

Global or world cities

Megacities are urban areas with populations greater than 10 million. **Global or world cities**, on the other hand, can be of any size. At present there are 31 such cities (Figure 6.11). They all have populations over 1 million and seven of them are megacities (Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, Mexico City, New York, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Seoul). What distinguishes a global city from a megacity? Global cities are recognised worldwide as places of great prestige, status, power and influence. All global cities are critical hubs in the growing global economy. There are three 'top dog' global cities. They are London, New York and Tokyo. These are the financial centres of the global economy and it is from this that they derive their power and influence. Each of these three cities is the hub of a network of smaller global cities. Four global cities are located outside these three networks – Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Buenos Aires and Sydney, all in the Southern Hemisphere.

What is the difference, if any, between a megacity and a world city?

Just check that you understand the main causes of rapid urbanisation, namely:

- high volumes of rural-urban migration
- high rates of natural population increase
- a quickening rate of economic development.

6.2 The problems of rapid urbanisation

The world is rapidly becoming urbanised, and the pace of urbanisation is greatest in LICs. For example, the population of the city of São Paulo in Brazil grew from 7 million in 1970 to an estimated 20 million in 2010. Covering an area of 8000 km², it is now the second largest urban area in the Americas. Here, as elsewhere in the developing world, this rapid and often unplanned growth has created a range of problems, mainly because of the speed at which it has occurred.

- **Housing** – Much of the rapid growth of LIC cities has been caused by people moving in from rural areas or other parts of the country. When they arrive, there is nowhere for them to live, especially as many are looking for cheap, low-cost housing. Millions of people live in what were meant to be temporary **shanty towns** or **squatter settlements** (for more information see Part 6.5). Even for those with money, the demand for housing exceeds supply. As a result, housing is expensive relative to people's wages and salary. In general, because of poor transport, the most sought-after housing is close to the city centre with its shops and places of work.
- **Access to water and electricity** – It is commonly the case that the provision of basic services does not keep up with the growth of population. As a consequence, not all parts of the built-up area are provided with running water, sanitation or electricity. Many people have no option but to rely on fires for cooking and lighting, and on polluted streams for water and sewage disposal.
- **Traffic congestion and transport** – The provision of proper roads and public transport is another aspect of city life that lags behind the growth in population. As a result the transport systems in the city are overloaded and overcrowded, and traffic congestion is a major problem for everyone – rich or poor. The high numbers of vehicles also causes high levels of atmospheric pollution in cities, many of which suffer regularly from smog (a mixture of smoke and fog).



Figure 6.12: Traffic congestion

- Health** – There are not enough doctors, clinics or hospitals to deal with the rapid increase in population. With large parts of the mushrooming city having little or no access to clean water or sanitation, diseases and infections, such as typhoid and cholera, spread quickly. Atmospheric pollution leads to widespread respiratory problems.
- Education** – Rapid population growth also means a lack of schools. Although most cities manage to provide some primary education, not all children go on to secondary school. This is because of the cost and because many children have to work to help support the family.
- Employment** – Although people are attracted to cities for work, many are unable to find proper paid work. Instead they are either unemployed or become part of the massive **informal sector**, surviving as best as they can. This includes selling goods on the street (Figure 6.13), working as cleaners or shoe-shiners or cooking and selling food from home or by the roadside (see Chapter 4.3 on page 97 for more information on the informal sector). Even where there is paid work in new factories, these are often many kilometres away from the shanty areas where most newcomers live.
- Social problems** – Given how close to each other people live and the poor conditions experienced by sometimes millions of city dwellers, it is not surprising that they also suffer from high crime rates, drug trafficking and theft. The poorest areas are often inhabited by violent street gangs.



Figure 6.13: Informal street-side workers

6.3 The segregation of urban land uses

Look at the built-up area of most towns and cities and you will see the same recurring features – a **central business district**, industrial areas, a variety of residential districts, small shopping centres and so on. Figure 6.14 shows the segregation that is typical of HIC cities. What causes this segregation of different urban land uses? Why are the different land uses not jumbled up together?

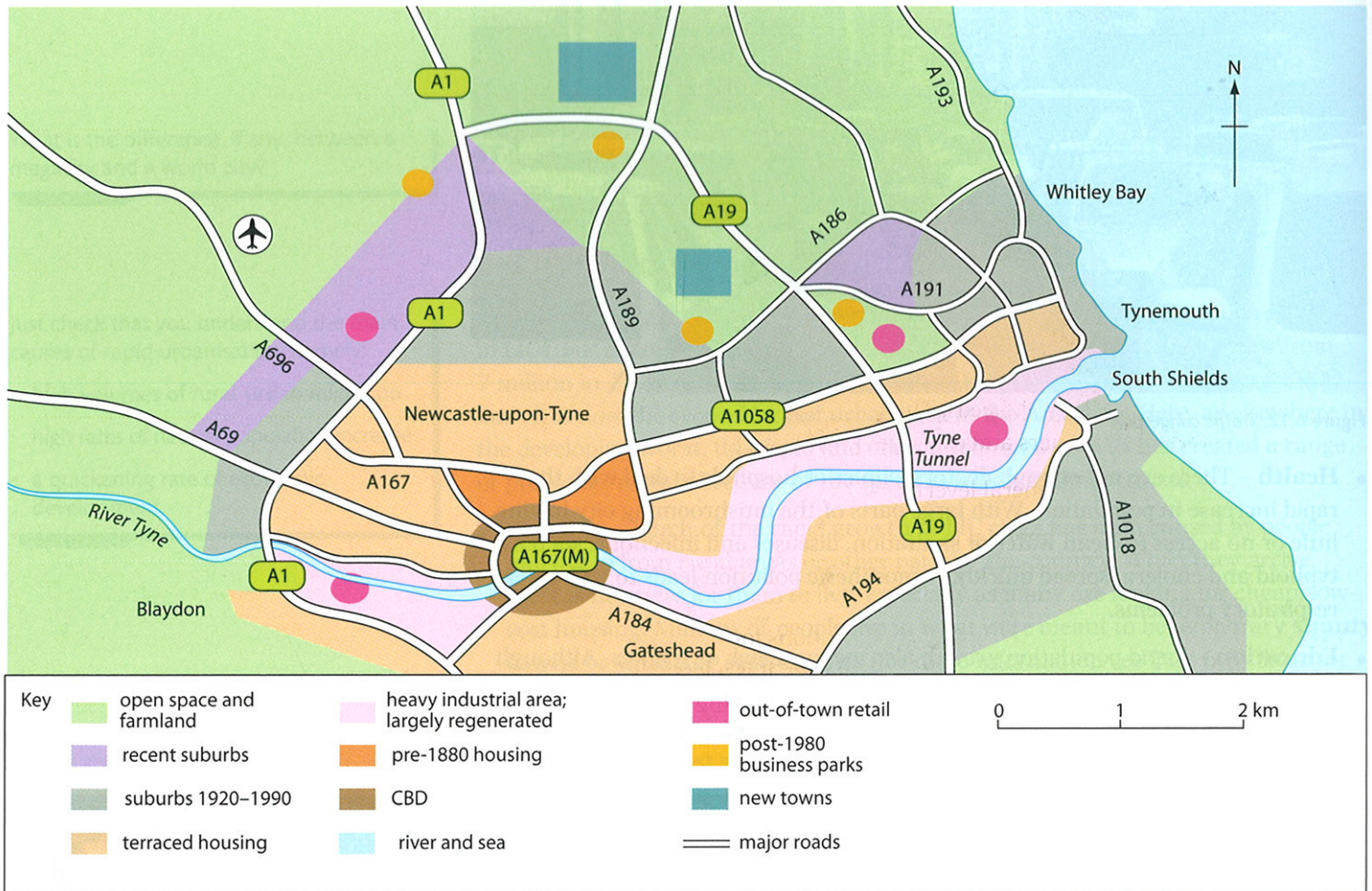
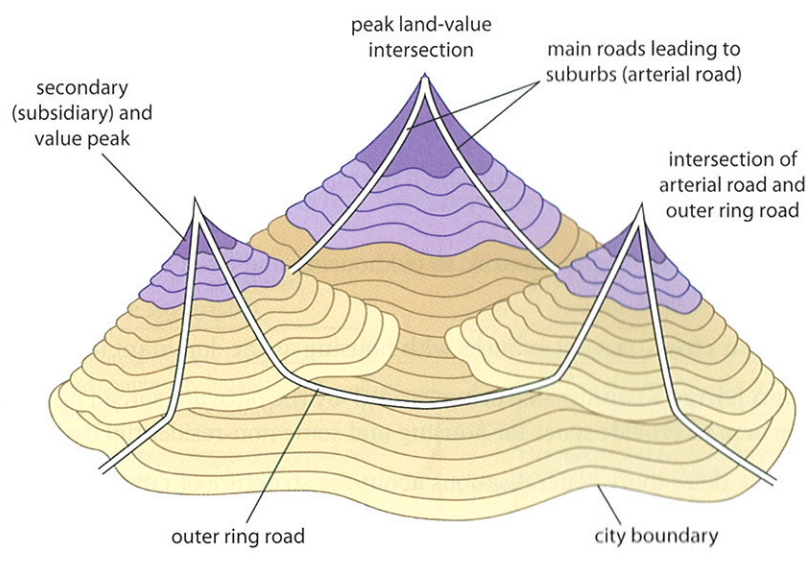


Figure 6.14: The urban pattern of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England

Study Figure 6.14. In what ways has the River Tyne influenced the urban pattern?

The main cause of the segregation is the **urban land market**. As with the selling of any item, a particular site within the built-up area will normally be sold to the highest bidder. The highest bidder will be that activity that can make best use of a site. It is usually retail shops that can make the best financial use of land and property. To understand this, two related points need to be made clear.

First, land values vary within the urban area. Generally, they decline outwards from the centre, from the **peak land-value intersection** (Figure 6.15). However, relatively high land values are also found along major roads leading from the centre and around ring roads. Small land value peaks occur where radial and ring roads cross each other. Businesses will pay extra for sites in these locations, because they are locations enjoying good accessibility.



Describe the pattern of 'relief' created by urban land values, as shown in Figure 6.15.

Figure 6.15: Urban land values

Secondly, similar activities or land uses come together because:

- they have the same locational needs. These may be large amounts of space or being accessible to customers and employees
- they can afford the same general level of land values.

Thus retailing and other commercial businesses (particularly offices) will cluster in and around the centre. This is the most accessible part of the built-up area. As a result of the clustering, they help define a central business district (CBD). In contrast, manufacturing also needs accessible locations for the assembly of raw materials and the dispatch of finished goods. However, it is a less capital-intensive use of space than shops or offices. Therefore, it has less buying power. So manufacturing is found outside the CBD and most often along major roads that provide good accessibility and transport links. Housing is even less competitive on the urban land market. For this reason it tends to be pushed further away from the centre. As land becomes cheaper towards the urban fringe, so houses can become more spacious.

In which part of the industrial HIC city were most factories located?

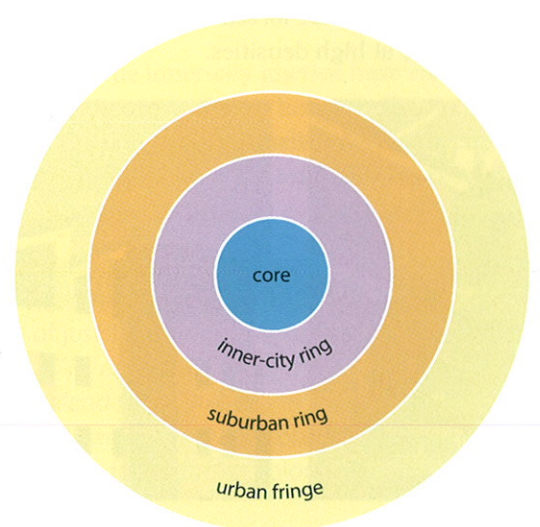


Figure 6.16: The four zones of a city

Because towns and cities grow outwards from a historic nucleus, they show concentric zoning – that is, a series of rings wrapping around the historic nucleus or core. Hence, it is possible to recognise in all towns in all cities, no matter where they are located in the world, the same four features (Figure 6.16):

- a **core** – the oldest part of the city which normally contains the central business district
- an **inner-city ring** – early suburbs, so old housing and often some non-residential land uses
- a **suburban ring** – present suburbs with housing as the dominant land use
- an **urban fringe** – countryside being 'eroded' by the outward spread of the built-up area to provide space for housing and some non-residential uses.

We may make three more generalisations about the structure of cities as one moves outwards from the core:

- the general age of the built-up area decreases
- the style of architecture and urban design change
- the overall density of development decreases.

This urban model of four zones applies to virtually all towns and cities. What varies in different parts of the world is the character of each zone – namely what goes on in them in terms of land use and the type of people living there.

6.4 The segregation of people in cities

People, like land uses, become sorted within the urban area by the same urban land market and the same process of bidding for sites. People become segregated into groups on the basis of their social class, type of occupation and ethnicity (Figure 6.17). People prefer to live close to those whom they think are of the same status. However, the reason for most of these differences is personal wealth. The wealthiest people are able to buy smart and large homes in the best locations. The poorest people have no option but to live in cramped or substandard housing in the worst residential areas. Many of them are unable to buy a home. Instead they have to rent. Due to their limited means, they are forced to occupy only a small amount of space, and therefore have to live at high densities.



Figure 6.17: Different types of housing typically occupied by different socio-economic groups

Globally, one of the most obvious signs of the sorting of different population groups into different spaces are the ghettos that are to be found in many cities. A **ghetto** is an area where an ethnic minority is concentrated and is the dominant population group. In the UK, there has been much immigration from Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean. The immigrants have settled and become concentrated in parts of the inner areas of towns and cities.

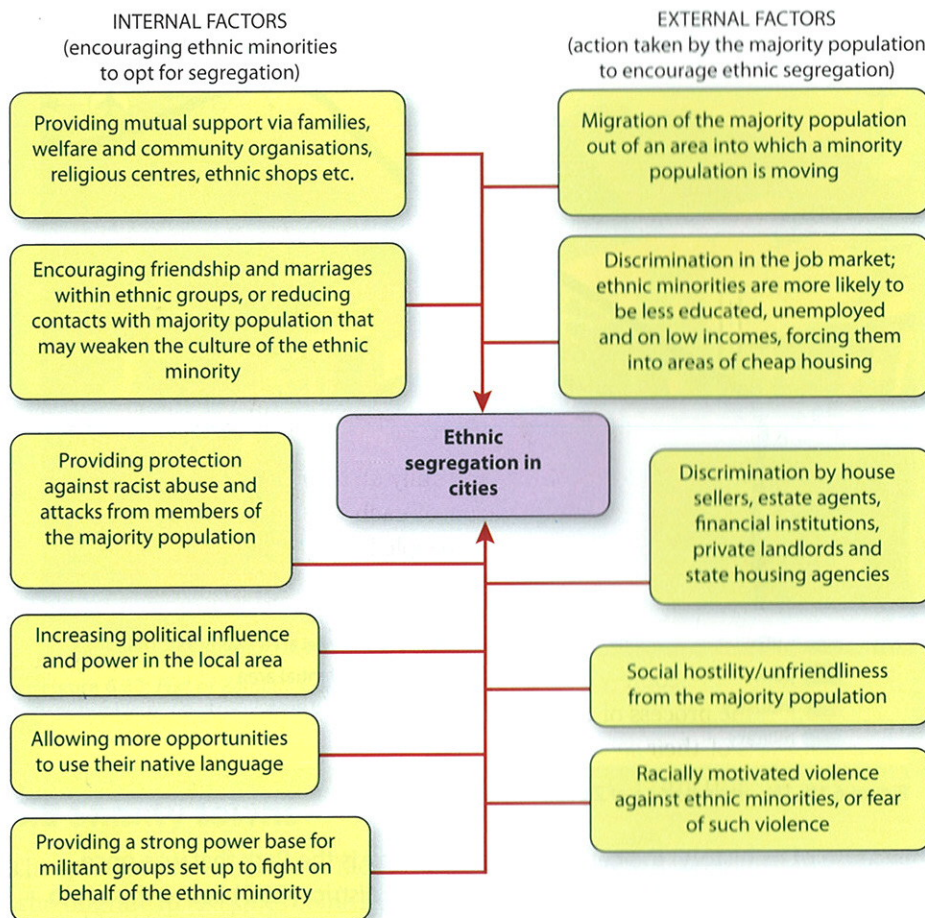


Figure 6.18: Factors encouraging ethnic segregation in cities

It is widely believed that the inner-city ghettos have come about because immigrants have been forced to live in areas of poor housing. The external factors shown in Figure 6.18 support the idea that the ghettos develop because of discrimination against some immigrants. However, the internal factors suggest that an ethnic minority gains some benefits from being concentrated in a particular area.

The interesting question associated with ethnic segregation is this – is the segregation more of a voluntary process than a forced one?

Case study: Zomba (Malawi)

Zomba is a city of just 100 000 people in the African state of Malawi in central Africa. For nearly 75 years, it served as the British colonial capital of what used to be called Nyasaland (now Malawi). In 1964 Malawi became an independent state and 10 years later Zomba was replaced by Lilongwe as the capital city. The city is best known for its British colonial architecture. Here in the centre of

Zomba was the Governor's residence, the army barracks and the Gymkana Club with its polo field and huge park. The Club was very popular with government officials and settlers from Britain and other European countries as a place for socialising.



Figure 6.19: The urban pattern of Zomba

What similarities, if any, do you see in the urban patterns of Zomba (Figure 6.19) and Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Figure 6.14 on page 154)?

Because of its history, the centre of the city today is the Park that was once part of the Gymkana Club. The central business district (CBD) lies to the south (Figure 6.19). This is the most accessible part of the city where the main roads meet. It contains verandah-style shops built during the colonial period, as well as a large market. Factories are mainly concentrated in two locations - one along the main road leading to the airport and the other close to the CBD. The rest of the built-up area is occupied by housing. Overall, the pattern of land use is not dissimilar to that found in HIC cities.

Three classes of residential area may be distinguished:

- **high-class residential areas** lie mainly to the north of the CBD and close to the Park. These areas date mainly from the colonial times when they housed the colony's administrators and European settlers. Consequently, it has the infrastructure - water, sewerage and electricity - not found in other parts of the built-up area. The social pattern is the opposite to that found in HIC cities where the inner city tends to house the poor.

- **middle-class residential areas** surround the high-class residential areas. Many of these areas started out as low-class housing. They have since been upgraded and provided with some basic amenities.
- **low-class residential areas** are found on the lower land to the south-east of the where there is a risk of flooding. These areas are essentially shanty towns. There is one notable area close to the CBD on its south-western side – again this is an area prone to flooding.



Figure 6.20: Part of Zomba's CBD

6.5 Shanty towns

The speed of urbanisation in LICs is fast and continues to accelerate. Most people who migrate to LIC cities come from poor rural areas in search of work. There are no houses for them, so they build homes on the only land available which is usually in areas of no economic value, on the edge of town, along main roads or on steep slopes. These DIY housing areas are generally referred to as **shanty towns**. In many instances, people build on land that they do not own, or on which they do not have permission to build. As a result, such areas are also known as **squatter settlements**.

Many of the areas on which shanty towns are built are unsafe. They may be prone to flooding or landslides or are in heavily polluted locations. Usually they are not serviced with refuse disposal etc. The actual dwellings are made out of scrap materials such as packing boxes, metal and plastic sheeting. However, for many, even living in a shanty town and working in the informal economy can be better and offer greater opportunities than the life they have left behind in rural areas.

Shanty towns are known by different names around the world:

- favelas (Brazil)
- barrios (Latin America)
- bidonville (North Africa)
- bustees (Indian subcontinent)
- squatter settlements (North America).