

Cristaller's Central Place Theory

This theory was created by Walter Christaller, a German, in 1933. It shows how and where central places would be functionally and spatially distributed. This model assumes: flat land with no physical barriers, uniform natural resources, transportation and population, and that there is a consistent distance people were willing to travel for goods and services.

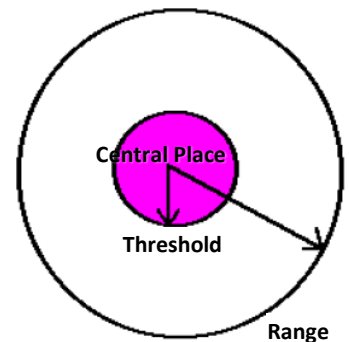
There are several key terms to be aware of:

Central goods and services – these are provided ONLY in the central place, things such as professional sports teams, international airports, etc.

Range of sale – the distance people would be willing to travel to access a good or service. The limit of a range of sale would be halfway between to places where central goods and services are located.

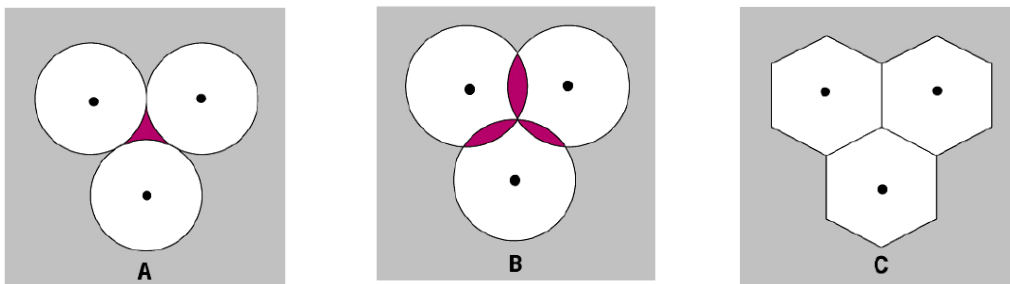
Threshold – the minimum market area required to draw in goods and services and keep the city or company in business.

Complementary regions – the area surrounding a central place that relies exclusively on that central place because it is the only location within the range of sale.



The theory states that central goods and services are located in a central place. The central place is surrounded by a complementary region where essentially all residents are dependent upon the central place for central goods and services. The full area of influence of a central place is called the range of sale, this is the area within a distance that people would be willing to travel to access a good or service.

If we assume that all of these are circular areas, there would be problems with the theory. If the circles border each other, then there is an area in between the circles that are not served (A). On the other side, if the circles overlap then the central place no longer has a monopoly within that range of sale (B). To resolve this conflict, Cristaller define these range of sales as hexagons (C).



Cristaller identifies an urban hierarchy of hamlets, villages, towns and cities. Each of these levels has its own threshold, range of sale, and complementary region. Cristaller presents this as a nesting pattern.

Although this model is based on a series of assumptions that are not always practical, it did provide several conclusions. There are ranks of urban places that do form in an orderly hierarchy and spatial balance. Places of the same size will be spaced the same distance apart. Finally larger cities are further apart than smaller towns and village.

