Global Urbanization

One way to examine the world urbanization is to view the urban population of a state as a percentage of its total population. A state or region may not contain any of the world's largest cities (e.g., many Western & Northern European states), but it may be more highly urbanized than states or regions with megacities (e.g., South and Southeast Asia). Would you be surprised that Brazil (84%) and Chile (87%) are more urbanized than France (77%) or Germany (73%)? Or that the Congo (33%) is more urbanized than India (29%)? Or that Nigeria (47%) has the same percent urban as China (47%)? While many urban statistics are fascinating, what is obvious is how often cities are associated with the most developed states and regions of the world.

Cities in the Global Core

Canadian cities are much less dispersed than American cities. Urban population densities are higher; multiple-family dwellings are more common; and most important, suburbanization has not gone nearly as far as it has in the United States. Although not immune to the forces of globalization and the development of world cities, Canadian central cities have retained a larger share of overall economic activity than their U.S. counterparts. Canadian cities do not display the sharp contrasts in wealth that are so evident in American cities. Since more taxpayers have remained in the inner city, especially the wealthy, much more money is available for their cities to maintain appearances and functionality. The integration of foreign-born residents, however, has not always gone smoothly in Canada's cities. For example, the Quebecois blamed foreigners for their failed attempt to devolve from the rest of Canada in the 1990s. Violent crime, though much less serious than it is in the United States, also afflicts Canada's cities. Overall, however, Canada's cities have not (at least not yet) evolved into megalopolises, with competing urban realms.


Montreal

European cities are older than American cities, but they, too, were transformed by the Industrial Revolution. London (> 13 million) and Paris (> 12 million), like Rome, Berlin, Madrid, and Athens, are large cities by world standards. These, however, are among Europe's many historic urban centers, which have been affected but not engulfed by the industrial tide. Unlike most American cities, however cities like London are not flanked by a zone of expanding suburbs. The reason for this is the metropolitan **greenbelt**, a zone of open country that contains scattered small towns but is otherwise open country. This had the effect of containing London's built-up area within its 1960 limits throughout the period of rapid suburbanization in the United States.

Although there are some settlements within the greenbelt around London, suburbanization has had to proceed beyond it – a long train ride away from the CBD. The greenbelt phenomenon is not unique to London; many European cities have a version of it. They have limited not only urban sprawl but also suburbanization. Beyond the greenbelt, suburbs are too far away from the CBD for commuting. And since the cost of gasoline is as much as three times higher in Europe than in the United States, people have an added incentive to use rapid transit.

Urban population
(as % of total population)

100%

65%

35%

10%
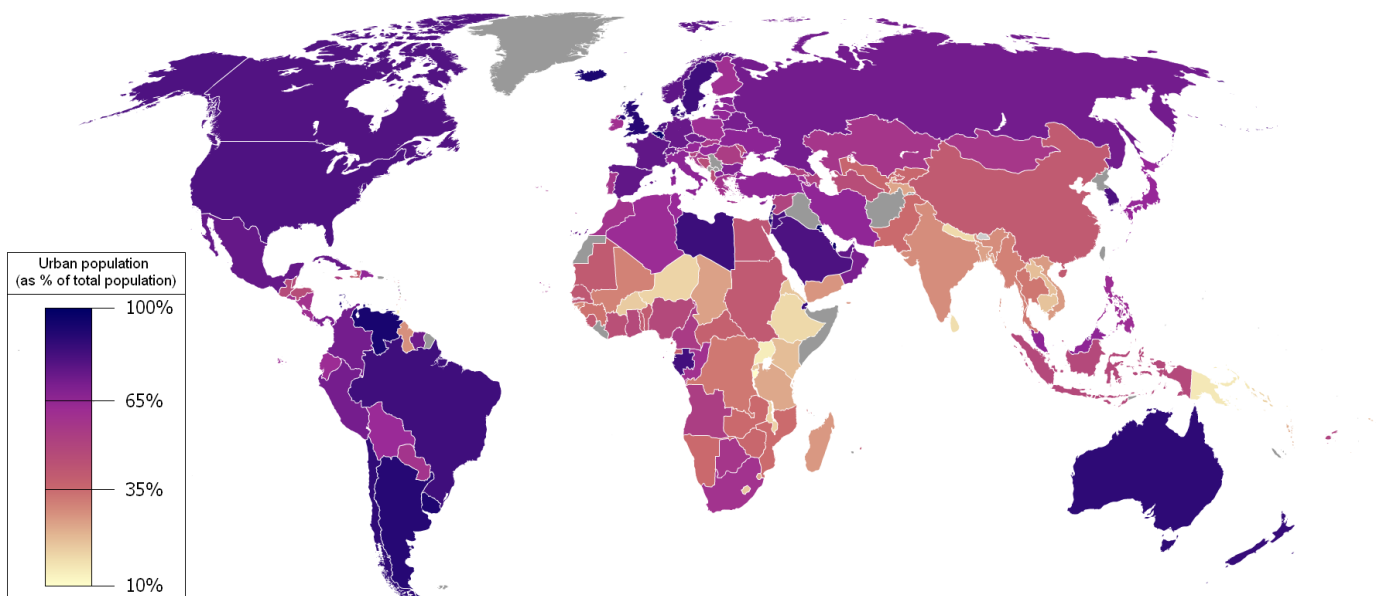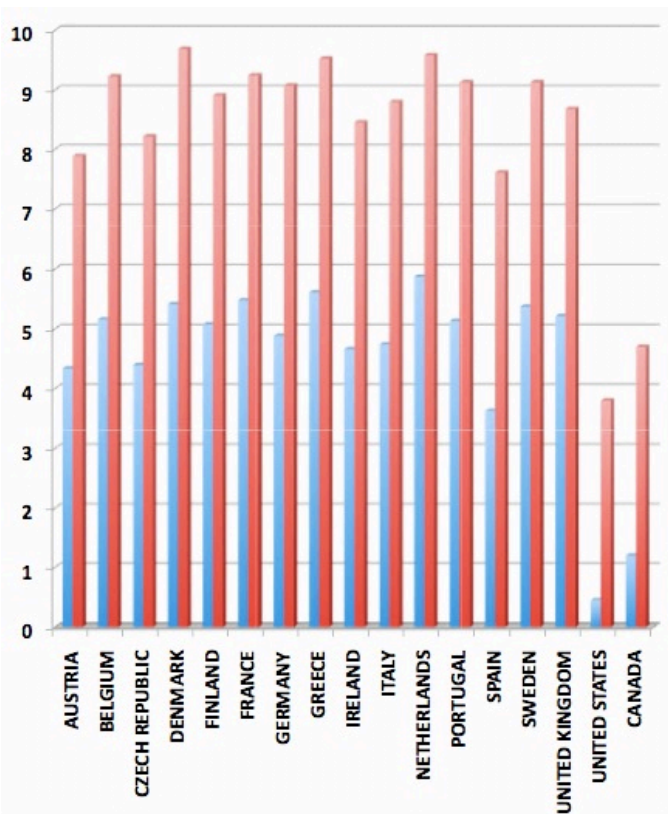
The relative price of gasoline (2012) is shown in US dollars in red, and gasoline taxes are shown in blue.

Governments in Europe are typically more involved in the social rights of people, such as health care and housing than the United States government. Since European cities are older than American cities, they were designed for foot and horse traffic, not automobiles. Thus, European cities are typically more compact, densely populated, and walkable than American cities. Historic city centers tend to be the focal point of these cities, and skyscrapers tend to be reserved for developments on the outskirts of town.

Migration to Europe is constrained by several policies and laws. As immigrants have settled in large numbers in the zone of transition (outside the city center), the locals have moved out. Ethnic neighborhoods in European cities are typically affiliated with migrants from former **colonies**. For example Paris has distinct Algerian neighborhoods, London has Jamaican neighborhoods, and Madrid has Moroccan neighborhoods. Other European countries fostered relationships with foreigners, such as the case with Germany, in which Turkish neighborhoods have evolved after guest workers were invited to help rebuild the country after World War II.

Whether a **public housing** zone is divided into ethnic neighborhoods in a European city depends in large part on government policy. For instance there are vast ethnic neighborhoods of Islamic Maghrebis (from North Africa) around Paris, where unemployment in high, crime is widespread, and resentment festers. France and many other European states, have followed multicultural

policies for decades. The distinctive feature of **multiculturalism** is respect for cultural difference, and, in contrast to assimilation, support for the maintenance of old-world cultures.

The 2005 riots that broke out in France were mainly confined to the poor housing projects of ethnic minorities.

As a result, the Muslims – and other minority groups - in many European cities have not assimilated into the national culture. For instance, Chancellor Merkel of Germany stated in 2010, "This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed." In many instances, European governments are instituting programs to help encourage immigrants to learn their official languages and **assimilate** into their cultures.

Immigrants have assimilated more easily in cities such as Brussels, Belgium, and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Brussels has very little public housing and immigrants tend to live in privately owned rentals throughout the city. Research has shown that immigrants from more rural regions chose to live in **ethnic neighborhoods**, whereas urban immigrants chose rental units scattered around the city. As a result, there is less residential segregation. Amsterdam, different from Brussels, has a great deal of public housing. However, the Dutch government allots public housing to legal immigrants by assigning homes on a sequential basis in the city's zone of transition. The housing and neighborhoods are multicultural. The ethnic groups maintain their local cultures through religious and cultural organizations rather than residential segregation.

2nd Microdistrict, Tbilisi, Georgia

The cities of **Eastern Europe**, many of which are old primate cities, were affected by communist planning that

tended to neglect their cultural and historic heritage and attempted to recognize urban life into so-called **microdistricts**. This plan entailed the creation of a huge, dominant square at the center of the city and wide, radiating avenues flanked by ugly apartment blocks. In addition, these microdistricts contained workplaces, schools, recreational facilities, stores, and other amenities either within them or nearby. Thus there was no need for a large CBD, for the districts were supposed to be largely self-sufficient. Neither would there be suburbanization, mass commuting, class contrasts in the neighborhoods, or traffic congestion. Today the cities of Eastern Europe are undergoing still another transformation as glass towers rise above their cities, reflecting the global economy.

Urbanization and the Environment

Many cities in **East Asia**, especially along the Pacific Rim, represent some of the most modern, and fastest growing urban areas on the planet. However, many of the industrial sectors in these cities represent some of the worst examples of air, land, and water pollution in the world. Air pollution in China alone may have contributed to over a million premature deaths in 2010, and some middle- and upper-class Chinese parents and expatriates have begun leaving China, in part due to pollution. Rivers and sources of drinking water in and around many East Asian cities increasingly contain harmful levels of industrial runoff, chemicals, poisons, and pharmaceuticals. However, these countries have been gradually implementing regulations to limit and reduce pollution to improve the sustainability of their urban growth into the future.

Only about 25 percent of the world's population lived in urban settings at the middle of the past century; by the middle of this one, as many as 75 percent may be concentrated in cities. Fewer people in rural areas would seem to be good for forests, wildlife, marginal environments, and soils. Moreover, urban life would tend to reduce family size, increase education, and improve access to adequate health care. However, some scholars argue that these positives will not outweigh the negatives over time, not only in East Asia, but worldwide.

An electronic screen shines amid heavy smog in Shenyang

Cities in the Periphery and Semi-Periphery

While increased urbanization has historically resulted in higher levels of health, wealth, and education for a region, the future may not be as certain. Many of the fastest growing urban areas are the least urbanized (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa). Many of the world's evolving megacities are located in the less prosperous parts of the world. People continue to migrate to cities in response to "pull" factors (e.g., jobs, better life, etc.) that are often more imaginary than real. Cities in the periphery generally lack enforceable **zoning** laws, which are drawn up to ensure that space is used in ways that the society deems to be culturally and environmentally acceptable. For example, immediately around the CBD of Cairo, you would see what appears to be a modern metropolis. But as you travel toward the outskirts of the city, that impression fades rapidly as paved streets give way to dusty alleys, apartment buildings to harsh tenements, sidewalk shops to broken doors and windows. The city is bursting at the seams (more than 14 million people today), and still people continue to arrive seeking the better life that pulls countless migrants from the countryside year after year.

Modeling the Latin American City

As urbanization has increased, it has become increasingly difficult to model, classify, or typify urban centers. Cities in the least developed countries (LDCs) and newly industrialized countries (NICs) tend to follow

The basic spatial framework of cities in South and Central America combine radial sectors and concentric zones. Anchoring the **Griffin-Ford Model** is

CBD of La Paz, Bolivia

Zona Sur – edge city of La Paz

Legend:

⬛ Commercial	🟧 Zone of peripheral squatter settlements
⬜ Market	⬜ Elite Residential Sector
🟥 Industrial	🟩 Gentrification
🟨 Zone of Maturity	🟨 Middle-Class Residential Tract
🟪 Zone of In Situ Accretion	

gentrification zone is where historic buildings are preserved. Although this model gives a general picture, in truth these cities display so much diversity that no simple model can represent all of their aspects.

The model reflects the enormous differences between privilege and abject poverty within South American cities. The concentricity of the model is breaking down as sector development is especially evident in many large cities.

One thing is for certain, however; many these cities are growing rapidly, and most of the new arrivals can only find room to live on the outskirts of the city. Many of these new "homes" are built in potentially dangerous areas (e.g., hillsides prone to mudslides). One other commonality with most Middle & South American cities, is the presence of great plazas, often named after revolutionary heroes, and flanked by cathedrals and churches as well as public buildings.
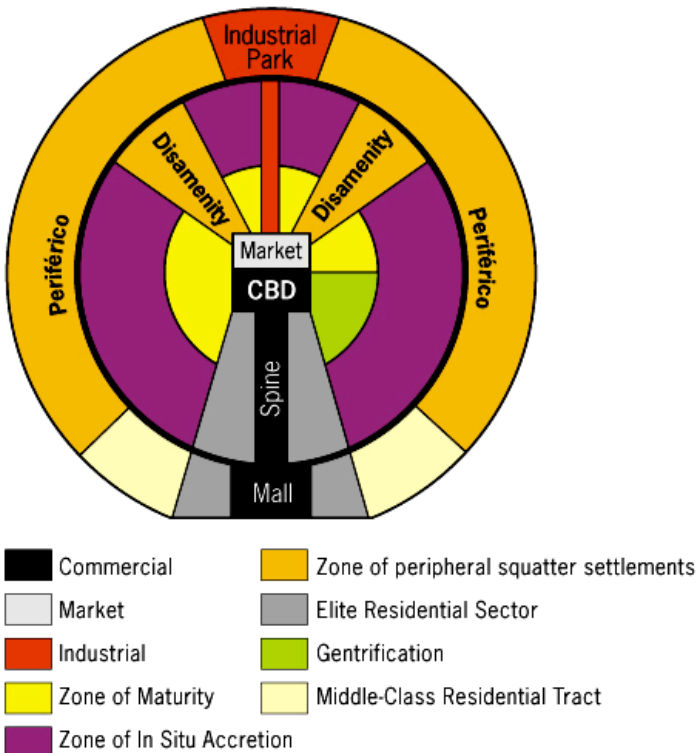

Lima's Plaza de San Martin, Peru

the thriving CBD, divided into a traditional market sector and a more modern high-rise sector. Nearby affluent residential areas and good public transit assure the dominance of the CBD. The *commercial spine* emanates between the *elite residential sector*. This widening corridor is essentially an extension of the CBD. It features offices, shopping centers, high-quality houses, and other attractive amenities (e.g., zoos, parks, etc.). An edge city (suburban node) shown as *"mall"* on the model is flanked by high-priced residences. Socioeconomic levels and housing along the spine attract the upper and middle classes.

The adjacent zone of *in situ accretion* ("self-built" homes) is one of much more modest housing. The residential density of this zone is quite high. The outermost *periferico* (periphery, or zone of peripheral squatter settlements) is home to the unskilled and impoverished, which is teeming with high-density **shantytowns** (or developments of
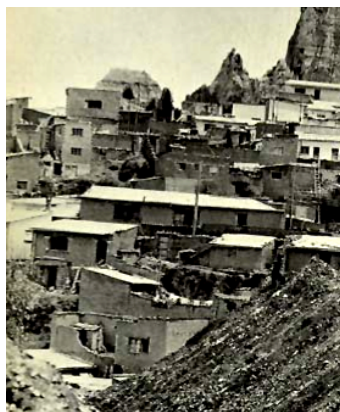
In Situ Accretion – La Paz

unplanned and crude dwellings mostly made of scrap wood, iron, and cardboard). Many Latin American cities have *disamenity sectors*, which contain slums known as *barrios* or *favelas*. Some are so poor they live in the streets. Drug lords sometimes run the show – or battle with other drug lords. Finally, the *industrial park* reflects the ongoing concentration of industrial activity, and a
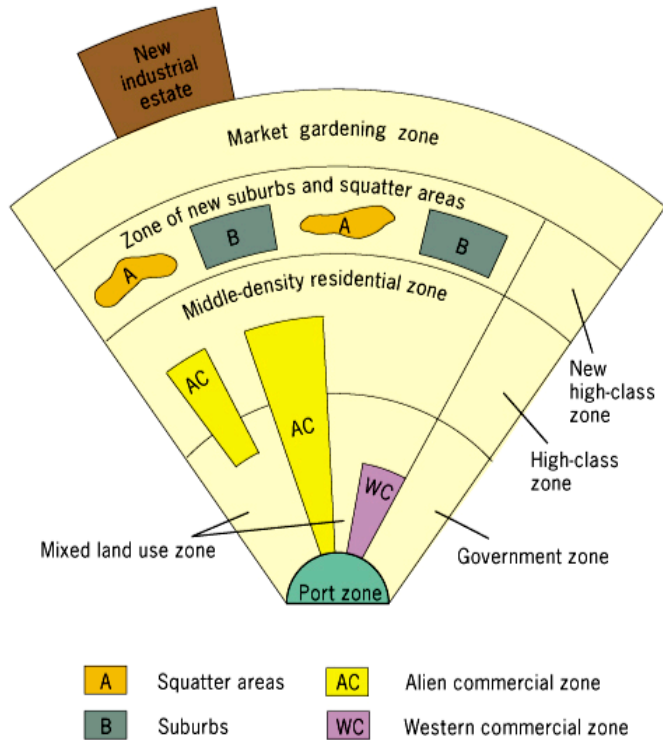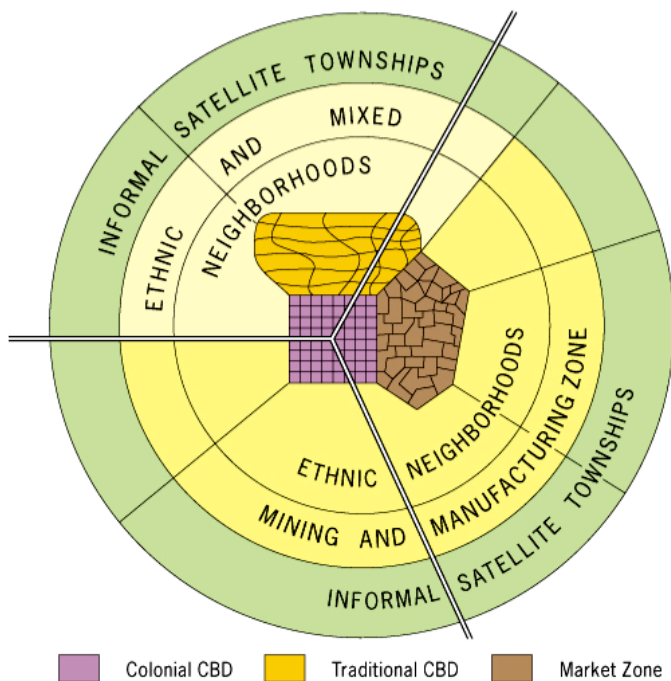
The Southeast Asian City

In 1967, the **McGee Model** was devised by urban geographer T.G. McGee, which can be applied to urbanization in Southeast Asia. Cities, like Singapore or Kuala Lumpur (the capital of Malaysia), are modernizing with a great deal of high-rise development. A generalized model is depicted above, with the old colonial *port zone* as the city's focus (obviously along the water). Although there is no formal CBD, its elements are present as separate clusters; within the belt beyond the port: the *government zone* (containing the seat of government), the *Western commercial zone* (displaying the imprint of a colonial past), the *alien commercial zone* (usually dominated by Chinese merchants whose residences are attached to their places of business), and the *mixed land-use zone* (containing miscellaneous economic activities like light industry).

The other non-residential areas are the *market gardening zone* along the periphery, and farther still, a recently built *industrial park*, or "estate." Among the similarities between the Southeast Asian model and the Latin

A	Squatter areas	AC	Alien commercial zone	
B	Suburbs	WC	Western commercial zone	

American model are the **hybrid** structure of sectors and zones, an elite residential sector (that includes new suburbs), an inner city zone of middle-income housing, and peripheral low-income squatter settlements.

The African City

Sub-Saharan Africa is both the least urbanized realm in the world. However, Africa now has the world's fastest growing cities, followed by those in South Asia,, mainland East Asia, and South and Central America. In contrast, the cities of North America, southern South America, and

Colonial CBD	Traditional CBD	Market Zone

Australia are growing more slowly, and those of western Europe are barely growing at all.

At present, only Lagos, Nigeria, is emerging as a world-class megacity (partly due to their rich oil reserves). As in Southeast Asia, the imprint of colonialism can be seen in many African cities. South Africa's major urban centers (Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban) are essentially Western, with elements of European as well as American models, including high rise CBDs and sprawling suburbs. Although difficult to formulate, many African examples contain a central city consisting of not one, but **three CBDs**: a remnant of the *colonial CBD*, an informal and sometimes periodic *market zone*, and a *traditional CBD* where commerce is conducted from curbside, stalls, or storefronts. Vertical development occurs mostly in the former colonial CBD; the traditional business center is usually a zone of single-story buildings; and the market zone tends to be open-air and informal. Sector development marks the encircling zone of ethnic and mixed neighborhoods; *manufacturing or mining* operations are found next to some parts of this zone. Finally, many African cities are ringed by *satellite townships*, which are essentially squatter settlements.


Lagos, Nigeria

Commonalities of Cities in LDCs and NICs

There are some key similarities between the three global city models discussed that occur more commonly in many of the **least developed countries** (LDCs) and **newly industrialized countries** (NICs). All three models show a hybridization of sectors and zones emanating from a fairly distinct CBD. Note also that the housing quality tends to deteriorate away from the core of the city contrasting with the general model of the American city (e.g., concentric zone model). One key way in which the McGee model (Southeast Asia) differs from the Griffin-Ford model (Latin America) and the African model is the zone of suburbs among the squatter settlements, displaying the greater extent of affluence in many Southeast Asian cities as compared to Latin America.

Cities residing in LDCs and NICs tend to have vast areas of **squatter settlements** (slums, shantytowns, barrios, favelas, etc.). These downtrodden areas are not only found throughout Latin America, Southeast Asia, and in
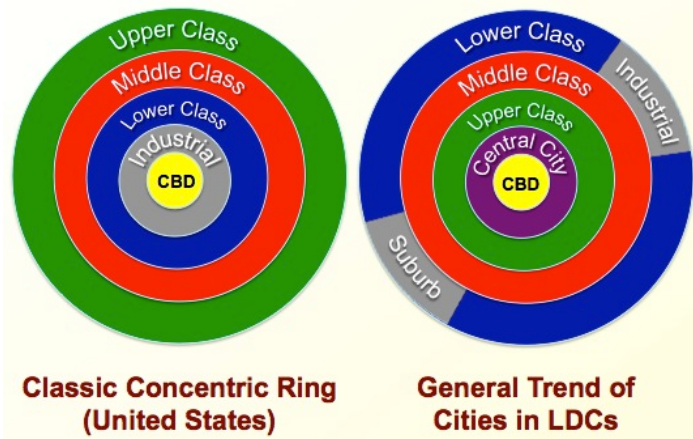
Classic Concentric Ring (United States)

General Trend of Cities in LDCs

Africa, but in South Asia and East Asia (mostly in the interior away from the Pacific Rim).

Squatter settlements are located almost exclusively along the outskirts (periphery, hinterland) of the city. They are found primarily in previously vacant or undesirable land (steep hillsides, floodplains, dumps/landfills, cemeteries, or close to industries (that provide jobs)). Several factors that help to form squatter settlements are rural-to-urban migration, poverty (providing the residents a shortage of options), a lack of affordable housing (public or private), and inefficient enforcement of zoning and land use policies.

The consequences of these squatter settlements include increased rates of disease, crime (gangs), political unrest, water pollution (due to a lack of sanitation), soil erosion, and deforestation. Consequently, there is a greater strain on the infrastructure (for transportation, electricity, sewage, etc.), as well as a greater risk of deaths caused by disasters (fires, mudslides, industrial accidents, etc.) due to the high population density. There is also an overabundance of cheap labor, which can be seen as positive for export-oriented businesses, but negative for just about everyone else in those countries. What prevails in the squatter settlements is the **informal economy –** the economy that is not taxed and is not counted towards a country's gross national income (GNI). The informal economy worries governments because it is essentially a record-less economy and no taxes are paid. People stuck in these situations are often casualties of a cycle of poverty and destitution that is extremely difficult to escape from.

The Islamic City

The traditional Islamic city occurs mainly in the Muslim zone in North Africa and Southwest Asia (in the Middle East). Cities in Muslim countries owe their structure to their religious beliefs, as many instructions werepassed along through the generations. Islamic cities contain mosques at their center and walls guarding their perimeter. Open-air markets (bazaars/souks) tended to encircle the main mosque that is typically at the heart of the city's center, providing economic activity within the

city. Courtyards were typically surrounded by high walls, and dead-end streets, which limited foot traffic in residentially-segregated neighborhoods.

Great Mosque of Algiers (1899)

Muslims, Jews, and other groups were separated along quarters so that each group could practice and celebrate their own cultural beliefs. These residential areas were usully dense, and each quarter typicaly had its own mosque (or house of worship) used for daily prayers, school, shops, and other necesities. These quarters usually had their own gates which were usually closed at night after last prayers and opened early morning for prayers.

The layouts of these cities remain largely the same, however, modern retailing sectors often radiate out from the city center around the main mosque. Newer housing and commercial areas exist outside the original walls, and separate graveyards are also often just outside the walls.