

**Gr 12 Geography**  
**SETTLEMENT GEOGRAPHY**  
**URBAN HIERARCHIES**

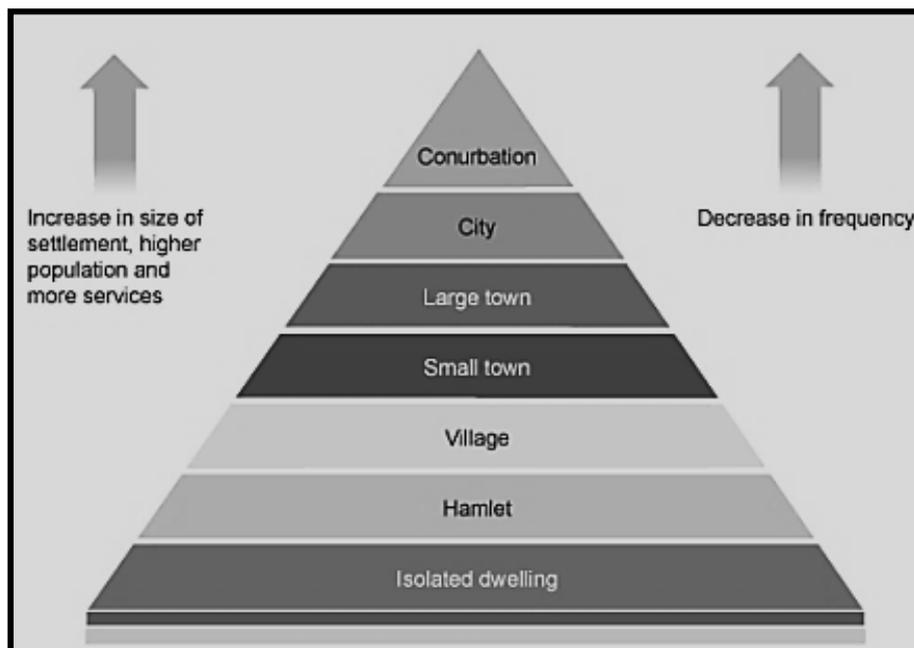
**5.1 The concepts of urban hierarchy, central place, threshold population, sphere of influence and range of goods**

**CONCEPTS:**

**URBAN HIERARCHY:**

The ranking of urban areas according to the criteria of size, number of functions and the degree of specialization of the functions.

The more people and functions a town/ city has the higher in the hierarchy it will be. There are many of the settlements in the lower hierarchy and only few large settlements in the higher ranks.



**CENTRAL PLACE:**

An urban settlement that provides goods and services to the surrounding rural population.

**THRESHOLD POPULATION:**

The minimum number of people required to support a service so that it remains profitable.

### **SPHERE OF INFLUENCE:**

The area from where people come to make use of the services in a city or town.

### **RANGE OF GOODS:**

How far people are prepared to travel to get hold of a specific product or service. E.g. people will not be prepared to travel

## **5.2 Lower and higher order functions and services**

**Low-order centres** – smaller settlements, e.g a country town. Smaller towns with mostly low order functions will attract less people from a smaller sphere of influence.

**Lower-order functions and services** = things and services that are required every day and used by people on a regular basis e.g conveniences like bread, milk, general dealers, hair dressers, butcheries, schools, clinics. Low order functions / services have a low population threshold and a small range.

**High-order centres** – large settlements, e.g a city. The sphere of influence of this type of town will be larger.

**High-order functions and services** = things and services that are specialised and required by fewer people, e.g e.g. jewelers, car dealers, banks, universities, legal services, hospitals and specialists. People will be prepared to travel further to obtain these products or to use these services if they need it, but they do not make use to these services daily. High order services / functions have a high population threshold and a wide range.

## **5.3 Lower and higher order centres**

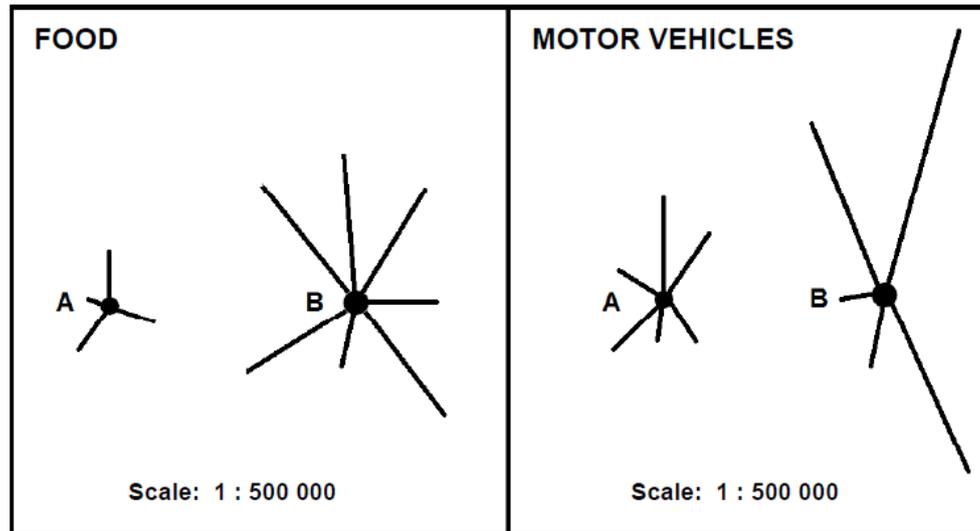
<b>LOW-ORDER CENTRES</b>	<b>HIGHER-ORDER CENTRES</b>
Large number of such settlements; e.g small towns	Fewer in number, e.g a major metropolitan area
Closer together	Greater distances between these cities
Smaller population	Large population
Fewer services on offer – mainly low-order	Wide selection of services offered – from low-order to specialised high-order
Small threshold population	Large threshold population
Small sphere of influence (market area)	Large sphere of influence (market area)
Short range (distances)	Large range (distance)

## WORK SHEET 5 – Settlement geography

### QUESTION 1:

*The FIGURE below shows the sphere of influence and range of food stores and motor vehicle retailers in settlements A and B.*

**FIGURE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND RANGE**



[Source: Examiner's own sketch]

- 1.1 Define the terms sphere of influence and range. (2 x 1) (2)
- 1.2 Which product, food or cars, has a larger range? (1 x 1) (1)
- 1.3 Give a reason for your answer to QUESTION 1.2. (1 x 2) (2)
- 1.4 Comment on the threshold population required for motor vehicle sales. (1 x 2) (2)
- 1.5 Describe TWO characteristics of settlement A, which is a low-order centre. (2 x 2) (4).
- 1.6 Explain what influences the sphere of influence of a settlement such as B. (2 x 2) (4)