

The ancient city of Tenochtitlan, on the site of modern-day Mexico City



Almost the same view of Mexico City as it is today

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NORTH TEXAS
Preserving the Past. Inspiring the Future.

Latin America/Caribbean

Survey of World Regions

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Latin America/Caribbean

- The Latin America/Caribbean region is literally the “world next door”
 - Just across the border from Texas, and sharing much in terms of cultures and environmental challenges with the US: parts are a short car or plane ride away
 - But for many of us, Latin America also represents another world completely, with major differences in terms of its history, economy, and society

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Introduction

- **Q:** What do you know about Latin America and the Caribbean?
 - What is “Latin America”?
 - Have you lived or visited anywhere in Latin America or the Caribbean?
 - Do you have any personal connection of any kind with the region?

Latin America and the Caribbean in a Global Context

Our regional focus today

With each region we encounter, there are a few issues we can always consider. Does geography give the region any particular:

- Strengths?
- Weaknesses?
- Opportunities?
- Threats?

What answers do you have on these for Latin America and the Caribbean?

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The Latin America/Caribbean Region (as Defined in Your Textbook)



Q: Can we make further observations based on this “zoomed-in” view?

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Developing an Understanding

- Several themes contribute to our understanding of Latin America
 - Culture
 - Colonialism
 - Economic Development/Underdevelopment
 - Environmental Impacts and Degradation

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Developing an Understanding

- These historic forces that have shaped the region must be analyzed if we are to understand the region as it stands today
 - Unfortunately, we have little time to do this
 - But we need to acknowledge the unique dynamics at play given the region’s history
 - Interaction of indigenous cultures (1000s of years of development) with relatively recent colonial powers (1492 and onward)

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Developing an Understanding

- Inter-cultural interactions have produced complex results over the centuries, impacting the region’s places, societies, and environment
 - Our goal here is to gain some basic understanding of the nature of these complex human-environmental systems

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The Latin American City

- These systems have broad impacts, extending to something as basic as the cities where people live today
 - Because of the structure of Latin American society, economy, and political relationships, the geographic structure of cities in Latin America differs markedly from cities in other parts of the world

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The Latin American City

- Quick comparison: The City in *North America* versus *Latin America*
 - A number of perspectives have developed over the years by people trying to summarize the geography of the North American city
 - Overall: what are the main features of the “layout” of urban features in cities across North America?

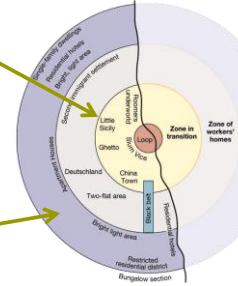
The Latin American City

- A prominent perspective in the North American city: the concentric zone model
 - Viewing the city here as a series of rings, with the middle of the rings being the modern downtown

The Concentric Zone Model as a Map

Key, general feature: the poor and recent immigrants tend to live close to the city center

The middle and upper classes tend to live on the outskirts of the city



Not a perfect summary, but pretty good when you compare it with cities across the US

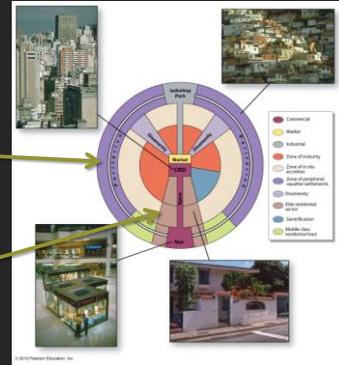
Developing an Understanding

- The city in Latin America is a very different thing, produced by different social, economic, and historic processes
 - In Latin America, we see much more concentrated power structure, and a much greater underclass
 - We can see this distinction in part through a general representation of Latin American city structure

Many features here... too many to discuss

But one key is where the poor live: on the edge

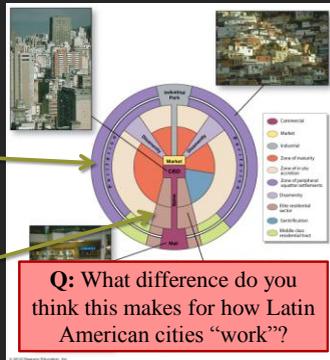
The elite tend to live in a cluster, along a corridor



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The elite tend to live in a cluster, along a corridor

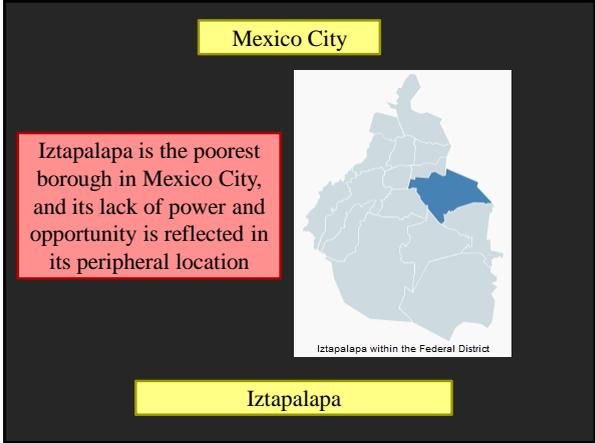


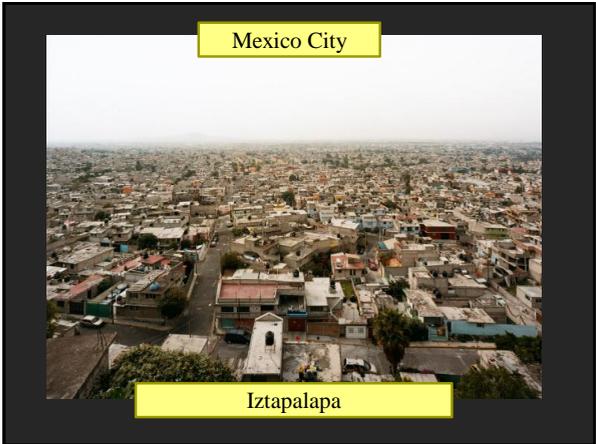
Q: What difference do you think this makes for how Latin American cities "work"?

Mexico City



Paseo de la Reforma





The Economy of Latin America is Diverse: Many Opportunities and Challenges

Informal Sector in Peru

GM Factory, Mexico

Oil Production in Venezuela

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Economic Development

- Studying the economic challenges and pathways followed in Latin America is important to understanding the region
 - We don't have time to do an in-depth view of the region's entire economy
 - However, we can examine one component: strategies linking the region with the USA
 - Focus: maquiladoras

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Maquiladoras

- **Q:** Who has heard of maquiladoras? What is a maquiladora?
 - **Maquiladoras:** businesses that import goods into Mexico duty-free for processing and assembly in Mexico with export back to the US market
 - Benefit for Mexico: employment of Mexican workers
 - Benefit for US: low cost labor

Maquiladoras in Mexico

Q: could the presence of Maquiladoras on the Mexican side of the border have any impact on US border communities?

A very significant economic presence

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Maquiladoras in Ciudad Juárez

- **A video case study provides some perspective on maquiladoras and the Mexico/US border region**
 - Focus: Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) and its twin city, El Paso, Texas
 - As you view the video, note the situations mentioned and the challenges involved

<http://www.learner.org/series/powerofplace/page2.html>

Case Study: Hispaniola

- We conclude our discussion today with one more case study: the island of Hispaniola
 - Two countries occupy the island:
 - 1. Haiti
 - 2. The Dominican Republic
 - The island makes for an interesting comparative study because of the shared physical environment but contrasting governments and societies

Hispaniola: Haiti/Dominican Republic

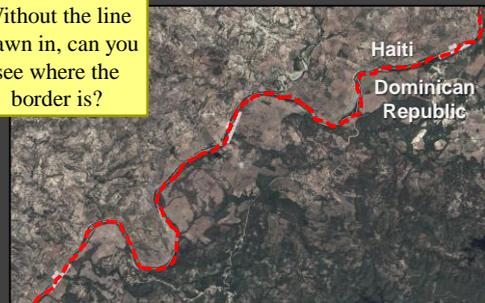


Hispaniola: An Island with Two Countries



Haiti/Dominican Republic Border

Without the line drawn in, can you see where the border is?



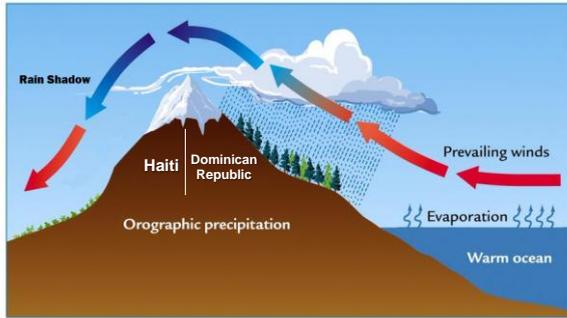
Case Study: Hispaniola

- Haiti and the Dominican Republic are a study in contrasts, well-documented in Jared Diamond's book *Collapse*
 - Today, 28% of the Dominican Republic is forested, compared with 1% of Haiti
 - Deforestation consequences: loss of timber and building materials, soil erosion, soil fertility loss
- Deforestation is important to understand, especially as it relates to human activities

Case Study: Hispaniola

- Why the difference between the two halves of the island?
 - Part of the answer is environmental: Hispaniola's rains come mainly from the east
 - So, the Dominican Republic receives more rain and thus supports more plant growth
 - The island's tall mountains (10,000 feet) are in the Dominican Republic, directing rainfall back to the eastern (Dominican) side of the island

The Rainfall and Runoff Situation in Hispaniola



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Case Study: Hispaniola

- However, environmental differences are only part of the story
 - Cultural and political differences are even more important: numerous separate factors coincided in tipping the result in the same direction
 - One difference: the two sides had different colonial masters

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Case Study: Hispaniola

- However, environmental differences are only part of the story
 - Haiti was ruled by wealthy France: Haiti's experienced extensive investment in an intensive, slave-based plantation economy
 - More slaves (people), more production (demand on the ecosystem), more degradation
 - Haiti had a population seven times greater than its neighbor in colonial times

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Case Study: Hispaniola

- However, environmental differences are only part of the story
 - The Dominican Republic was ruled by impoverished Spain: this led to less extensive agricultural development, and many fewer slaves
 - Most of the people who were attracted to the Dominican Republic came of their own free will, and included many middle-class businesspeople

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Case Study: Hispaniola

- **Q:** So, the important question emerges, *what will happen to Haiti?*
 - Let's divide up into two sides: one to argue that *the situation is impossible* (no change will happen), the other to argue that *conditions in Haiti can improve* (change can happen)
 - Let's take **five minutes** and then have our two side come back and make their cases