered in a linear format, which are the connections between points; even complex linear features can be represented by a series of line segments, each connecting two points. Still other data represent areas, for example administrative or political units. These areal entities are expressed as polygons, that is, a series of lines enclosing an area. GIS allows these data to be integrated for display, modeling, analysis, and management, despite the different formats of the original data.

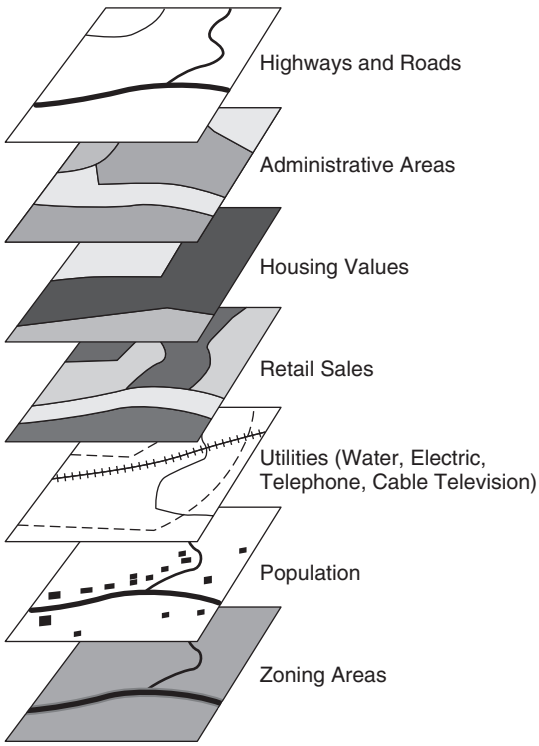


**Figure 1.6** An example of data layers of an urban GIS.

Businesses in urban areas use GIS to integrate data from a variety of sources to plan for market area change, to analyze sales performance, and to select locations for new businesses or identify existing locations where performance is unsatisfactory. Data may be derived from US Census and other governmental sources, from consulting firms, and from company records. The data may be based on census tracts, local planning districts, traffic activity zones, ZIP codes, retail market areas, or individual household interviews. GIS will allow these data sources to be combined to analyze various business growth scenarios; to project the likely impact of firm expansion, added competition, or new technologies; and to determine needed shipments among supply and demand points. In general, the spatial models developed and applied in the 1960s are increasingly being utilized in GIS in urban business enterprises, in urban planning, and in academic urban research and teaching (Sui, 1994).

**Urban health geography** is another facet of the spatial analysis stream that enjoys considerable current attention. Often relying on GISci to generate data and conduct analysis, urban health research overlaps with public health and urban planning to investigate the ways that different kinds of urban environments – dense central cities versus car-dependent suburbs, for example – affect a wide array of human health outcomes, including general fitness and disease incidence.

### *Marxist Urban Geography and Urban Political Economy*

Beginning in 1969 with the publication of *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* at Clark University, Marxist interpretations of the geographic landscape became increasingly common. Marxist urban geographers, exemplified by David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973), saw spatial analysis as too preoccupied with geometric arrangements of locations and surface correlations, and thus unable to understand and challenge injustice. For example, most industrial location theory focused on the profits of industrialists rather than concerns of the working class (Massey, 1973). Marxist geographers instead emphasized the importance of understanding the structure of capitalist production and its labor relations in studying and confronting the underlying causes of several injustices including urban poverty, discrimination against women and minorities, unequal access to urban social services, and underdevelopment in nonindustrialized countries. Marxist urban geographers studied these phenomena in terms of their inherent contradictions, and where and how phenomena fit within a wider social and economic context. Understanding the structural roots to complex social problems was thought to create the potential for revolutionary social transformation. Radical and Marxist urban geographers saw themselves as working in concert with other radical social movements that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The anger and radical activism characteristic of the early years of Marxist urban geography has matured into one of the strongest and most widely recognized of the urban geography research streams. This stream is now more commonly known as **urban political economy** and has come to focus on the changing relationship between politics, understood broadly, and the economic structure of social relations. The structure of urban systems and the internal structure of cities both reflect and constitute the political economy of cities. Urban political economy has devoted considerable attention to the rise of economic globalization and to the changing relationship between governments and urban economies as affected by neoliberal political ideology. Many urban geographers working in the political economy tradition do not espouse strongly structural perspectives and produce work that is sympathetic with several poststructural streams of research, discussed below.

### *Critical Social Theory in Urban Geography*

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the development and incorporation of a variety of **critical social theory** into human geography in general and urban geography in particular. Social theorists take on a critical political perspective, "dedicated to changing the world in some way for the better. Social theory is almost always leftist in style, character, and intent – that is, dedicated to human emancipation" (Peet, 1998, p. 7). Social theorists rejected the notion that spatial relations – distance, rate of

diffusion, intervening places – determined such social activities as commuting and migration; rather, they argued that social relations explained the observed spatial or geographic distributions or patterns identified on maps. The "human agency" or social context and power relationships must be uncovered and understood before spatial attributes can be comprehended. All human reality is "socially constructed," that is, created by humans.

### *Feminist Urban Geography*

Gender studies and feminist theory entered meaningfully into geographic research in the 1970s. This stream of work fell into three of the four epistemological approaches. Early work, like that of Hanson and Hanson (1980), studied journey-to-work patterns of males and females in Uppsala, Sweden, and found that "a significantly lower level of mobility existed for working women than for working men" (p. 294). They used the tools of spatial analysis to examine questions about gendered disparities. Throughout the 1980s and to the present, interest in feminist geography greatly accelerated. As Melissa Gilbert (1997, p. 166) observed, "Feminist research on urban processes and daily life is flourishing, as evidence by the proliferation of conference papers, journal articles, and books on these topics." She also noted that "many feminist urban geographers have begun to examine the diversity of women's experiences in cities, and the ways in which different structures of inequality shape urban processes" (p. 167).

Feminist theory and feminist urban geography took on a more structuralist character as the links between patriarchy and capitalism were explored, especially with regard to the structured roles assigned to women for the responsibilities of social reproduction. Significant progress was made linking urban spatial structure (e.g., suburbanization) with the gendered division of labor and a set of domestic responsibilities that enabled the exploitation of labor.

More recently, feminist theory has become quite diverse and resonates most strongly with the poststructural approaches as described here. Feminism maintains its focus on power and oppression but argues that patriarchy cannot be understood solely from its relation to capitalist structures: "Feminist theory argues that gender, like class and race, is a basic building block of social organization. To this extent gender relations sustain a system of power capable of shaping . . . capacities of individuals. Gender . . . is not a . . . given of biology but is a product of male and female actions that is institutionalized through families, schools, the workplace, and the state" (Pickles and Watts, 1992, pp. 312–313). Gender is part of an intersectional array of systems of power; it is socially constructed with material consequences. Feminist epistemologies have become much more nuanced and varied compared to earlier phases of feminist scholarship. These understandings have helped bring a feminist consciousness to the study of urban geography, in contrast to earlier approaches that assume a "masculine" city. Gilbert (1997) succinctly summarized the current status of feminist urban geography: "Feminist urban geographers, while maintaining the significance of gender as an analytic category, are now examining at a concrete level how different structures and relations of inequality are mutually and spatially constituted. The exploration of differences in women's experiences of this city often requires reconceptualizing feminist urban theory" (p. 168).

### *Postmodern Urban Geography*

The introduction of postmodernism to geography can be traced, in part, to writings by Michael Dear and Ed Soja during the 1980s (summarized in Dear 1988 and Soja 1989). Postmodernism, like other streams in the poststructural approach, rejects science as the only valid way to generate knowledge. Its critique of positivism and structuralism was perhaps the most severe, however, and postmodernism became one of the most controversial research streams. Part of the difficulty was that many scholars and students confused a set of societal changes that were described as *postmodernity* with the research agenda of *postmodernism*. The former began several decades before geographers engaged – society became cynical about the prospects of rationality and science to solve pressing social problems. Cynicism and skepticism increasingly permeated Western societies and was followed by cultural fragmentation and celebration of difference that led into social, political, and economic fragmentation.

Postmodernism, by contrast, is generally tied to trends in art and architecture that began in the 1970s. Before, the dominance of high modernism was grounded on extremely simple unadorned forms that reflect and facilitate the function of the structure rather than calling attention to the form. Many of skyscrapers in downtown built in the early postwar period are extreme examples of this approach. Postmodern design rebelled and reveled in the pastiche of many low-brow design elements in nonreferential assemblages. Brought into academia, postmodernism was a culture-centric rejection of the perceived sterility and anonymity of spatial analysis and the overbearing nature of Marxist structuralism. Michael Dear declared in *The Postmodern Urban Condition* (2000) that "The tenets of modernist thought have been undermined, discredited; in their place, a multiplicity of new ways of knowing have been substituted." Dear continued: "As these geographies of the twenty-first century are being born, the rise of postmodern thought has encouraged, even insisted on new ways of seeing. Founded on a sensitivity to difference and radical undecidability, postmodernism has brought into question the ways we need, represent, and make choices" (p. 1).

Beyond the rejection of modernism, however, it proved to be difficult to define what postmodernism *is*. In fact, given its spurning of categories, as well as its many and varied interpretations, postmodernism virtually repudiates any simple definition. It rejoices in complexity and plurality, the subjective and indefinable, and disorder and contradictions. While postmodernism wishes to unleash repression and inhibitions created by the forces of modernism and eliminate socially based power relationships such as racism and sexism, many criticized it for regressive or fatally ambiguous political implications. Despite drawing considerable attention through the mid-1990s, few urban geographers today claim to work in this approach and its attendant controversy is mostly gone.

### *Nature and Urban Geography*

The last several decades have witnessed countless environmental disasters (note that we do not say "natural" disasters) that have played out in cities across the planet. While there has long been an interest in "ecology" from scholars interested in cities (e.g., note the Chicago School of Urban Sociology's use of biological metaphors in the early twentieth century – see Chapter 6), climate change and the vital need to make our cities, our homes, sustainable has made these topics vital to urban geographers. There are a variety of questions that get asked, and styles of doing research, but in general, the three motifs shown in Figure 1.5 are very active. Urban ecology refers to ecological science being conducted in and about cities. Sustainability studies include a wide variety of efforts including urban planning, science communication, and green engineering. Urban political ecology is a derivative of urban political economy, but with the focus clearly on the dialectic relationships between cities and nature, sometimes referred to as urban natures. We take up this theme in Chapter 13, new to this edition of the textbook.

### *Race*

Race has been a long-standing concern of urban geography. But the approaches adopted by researchers have tended to align with the already-described streams of research. Most recently, a new energy has been devoted to examining issues of race with newly invigorated theoretical approaches. Critical race theory is an approach that emerged within legal studies in the 1990s and has had an increasing influence with geography in part because it provides a way to deal with racial inequities as structural. Note that critical race theory (so-called "CRT") has been a lightning rod of US electoral politics and culture wars, increasingly standing in for a very ill-defined set of ideological and political arguments that refuse to consign racial discrimination and injustice to the waste bin of history. Indeed, several states are in the process of making the teaching of "CRT" either illegal, against state policy, or culturally untenable. In Figure 1.5, we are referring to the legal studies tradition of critical race theory, but also push back strenuously against the demonization of structural understandings of race. Indeed, structural understandings of race are what unite the growing stream of research in urban geography. Racial capitalism specifies that the structures of racial oppression are deeply historical and pre-date the emergence of capitalism in early modern Europe. Capitalism, thus, is inherently based on racialized hierarchies.

Racial capitalism contrasts with traditional urban political economy in the way it has been examined and articulated within geography, which tends to emphasize class relations a la Marx over other axes of structural oppression. By centering race at the core of capitalism, this approach seeks in some ways to re-examine things that we thought we already knew. Postcolonial theory predates the recent interest in racial capitalism, but along with indigenous studies, increasingly examines the complex ways that racial capitalism was taken into, and spread because of, the global colonial exploits of European nation-states. Critical concerns with settler colonialism are common in this variant.

## DEFINING CITIES

### *Rural–Urban Continuum*

In order to understand the nature of cities and the urbanization processes that shape them, we need to think about how we define cities. We will do so in two ways. First, we will use the notion of a **rural–urban continuum**. The rural–urban continuum recognizes that places have a wide variety of characteristics, and we are interested in the range of place types that extends from rural – or places that are clearly not urban in any meaningful way – on one side of the continuum, to places that are very urban – that anyone would recognize as being a city. So, for example, a wilderness area or an area with very few farms would be considered by most people to be not urban or rural in some meaningful way. On the other hand, in the United States context, New York City, specifically Manhattan, is clearly the most iconically urban place in the entire country. Figure 1.7 visualizes the rural–urban continuum, along with some of the distinctive characteristics of places that occupies its end points.

Remember, however, this is a *continuum* of place types, which means that it's not just the endpoints of the continuum that we need to identify; there are all kinds of places in between the endpoints! Where do we position these places along the continuum? Clearly, we would locate cities, large and small, on the urban side of the continuum. But, what about a small hamlet, a cluster of houses with very little commercial or institutional land use, or a village, which is larger and has some commercial and institutional land use? What about towns, which are larger still? Or, what about suburbs? Some of the older suburbs developed in the early twentieth century are quite large and dense and belong on the urban side of the continuum. Other suburbs are developed with very low density on the far-flung exurban edge of metropolitan regions. Are these places on the rural side of the continuum?

The rural–urban continuum leads us to think about the criteria that we can use to divide – to draw a line across – the continuum and to better understand the essential characteristics of cities. One is related

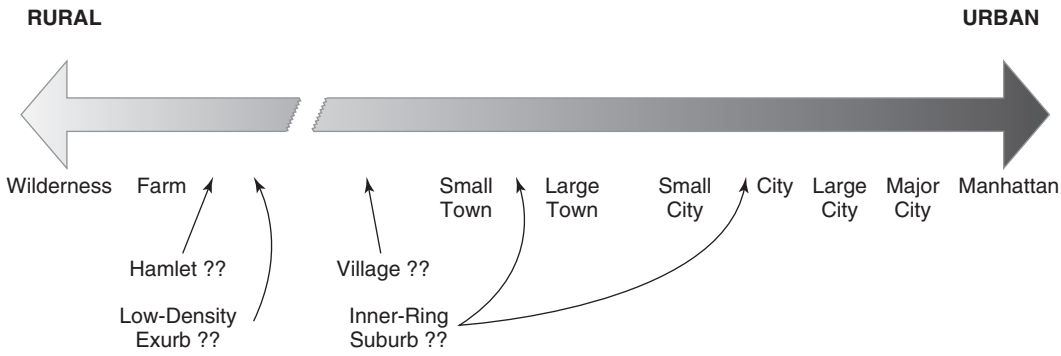


**Figure 1.7** Rural–urban continuum. Governments and researchers often classify settlements into "urban" and "rural" (or "nonurban"). In reality, settlements have multiple characteristics that can be thought of as being continua. The challenge is to set criteria by which the distinction between urban and rural places can be drawn. *Source*: Authors.

to population. Clearly, cities have more people than do places that are not urban. Seems pretty simple! Even so, this criterion can vary considerably depending on which country we are looking at. Some countries will define as urban a place with as few as 200 residents. In other countries, for example in the United States, it has long been the tradition that you need to have 2000 people in a town in order to consider that town urban. Other countries set that threshold at a much larger number, even as high as 20,000! So, you can see that the criterion of population gets applied in different ways in different places.

But conceptually, population alone is not sufficient – we also need to know how densely settled the population is. In other words, we need to know something about how large the settlement is relative to the population living there. So, a second criterion is density: Urban places are more densely settled than are rural places. Together, population size and population density take us a long way toward being able to distinguish between cities and non-cities.

But here is a caveat: there are very sparsely populated spaces, especially in the Western countries and especially within the United States, that are clearly urban. Think again, for example, of extremely low-density development on the exurban fringe dozens of miles away from the downtown of a large metropolitan area like Atlanta. Even though they have some of the characteristics of small town or rural life, they are strongly connected to the greater Atlanta metropolitan area in meaningful ways. And we would probably consider those spaces to be urban. On the other hand, there are spaces with large populations living in close proximity, where almost everybody who lives there farms or fishes for a living. Do we really want to consider that space and those people to be fundamentally urban?

In addition to population size and population density, additional criteria can be *social*, and they can be *economic*; they can be *political,* and they can be *cultural*. They can be *ecological,* or they can be *architectural* or design-related. The key is to think critically and comprehensively about what makes cities fundamentally different from spaces that are not cities.

Urban theorist Neil Brenner argues that the rural–urban continuum is antiquated and misleading. He argues instead that urbanism is so deeply embedded globally – as part of political, economic, social, and cultural systems; facilitated by rapidly advancing telecommunication capabilities – that it makes no sense to think of *any* place as not urban. Instead, he argues that we should think about **planetary urbanism** and dispense with trying to distinguish the urban from the (nonexistent) rural (Brenner and Schmid 2012).

### *What Is the Spatial Extent of Cities?*

As we continue our discussion of how to define cities, we shift to a focus on defining the *spatial extent* of cities. In other words, how do we define the *boundaries* of cities? There are two broad approaches to defining boundaries.

***Functional Approaches*** One way to define the city's spatial extent is to think about its sphere of influence – in other words, the space that is heavily influenced by the city. **Tributary areas** refer to the movement of consumers from a surrounding area into a city, or the movements of urban goods or services out to a surrounding population. Think about a hospital, for example, that provides services to people who live in the city but also to people who live outside of the city and travel in for medical services. This is a tributary area. Or think about sports teams. Athens, Georgia, is home to a successful college football team and folks come from a long distance away to consume a live sporting event. Both of these examples illustrate that a city has influence culturally, economically, commercially, and in other ways on an area that is larger than the city itself.

Another way in which cities have a sphere of influence larger than the city itself is the **daily urban system**, which captures the daily movements of labor – its workers. The daily urban system describes the space from which commuters will move into the city for employment. We sometimes refer to these spaces as labor sheds and/or commuting fields. This reflects the daily economic, social, and even political interchange that a city has with its surrounding areas through the commuting process.

***Formal Approaches*** So far, we have discussed ways to functionally define city boundaries in terms of their spheres of influence on their surrounding areas. Formal approaches designate the actual boundaries of urban places. The most common formal approach refers to the legal boundaries of the incorporated place or city. This is typically what we mean when we say "the City of _____" (the City of Atlanta, for example). Note that formal city boundaries can be very different from what people often think of as "the city." In Atlanta, the formal city boundary defines a fairly small area with a pretty small population (~500,000) relative to the population of the entire metropolitan area (> 6,000,000). Surrounding the City of Atlanta are dozens of legally incorporated suburban jurisdictions and lots of unincorporated land that is governed by the county-level government.

We call formally bounded cities that are smaller than their "real" or functionally defined area of influence **underbounded** (Figure 1.8). This exists very often in older metropolitan areas, where formal boundaries were set early in history. As the city grew, separate legal jurisdictions often surrounded the older city. There are other cities, however, that are **overbounded**, and include a lot of undeveloped space within the formal city boundary. Overbounded cities are much more common in the West and the Southwest United States where rapid urban growth has come in recent decades. In all US metropolitan areas, there is a complex array of legal jurisdictions – and not just cities and their legally incorporated suburbs. Infrastructure and services, like fire protection, school districts, and water and sewage, are often organized in legally recognized jurisdictions that often do not fit neatly within the legal cities. Overall, metropolitan areas suffer from **jurisdictional fragmentation**, which is confusing and often politically contentious.

A second formal approach to defining urban boundaries is for statistical purposes – that is, boundaries that are set in order to facilitate the collection and dissemination of data. These are statistical

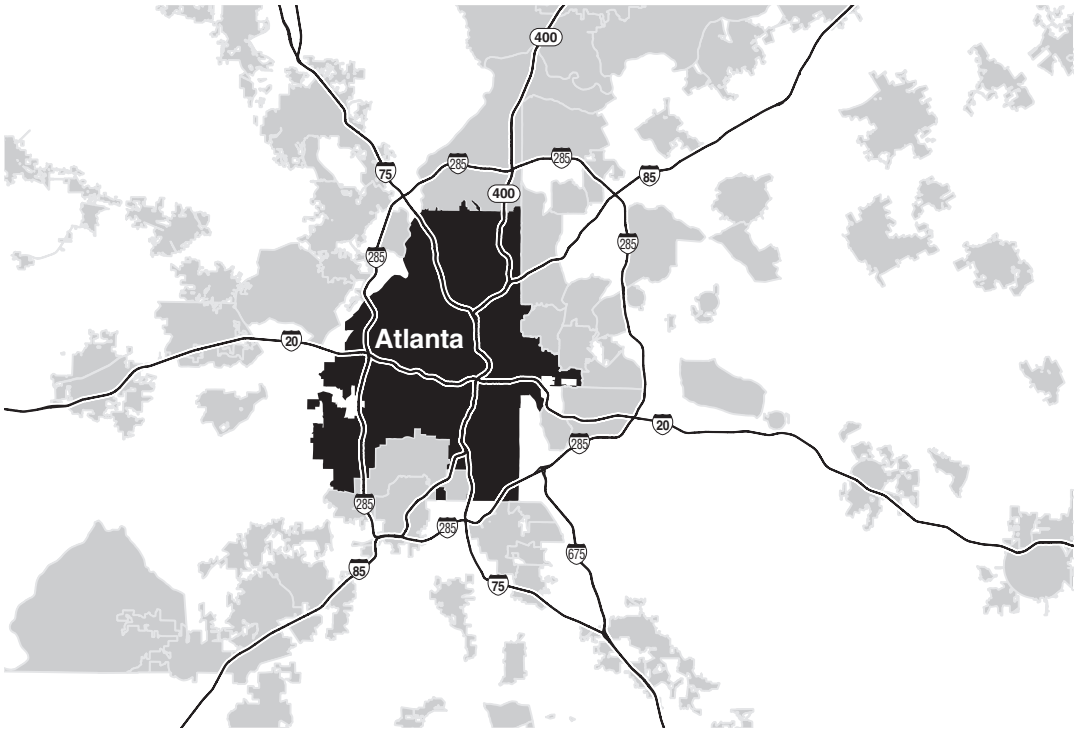


**Figure 1.8** The city of Atlanta (in black) is surrounded by many legally incorporated places (in gray) and illustrates both the underbounded nature of the city and the problem of jurisdictional fragmentation. *Source*: Authors.

boundaries. In the United States, the Census Bureau has a constitutional mandate to enumerate the population, and also collects a lot of important data about the population. The Census has a wide array of formal boundaries that are set by the Bureau. One set of boundaries captures small areas *within* cities. Starting with the smallest areas in which several hundred people live, called **blocks**, the Census formally sets boundaries for the entire nation. Blocks are used in the redistricting process. **Block groups** are groups of blocks and contain on average about 1,000 people.

**Tracts** are made up of groups of block groups (this arrangement is termed "nested") and house on average 4,000–6,000 people. Tracts are the units that are thought to best represent the idea of "neighborhood" (though there is a lot of debate about how well they do so) and are widely used in every arena. The Census Bureau has a set of data for these areas that now extend back many decades, which allows geographers to conduct research on neighborhood change.

The Census Bureau also defines urban boundaries in other ways. **Urbanized areas** and the smaller **urban clusters** reflect the most "on-the-ground" patterns of urbanization. These boundaries encompass the contiguous urban built-up area – the area that has urban land use. These boundaries are the most consistent with what you might "see" as an urban boundary from an aerial photograph or satellite image. The downside of defining urbanized areas/urban clusters is that their boundaries change dramatically over time as the urbanization process continues.

The last Census boundary concept that we want to discuss is the **Core Based Statistical Area**, or CBSA. This concept attempts to formally represent the broader region around a city or cities that is functionally integrated. The building blocks for CBSAs are whole counties – they are either in or they are out! New England has two sets of CBSA boundaries, one based on counties, and the other based on townships. There are two types of counties in CBSAs. One is the core county, which must have a core urban area with a population of 10,000 to 50,000, OR a population greater than 50,000.

Additional counties are added to core counties when they are contiguous (meaning that they touch) and sufficiently interconnected on a daily basis, defined largely in terms of commuting. So, when a county adjacent to a core county has a sufficient share of its residents who work in the core county (> 25%), it is added to the CBSA. Commuters can also come from the core county into the adjacent county. This is the Census Bureau's attempt to approximate the daily urban system using a consistent geography that is very stable over time.

CBSAs are classified into two categories, depending on the size of the city in the core county. **Metropolitan areas** have as their core an urbanized area that exceeds 50,000 in population. **Micropolitan areas** (Box 1.2) have as their core an urban cluster with a population between 10,000 and 49,999.

In order to reflect the fact that metropolitan areas are growing ever larger and ever more influential over a broader area, **combined areas** are literally the combination of metropolitan areas with other adjacent metropolitan areas and/or adjacent micropolitan areas if they (1) share a boundary and (2) are economically interconnected through commuting.

### BOX 1.2 Micropolitan Areas

The US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regularly updates its guidelines for defining metropolitan areas in the United States, known as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). In the late 1990s, OMB conducted a comprehensive review of the concepts and definitions associated with metropolitan areas (Metropolitan Area Standards Review Project, aka MASRP). As a result of this process, the OMB in 2000 altered the concept, terminology, and definition of metropolitan areas. The updated concept is still based on the economic and social relationship between a core urban area and its surrounding area. The concept still builds areas with whole counties, except in New

(*continued*)

**BOX 1.2 (*Continued*)**

England, where an additional set of areas is defined using towns. The rules result in a set of Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs). Metropolitan CBSAs (MSAs) are mostly like the old MSAs, centered on a core county containing at least one qualifying urban are with at least 50,000 population (also known as urbanized areas), plus adjacent counties that are strongly linked with the core by an employment interchange (commuting) of at least 25 percent.

The 2000 OMB rules also created a new geographic designation called **micropolitan areas**. Micropolitan areas are also a CBSA and are built on a county containing at least one qualifying urban area with population between 10,000 and 49,999 (also known as urban clusters). Surrounding counties can be added if the employment interchange (commuting) between the core and adjacent counties is sufficiently strong. Micropolitan areas capture the concept of a small city and its functional surroundings.

The OMB last updated the delineations of metropolitan and micropolitan CBSAs based on the 2020 Census in July 2021. Figure B1.2 shows the metropolitan and micropolitan CBSAs for Georgia based on these definitions.

Figure B1.2 also points to an example of micropolitan areas from nonmetropolitan Georgia. Dublin is a small city (2020 population of 16,074) located in central Georgia. It qualifies as a micropolitan core. Located in Laurens County (population 49,546), Dublin connects with Macon and Savannah via Interstate 16. Laurens County combines with two adjacent counties to make up the Dublin micropolitan CBSA because a community interchange of over 25 percent exists in each of the two adjacent counties and Laurens County. The principal city in Johnson County (population 9,643) is Wrightsville, with a 2020 population of 2,195. The main city in Treutlen County (population 6,901) is Soperton, with a 2020 population of 3,115. The three-county micropolitan area has a combined 2020 population of 64,090. Wheeler County (2020 population 7,471) is also located adjacent to Laurens County, but is not part of the micropolitan area. Whereas there are relatively few jobs in Johnson County and the highway commute to Dublin is only about 15 miles over a good quality two-lane road, the trip from McRae, the county seat in Wheeler County, is more than 30 miles over a fair quality two-lane road.

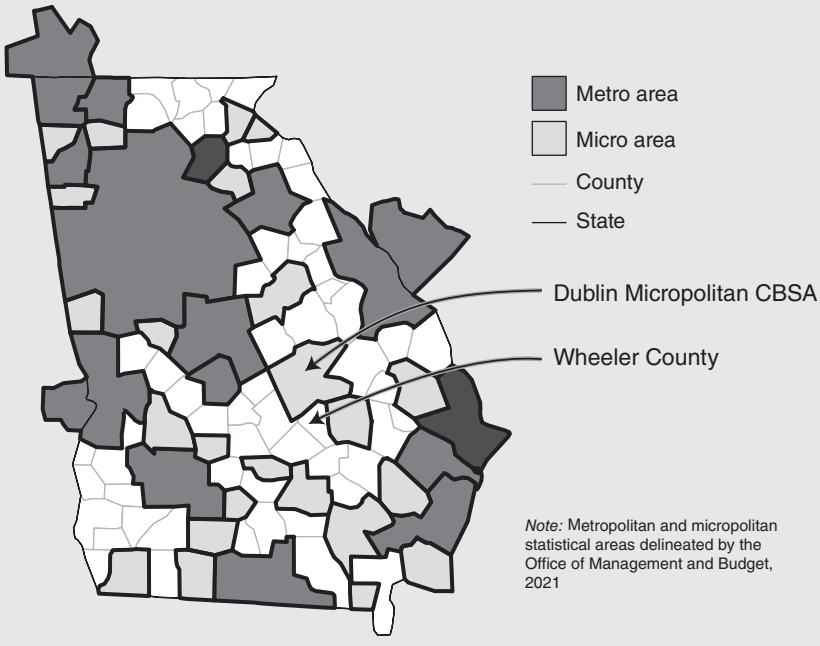


**Figure B1.2** Metropolitan and micropolitan Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) for Georgia, as defined by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2021. *Source*: Reproduced from United States Census Bureau / Public Domain.

## Introduction to This Textbook

As we have discussed, urban geography has evolved into one of the leading teaching and research subareas of geography over the past few decades. Urban geography has been taught to tens of thousands of undergraduates in recent years, many of whom have gone on to pursue graduate degrees and careers in urban geography, urban and regional planning, public administration, and related fields, as well as in teaching. To a great many students, the study of urban geography has proved to be a fascinating and stimulating field with high relevance to everyday life. Having provided a contemporary overview of this field, we conclude this chapter with a brief summary of this textbook.

Following this introductory chapter, we turn to the origins and historical development of cities. Why did early cities arise when they did and why did they prosper in certain locations and not in others? These first three chapters largely focus on metropolitan systems. Chapter 3 introduces theories and issues associated with the evolution of American urban systems, including the American urban hierarchy, during the years 1630–1920. It addresses the concepts of metropolitan dominance, urbanization processes, and contemporary urban-economic restructuring. Chapter 4 takes up similar themes focused on the last 100 years or so, ranging from the peak of industrial urbanization to industrial decline and the emergence of neoliberalism and globalization. We dive into the internal structure and functioning of cities in Chapter 5, including sections on industrial location, gentrification, and sprawl.

We take up in Chapters 6 through 9 vital aspects of the social landscapes of the metropolitan area. Here the focus is on people and how and where they live. Chapter 6 presents traditional models of urban social space but also examines new factors that organize intraurban space – globalization and postmodernism. Chapter 7 focuses on urban housing, particularly the role of government, the debate over discrimination in the housing market, housing "blight," and urban sprawl. Chapter 8 relates the topics of residential segregation, race, and poverty, with careful attention to the North American inner city. Chapter 9 analyzes the relationships among the issues of immigration, ethnicity, and urbanism, with special emphasis on the geographic patterns of Latino and Asian immigration. This chapter will be of utmost interest to those of you who live in a rapidly changing social and ethnic environment.

Chapter 10 presents major issues of metropolitan governance and geographical and political fragmentation. Chapter 11 explains how urban planning works and how it can help create a better city. Chapter 12 is new to this edition of the textbook and treats in focused form the topic of urban transportation. Chapter 13 is also new and focuses on the increasingly important topic of the relationship between cities and nature, including climate change. Those of you who wish to make a career in planning will find this chapter especially informative.

In the final section of the book, we first examine cities in the developed or industrialized parts of the world other than the United States and Canada (Chapter 14) and in the less developed, nonindustrial areas of the world (Chapter 15). These are fascinating reviews of where and how people live such different lives in the world cities. Finally, Chapter 16 details the geographic layout of cities in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeastern Asia.

## Wrapping Up

Urban geography today is the leading substantive area of geography and the one in which GIS technology, the leading growth segment in contemporary geography, is most often applied. As with other social and behavioral sciences, urban geography is a product of the past century, with most of its accomplishments occurring only within the past few decades. Urban geography has taken advantage of using multiple perspectives on how to conduct research to better understand our changing urban regions in the United States and Canada and around the world. Given the rich academic and pedagogic traditions

built by multiple generations of geographers interested in the city, contemporary urban geographic education, training, and research offer challenging employment opportunities in private industry, government, planning, and education.

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