Central Place Theory
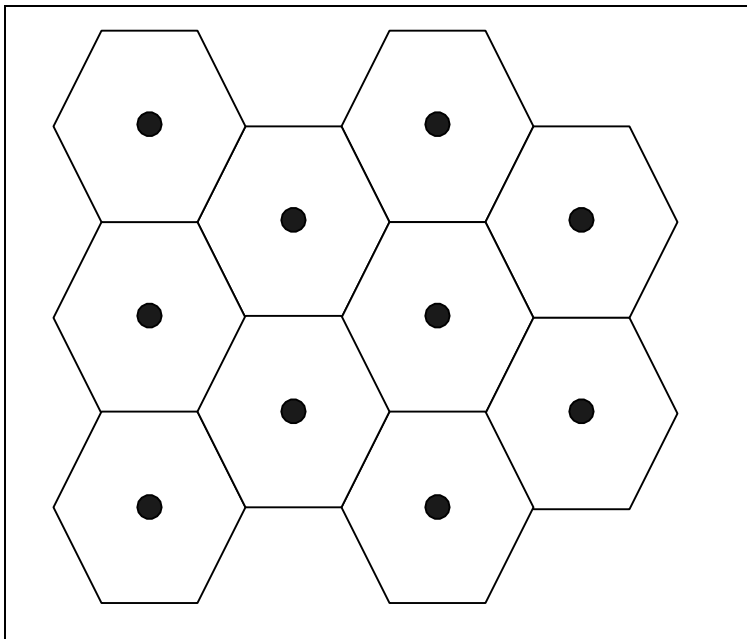
Originally devised to explain settlement patters in southern Germany the theory has been applied to other settlement patterns and found to fit North American geography well. After studying southern Germany Christaller devised a model with assumed a uniform flat plane, with no natural advantages of one place to another, settlements could occur anywhere. Given this, where would towns occur? He concluded people cluster in groups equal distant from one another. Each town would have a hinterland of equal size. This would result in circular spheres of influence leaving some areas uncovered so the model uses hexagons instead of circles, each of which has a town at the centre.

In Cristaller's model natural features like rivers and mountains where ignored. The model could suggested where settlements would arise – if there was a river close by the settlement would be a bit closer to it, natural features could be allowed for when looking at real settlements But the model allowed geographers to reason about settlement patterns, and it provided a common standard to measure and compare settlement patterns by - it provided a language to exchange information.

Nobody ever expected to find a perfect example of the model, that wasn't the point, it was a tool for modelling the real world.