

Box 2.1

The Urban Revolution

In "The Urban Revolution," V. Gordon Childe noted that the development of the first cities was marked by a number of important innovations, including the following:

Increased population size and density: By 3000 BC Nineveh, Ur, Uruk, and other Sumerian cities each had as many as 20,000 persons, larger than other human settlements up to that time.

Concentration of agricultural surplus: Farmers living in the region controlled by the city paid a tithe, or tax, to an "imaginary deity or a divine king" to support soldiers, priests, and other officials.

Public works and monuments: Irrigation projects built by the state (through labor required of all citizens) allowed farmers to produce an agricultural surplus; the cities were dominated by temples (ziggurats) rising from a stepped brick platform.

Specialization of labor: The production of an agricultural surplus freed individuals to perform the specialized tasks required of artists, craftspeople, merchants, soldiers, and priests.

Invention of writing: Systems of writing and numerical notation were necessary to keep track of commercial accounts and tax payments.

Social stratification: Priests, military leaders, and other officials formed a ruling class and were exempt from manual labor; workers and craftspeople were "relieved from intellectual tasks" but were guaranteed safety within the city.

Development of the arts: Artists and craftspeople developed sophisticated styles and traditions in the decorative and fine arts with the depiction of persons and animals.

Development of sciences: Sciences were developed to predict, measure, and standardize to assist in the production of agriculture and the keeping of tax records (arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy).

Membership: Participation in the community was based on residence and was no longer dependent on kinship.

Long-distance trade: Raw materials not available in the local area were imported for craft production and religious ceremonies.

SOURCE: Childe (1950)

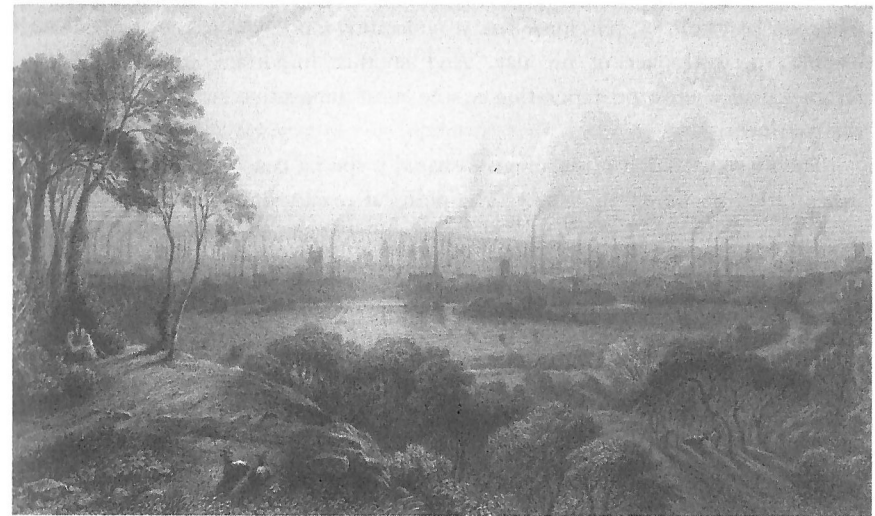


FIGURE 2.3 Manchester from Kersal Moor (1852). Many engravings were made of William Wyld's famous painting showing the first industrial city. Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of the city: the smoke from the factories was so thick that you could not see the sun at midday. SOURCE: Courtesy of The New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY. Used with permission.

live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in these workingmen's quarters may readily be imagined.

Engels was not alone in his condemnation of conditions in the industrial city. Many books were written in the nineteenth century cataloging the hardships caused by industrialization, including Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851–1862) and Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1891). These works, and many more, described what Booth called "the problem of poverty in the midst of wealth."

THE ORIGINS OF URBAN SOCIOLOGY

A special inquiry devoted to urban phenomena was the premier achievement of early US sociology. Albion Small founded the first sociology department in the US at the University of Chicago in 1893. Robert Park joined the department in 1914 and quickly took on a prominent role. Albion Small and Robert Park had something in common: both had traveled to Germany as graduate students to take courses with Georg Simmel. In the 1890s only France and Germany had professional sociologists. Emile Durkheim, a sociologist at the Sorbonne in Paris, had

developed a growing reputation in France. Max Weber, the German scholar who wrote on law, politics, religion, society, and much more, was acknowledged as the leading social thinker of his day. And another important sociologist, Georg Simmel, had a growing reputation as the most innovative social philosopher on the continent.

The first generation of sociologists shared a special concern with the impact of urbanization on European society. The political revolutions of the 1800s brought an end to earlier ideas that the social and political order reflected a divine plan. What exactly would the new social order, created by widespread changes in the economic and social structure, look like? In the wake of the social and political changes brought about by the French Revolution, questions about how social order could be maintained were not simply a matter of idle speculation. These societal issues were essential to understanding the very nature of the new industrial order, a stage of capitalism, that was transforming European cities.

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) was one of the early German social philosophers who addressed these questions. In *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (published in 1887 and often translated as “Community and Society,” although “Community and Association” more accurately reflects the original meaning), Tönnies sketched out an evolutionary view of the development of human society. The great period of industrialization that transformed European societies beginning in the late 1700s signified a change from community to association. Tönnies saw that the transition from community (where individual families have long histories, individuals interact with one another on a personal basis because they often work together or are related to one another, and all jobs are interdependent on one another) to society (where individuals often interact with others whom they do not personally know and work at jobs that seem unrelated to one another) resulted in a weakening of social ties and the loss of a shared sense of belonging to a meaningful community. His ideas (summarized in Box 2.2) are often used to highlight differences between village life of the preindustrial period and urban life of the capitalist industrial period, and between small-town life and that of the large, *modern* city more generally.

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), who was the first chair of sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1883, also wrote about the changes brought about by industrialization without mentioning its capitalist nature. In *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933 [1893]), Durkheim discussed many of the same issues presented in Tönnies’s earlier essay, this time under the labels of *mechanical solidarity* and *organic solidarity*. In the preindustrial village, individuals were held together by the mechanical bonds of kinship and social interdependence—mechanical because they were predetermined and could not be changed as long as the individual remained within the local village. In the industrial city, individuals were no longer bound by the mechanical bonds of kinship. Now, they could work at new

Box 2.2

Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft

In his seminal work analyzing the social changes that accompany the transition from the traditional community to the modern urban society, Ferdinand Tönnies described the forms of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft in the following terms:

The very existence of *Gemeinschaft* rests in the consciousness of belonging together and the affirmation of the condition of mutual dependence which is posed by that affirmation. Living together may be called the animal soul of *Gemeinschaft*, for it is the condition of its active life, of a shared feeling of pleasure and pain, of a shared enjoyment of the commonly possessed goods, by which one is surrounded, and by the cooperation in teamwork as well as in divided labor. Working together may be conceived of as the rational or human soul of *Gemeinschaft*. It is higher, more conscious cooperation in the unity of spirit and purpose, including, therefore, a striving for common or shared ideals, as invisible goods that are knowable only to thought. Regarding being together it is descent (blood), regarding living together it is soil (land), regarding working together it is occupation (*Beruf*) that is substance as it were, by which the wills of men, which otherwise are far apart from and even antagonistic to each other, are essentially united.

The city is typical of *Gesellschaft* in general. It is essentially a commercial town and, in so far as commerce dominates its productive labor, a factory town. Its wealth is capital wealth which, in the form of trade, usury, or industrial capital, is used and multiplies. Capital is the means for the appropriation of products of labor or for the exploitation of workers. The city is also the center of science and culture, which always goes hand in hand with commerce and industry. Here the arts must make a living; they are exploited in a capitalist way. Thoughts spread with astonishing rapidity.

SOURCE: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1957 [1887]

types of jobs and have greater opportunities for interaction with a wider range of people. These were organic bonds that flowed naturally from the increased social differentiation brought about by the division of labor. If these terms seem to be counterintuitive (we often think of work in factories as being mechanical), it is important to realize that Durkheim was convinced that the new industrial economy was an improvement over the limited opportunities of feudal society, and he may have deliberately chosen words with a positive connotation to represent the

modern city. Durkheim was certain that the new industrial order would replace the earlier ways of life: "With the coming of the industrial economy, village society has disappeared, never to come again." Later, especially in the US during a period of conservative thinking that avoided the approach of Karl Marx, Durkheim's perspective was widely accepted.

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), the German scholar, saw things very differently. Engels's father was a wealthy industrialist, and he sent his son to Manchester, England, to manage the family's business interests in the new industrial city. Engels's observations on everyday life under industrial capitalism are found in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. This seminal work in urban sociology devoted a chapter to "The Great Towns." According to Engels, the evils of industrialization and capitalism were intensified by the space of the city. We will return to this perspective in the next chapter, when we turn back to an analysis of capitalism and space, and rightfully so.

The European thinker who had the greatest influence on urban sociologists in the United States during this early period was Georg Simmel (1858–1918). Simmel viewed the city in cultural terms and as a product of "modernism." He wrote about how urban life transformed individual consciousness. Everyday existence within the city altered the way people thought and acted compared to traditional society. Robert Park and Albion Small were familiar with Simmel's work and brought this "interactive" perspective back to the University of Chicago. In the United States, the work of the early Chicago School was less concerned with historical and comparative studies in the manner of Weber, and more focused on social behavior and interaction within the urban milieu in the manner of Simmel.

Any thorough discussion of the development of urban sociology in the United States must begin by explaining the important difference between the two organizing topics in the field: urbanization and urbanism. *Urbanization* refers to the origins of cities and the process of city building. It studies the way social activities locate themselves in space and according to interdependent processes of societal development and change. The analyses are often historical and comparative. When we study the process of urbanization, we are interested in charting the rise and fall of great cities and urban civilizations. *Urbanism*, in contrast, studies the ways of life that may be found within an urbanized space. It deals with culture, with meanings, symbols, patterns of daily life, individual lived experiences, and processes of adjustment to the environment of the city, but also with social conflict and political organization at the street, neighborhood, and city levels.

While both Max Weber and Friedrich Engels emphasized the relation between the historical development of the city and its ways of life, Georg Simmel was more concerned with patterns of activity and cultural ways of thinking found in the city. The work of the early Chicago School followed Simmel closely and focused on patterns of activity within cities rather than addressing the topic of

city formation or US urbanization. Yet for Simmel, the study of life within the city was not meant as an "urban sociology." Simmel was instead concerned with *modernity*, or the transition from a traditional society characterized by social relations based on intimacy or kinship (known as "primary" relations) and by a feudal economy based on barter to an industrial society situated within cities and dominated by impersonal, specialized social relations based on compartmentalized roles (known as "secondary" relations), and by a money economy based on rational calculations of profit and loss. For Simmel, the subtle aspects of modernity were displayed most clearly within the large city or metropolis and through consciously directed behaviors. Simmel gives us a social psychology of modernity that Robert Park took to be the sociology of urbanism, or "urban sociology." Most importantly, Simmel opposed the Marxian view that society progressed historically through political-economic stages of development in favor of a culturally determined analysis focused on historical changes in social interaction, societal organization, and the individual's inner life. For this reason, and due to the anti-Marxism of early-1900s America, Simmel was much more influential in the creation of urban sociology.

GEORG SIMMEL ON THE CITY

What was it like to confront modernity and why was Simmel so impressed with the city as the vehicle for change? Consider if you will, a German farmer from Bavaria. His life was tuned to the daily rhythms of agriculture. Nature and his physical labor provided the boundaries within which the farming endeavor was framed. The regime of labor on the land was early to bed because darkness meant little work could be done, and early to rise because it was necessary to use every second of daylight for work—even dawn and twilight. This farmer was immersed in a social world of primary kinship relations. His principal contacts were members of his family, both immediate and extended. Perhaps several generations and families lived together in the same location and worked the land. Beyond this primary network, the farmer would interact with individuals who aided his enterprise. He typically visited a local service center, perhaps in a small town. There he was involved in a network of people who knew him well. In this kind of traditional society, it was entirely possible that no money changed hands while farm produce and needed commodities were exchanged. Barter, credit, and informal agreements among known persons characterized the social relations of this world.

As Simmel might suggest, suppose this individual, let's call him Hans, lost the farm and his family in some personal tragedy. With a small amount of money, he now traveled to Berlin to begin a new life. He went to this modern city precisely because it offered him an alternative to the traditional rural

Box 2.3

Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel was born on March 1, 1858, in the very heart of Berlin, at the intersection of Leipzigerstrasse and Friedrichstrasse. This was a curious birthplace—it would correspond to Times Square in New York—but it seems symbolically fitting for a man who lived at the intersection of many movements, intensely affected by the crosscurrents of intellectual traffic and by a multiplicity of moral directions. Like “the stranger” he described in his brilliant essay of the same name, he was near and far at the same time; a potential wanderer who had not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. Simmel was a modern urban man, without roots in traditional folk culture.

After graduating from *Gymnasium*, Simmel studied history and philosophy at the University of Berlin with some of the most important academic figures of the day. By the time he received his doctorate in 1881, Simmel was familiar with a vast field of knowledge extending from history to philosophy and from psychology to the social sciences. Deeply tied to the intellectual milieu of Berlin, he played an active part in the intellectual and cultural life of the capital, frequenting many fashionable salons and participating in various cultural circles. He attended the meetings of philosophers and sociologists and was a cofounder, with Weber and Tönnies, of the German Society for Sociology.

Simmel taught at the University of Berlin, where he became a *Privatdozent* (an unpaid lecturer dependent on student fees) in 1885. His courses ranged from logic and the history of philosophy, to ethics, social psychology, and sociology. He was a very popular speaker, and his lectures became leading intellectual events, not only for students but for the cultural elite of Berlin. Simmel was something of a showman, punctuating the air with abrupt gestures and stabs, dramatically halting, and then releasing a torrent of dazzling ideas. In spite of the fascination he called forth, however, his academic career turned out to be unfortunate, even tragic. Many of Simmel's peers and elders, especially those of secondary rank, felt threatened and unsettled by his erratic brilliance. Whenever Simmel sought an academic promotion, he was rebuffed.

Simmel was a prolific writer. More than 200 of his articles appeared in a great variety of journals, newspapers, and magazines during his lifetime, and several more were published posthumously. He published fifteen major works in the fields of philosophy, ethics, sociology, and cultural criticism, including his seminal work, *The Philosophy of Money*, in 1900. His influence on the further

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development of both philosophy and sociology, whether acknowledged or not, has been diffuse yet pervasive, even during those periods when his fame seemed to have been eclipsed. Among Americans who sat at his feet was Robert Park. No one who reads Park's work can overlook Simmel's profound impact.

SOURCE: Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 1971

existence of farming. Karl Marx, writing in the nineteenth century, would have focused on Hans's conversion to an industrial worker. He would have taken us into the factory with Hans and described his encounter with abstract capital (the machine), with the relations of production (the factory building, the assembly line, and the daily schedule of work), and with class relations (interaction with the workers and the boss). Simmel, writing in the early twentieth century, virtually ignored this entire domain of the factory, which could be termed the immediate environment of capitalism, and focused instead on the larger context of daily life, the extended environment—the city.

Hans stands on the corner of a large boulevard in Berlin teeming with daytime auto traffic. He has to dodge the steady stream of pedestrians just to stand still and watch, since everything else is in constant motion. At first, Hans would be paralyzed by the “excess of nervous stimulation,” according to Simmel. Haven't we all had a similar experience when visiting a large city? Loud noises from traffic, people in the crowds calling after one another, strangers bumping us as they pass without an acknowledgment, and more—noise, noise, and noise. Hans would find himself in a totally new environment that demanded an adjustment and a response.

According to Simmel, small-town life required Hans to develop strong, intimate ties to those with whom he interacted. In the city, the excess of stimulation requires a defensive response. There are eight characteristics of urbanism noted by Simmel. Hans would 1) develop what Simmel called a “blasé” attitude—a blurring of the senses, a filtering out of all that was loud and impinging but also irrelevant to Hans's own personal needs. Emotional reserve and indifference bordering on hostility replace acute attention to the details of the environment. This concept is very close to Henri Lefebvre's concepts of the everyday and everydayness-alienated individual experience; although Lefebvre also saw the possibility for transcending this alienated, lived experience as freely constructed moments of communion or festival.

Hans would require the satisfaction of his needs. Yes, he would encounter capitalism and sell his labor for a wage, as Marx had observed. Here Simmel agreed



FIGURE 2.4 Victoria Hotel, Unter den Linden, Berlin, Germany, between 1890 and 1900. SOURCE: Library of Congress.

with Marx about the necessity of that transaction, which would 2) reduce the quality of Hans's capabilities simply to the quantity of his labor time—the time he spent at work for a wage. It would make his work equivalent to a sum of money, no more, no less. That sum of money exchanged for Hans's labor time would be all the employing capitalist would provide. Hans would quickly see that absolutely no concern for his health, spiritual, communal, sexual, or any other type of human need would be involved in his relationship with his employer. In short, for Simmel's cultural way of framing issues of change, the stage of capitalism created 3) an impersonal world of pure monetary exchange.

Yet, Simmel, unlike Marx, showed how the impersonal money economy extended outside the factory to characterize all other interpersonal transactions in the city. That is, he focused more on the *sociological* aspects of relationships. Hans would use his paycheck to buy the necessities of life, but in these transactions, too, impersonal or secondary social relations prevailed. Unless he went to a small store and frequented it every day, he would simply be viewed as 4) an anonymous customer being provided with mass-produced items for purchase. As a city

dweller, he might find himself more frequently going to a department store where 5) a mass spectacle of consumption would be on display.

In all these transactions, Hans would have to be very careful. His weekly paycheck could go only so far. He would have to count how much each item cost and then budget accordingly. This 6) rational calculation would be at the heart of his daily life. Everything would be measured by him; just as costs were carefully measured at the factory. Rational calculation of money would require knowledge and technique. If Hans mastered it successfully along with gaining mastery over the consumer world of the city, he could look down at his country-bumpkin cousins. City life, for Simmel, was a life of the intellect, and everywhere, the culture was dominated by the relation between the money economy and the rational calculation needed to survive in the world of capitalism that prevailed. Those in the city who could not master *modern*, impersonal culture and the technique of money management would surely be lost.

We are not finished with the example of Hans. In the traditional society of the country, the rhythm of life was provided by nature. The city environment required 7) adjustment to a second nature—the orchestration of daily activities as governed by clock time and as played out within a constructed space; *everydayness* in Lefebvre's analysis. All life in the city followed the schedule of capitalist industrialization or modernity. If Hans didn't own a watch before coming to the city, he now needed one. Time and money constituted the two types of calculation necessary for survival in the second nature of the urban milieu—the built environment of concrete, steel, and glass that is the city.

Finally, Simmel also commented on the qualitative value of an experience like Hans's. He did not see the transformation as something that was necessarily bad. Hans would be cast in a calculating and impersonal world, but he would also be 8) freed from the restrictions of traditional society and its time-bound dictates. He would be free to discriminate about the types of friends he chose, about the job he took (within strong constraints, of course), and about where he lived. To Simmel, modernity meant the possibility of immense individual freedom in addition to constraint.

For Simmel, the freedom of the city meant, above all else, that Hans would be free to pursue and even create his own individuality. Provided he had the money, of course—an actuality that Marx would doubt—Hans could cultivate himself. He could dress according to some distinct fashion, develop hobbies he could share with others, perhaps take up the violin and join a neighborhood string quartet. Hans could enjoy a certain brand of cigar or shoes, or attend night classes at the university—even Simmel's own lectures! Could Hans and Simmel eventually have met? The city allowed for the possibility of attaining such cultural freedom, and the signs of individual cultivation—the clothes, cigars, friends, lovers, discussion groups, opera, art, novels—were collectively the signs of modernity that we may also call the way of life or culture of "urbanism."

LOUIS WIRTH AND URBANISM AS A WAY OF LIFE

As we have seen, Georg Simmel had an important impact on the development of urban sociology in the United States. Albion Small and Robert Park attended lectures by Simmel while they were studying in Germany, and Park included some of the first English translations of Simmel's work in the sociology textbook (titled *The Science of Society*) used at the University of Chicago. Louis Wirth was born in Germany but was sent to live with relatives in Omaha, Nebraska, where he attended high school before going to the University of Chicago. Wirth's doctoral research reflected his knowledge of the development of Chicago's Jewish community. Published in 1928 as *The Ghetto*, Wirth's work describes the Maxwell Street neighborhood where recently arrived Russian Jewish immigrants had settled (the ghetto) and the area of second settlement where the older German Jewish immigrants had moved (Deutschland). Wirth became a faculty member in the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago and was one of the important figures in the later development of the Chicago School.

Louis Wirth was inspired by the work of Simmel. The Chicago sociologists came to view spatial patterns in the city as the result of powerful biologically based "ecological" factors, such as competition and the struggle for survival among individuals and groups within the city. Thus, Robert Park and his associates viewed urban space as a container, a built environment that encloses the action. Wirth's idea was different. Following Simmel, he emphasized the way the city, as a spatial environment, influenced individual behavior. Wirth wanted to know what it was about the city that produced unique behaviors that might be called an "urban way of life" in contrast to existence in rural society. Given his study emphasis, Wirth naturally returned to Simmel. However, while Simmel (along with Weber and Marx) attributed much of the city way of life to the influence of larger systemic forces, especially capitalism and its money economy, Wirth aimed for a general theory that ignored forces having origins outside the city. He studied the characteristics of people in the city and how life there might produce a distinct "urban" culture. Furthermore, Wirth had adopted the Anglo-American social science approach of empiricism that sought to explain social facts by statistical measurements. Hence, "urbanism," or an urban way of life, became the *dependent* variable to be explained using larger societal factors as causes, or *independent* variables.

In his important essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1938), Wirth focused on three factors. Urbanism was produced in relatively large and densely populated settlements containing groups of persons of different backgrounds; that is, the phenomenon, urbanism, was a product of large *population size*, *density*, and *heterogeneity*. Wirth's approach was a major leap in sociological thinking

up to that point, because he provided a set of factors that could be analyzed statistically according to their effects. It was a theory with true predictive power. Given a sample of cities, the higher each one scored on the three factors of size, density, and heterogeneity, the more one could expect it to house a true urban culture.

Wirth's theory was impressive for the time because of its predictive potential. Problems arose when he tried to define what precisely an urban culture would be like. Recall the example of Hans. Simmel gave us a detailed picture that contained both negative and positive aspects. Essentially, Simmel viewed the city as simply different. In his formulation, Wirth stressed the dark side of Simmel's vision: aspects of social disorganization would characterize urbanism as a culture. Central to Wirth's view was the shift from primary to secondary social relations. Wirth tended to see urban anonymity as debilitating. More specifically, the effects of the three factors on social life can be expressed as a series of propositions, as indicated in Box 2.4.

Wirth's work has been exhaustively tested, mainly because it was so clearly stated (Fischer, 1975). The core assertion—that size, density, and heterogeneity cause a specific set of behaviors considered urban—has not been borne out. If we look at the propositions presented in Box 2.4, many of the assertions appear to be accurate descriptions of social interaction in the large city, and they help to provide a more detailed picture of what urbanism as a culture is like. However, while the theory contains some truth, we cannot be certain that these factors produce specific results. Cities merely concentrate the effects of societal forces producing urban culture. Surely we know that small towns are affected by many of the same social forces as the central city and urban-style social problems also affect rural areas, although the types of behaviors that we observe in these environments may differ in type and intensity.

Finally, Louis Wirth held strongly to the view that the true effects of urbanism would occur as a matter of evolution as cities operated on immigrant groups to break down traditional ways of interacting over time. He did not see the larger city acting as an environment to bring about immediately the change he predicted. These things would take time, perhaps a generation. "Urbanism as a Way of Life" would inspire other urban sociologists to analyze the development of new suburban lifestyles ("Suburbanism as a Way of Life"; Fava, 1980) and to compare urban and suburban lifestyles ("Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life"; Gans, 1968). Wirth's work also inspired a subsequent generation to plow through census data and derive the statistical regularities of urban living. Much urban research is similarly conducted today. Consequently, although his theory was not borne out, Louis Wirth is clearly a true pioneer of contemporary urban sociology.

Box 2.4

Urbanism as a Way of Life

Louis Wirth did not believe that there was a specific number that magically created an urban space (compare this idea with the definitions of *urban* from Chapter 1). Instead, he believed that cities differ from rural areas because of three factors—the size, density, and heterogeneity of the population—that interact with one another to produce a specific urban way of life. Here are some of the effects of the variables as Wirth described them:

The effect of size: The greater the size of the population, the greater the specialization and diversity of social roles we find within the city—and so too the diversity of the population itself. Because the population lacks a common identity, competition and formal mechanisms of social control would replace primary relations of kinship as a means of organizing society. Because human relationships are highly segmented, there is increased anonymity and fragmentation of social interaction. These effects can be liberating (one has greater anonymity and can do as one likes) but they may also lead to anomie and social disorganization.

The effect of density: The increased density of the urban population intensifies the effects of large population size, increases competition among individuals and groups, and thereby creates a need for specialization. Greater density produces greater tolerance for living closely with strangers but also creates greater stress as groups that do not share a common identity come into contact with one another. Increased competition leads to mutual exploitation, while greater density leads to the need to tune out excessive stimulation.

The effect of heterogeneity: Individuals in the city have regular contact with persons and groups that differ from them in many ways: ethnicity, race, and social status, as described above. Increased heterogeneity leads to greater tolerance among groups as ethnic and class barriers are broken down. But the effect also is to compartmentalize individual roles and contacts, and, as a result, anonymity and depersonalization in public life increase.

The increased size, density, and heterogeneity of urban areas leave us with an urban environment where individuals are alienated and alone, where primary groups have been splintered. The individual is now subject to the influence of the mass media and mass social movements where the individual must “subordinate some of this individuality to the demands of the larger community.”

SOURCE: Adapted from Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life” (*American Journal of Sociology*, 1938)

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL OF URBAN SOCIOLOGY

While it is common to date the origin of urban sociology at Chicago to Robert Park's arrival in 1914 and his subsequent work with Ernest Burgess, the idea of the city as a laboratory for social research came much earlier (Hutchison, 2009). Charles Henderson, one of the founding members of the department, applied for funds for a systematic study of the city in the 1890s, and W. I. Thomas began his research on *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* in 1908. An early (1902) description of the graduate program in the *American Journal of Sociology* stated:

The city of Chicago is one of the most complete social laboratories in the world. While the elements of sociology may be studied in smaller communities, ... the most serious problems of modern society are presented by the great cities, and must be studied as they are encountered in concrete form in large populations. No city in the world presents a wider variety of typical social problems than Chicago. (Tolman, 1902:116)

Robert Park and Human Ecology

Robert Park (1864–1944) attended the University of Michigan and began his career as a newspaper reporter, first for the *Minneapolis Journal* and later for the *New York Journal*. Because he was assigned to the police beat at the newspapers, he would have to pound the streets to develop leads and check facts for his news articles. He returned to graduate school at Harvard University and traveled to Germany, where he took courses with Georg Simmel and received a degree from the University of Heidelberg. In 1912 Park organized a conference on race relations at Tuskegee Institute. W. I. Thomas, who taught at the University of Chicago, approached him to ask if Park would come to the university and join other scholars in the newly formed department of sociology (Blumer, 1984; Mathews, 1977).

In 1914, at age forty-nine, Park joined the faculty of the University of Chicago on a part-time basis. Park's approach to the sociological study of the urban environment was clear. He urged his students to “get the seat of their pants dirty” by going out into the neighborhoods of the city, studying the many different groups of people who had come there. While Park worked with W. I. Thomas on a study of immigrant adaptation to the urban environment and on his own study of the development of the immigrant press in the United States, he and Ernest Burgess conducted undergraduate classes and graduate seminars that required students to go into the community, collect data from businesspeople, interview area residents, and report back with their information.

Box 2.5

Robert Park's Fascinating Career

Robert Park was born in Red Wing, Minnesota, in 1864. His father did not want to send him to college, insisting that he was not "the studious type," but Park saved money from a summer job working with a railroad crew to pay for his college tuition. He graduated from the University of Michigan, where he took courses with John Dewey, and began his career as a newspaper reporter, first in Minneapolis and later in Denver, New York, and Chicago. Despite a successful career in the newspaper business, including serving as city editor for two Detroit newspapers, Park decided to return to graduate school.

He received his MA in philosophy from Harvard University in 1899 and then moved his family to Berlin, where he attended lectures by Georg Simmel, and later received his PhD from Heidelberg University. Returning to the United States in 1903, he became secretary of the Congo Reform Association and wrote a series of articles that exposed the atrocities of the Belgian government in its African colony.

While working with the Congo Reform Association, Park met Booker T. Washington, the most influential black American leader of the day and the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, and decided that he was sick and tired of the academic world and wanted to "get back into the world of men." Washington invited Park to become the publicist for the institute, and for the next decade Park served as Washington's personal secretary, revising papers and speeches. Park used his spare time to investigate lynching in the American South and to write about race relations in the United States.

In 1912 Park organized the International Conference on the Negro at Tuskegee. One of the scholars he invited was W. I. Thomas from the University of Chicago. The two became friends, and Thomas invited Park to come to Chicago to teach. Park arrived in Chicago in 1914 and began the work that we are familiar with from the Chicago School of Urban Sociology. Because of Park's connections with Washington and Tuskegee, the University of Chicago attracted a number of black students and produced the first generation of African American sociologists in the United States, including E. Franklin Frazer, Horace Cayton, and St. Clair Drake (this at a time when black students were not allowed to attend many universities). Another of Park's students, Charles Johnson, wrote the final commission report on the Chicago race riots of 1919.

Charles Johnson moved to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he would serve as president of the historically all-black school. When it came time

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continued

for Park to retire from the University of Chicago (in 1936 at the age of 72), Johnson invited Park to come to Fisk, and together they established an urban laboratory to conduct studies of race relations in American cities. Park died in Nashville in 1944, and in 1955, Fisk University named a new dormitory Park-Johnson Hall in honor of his work.

Robert Park's contributions before and after his years at the University of Chicago have largely been overlooked, as if he discovered urban sociology there and left it behind when he retired. But in reality he spent his long and exciting career engaged with the city, with sociological study, and with the African American community before and after his years in Chicago.

From the very first, the Chicago School sociologists adopted a conceptual position that we know as human ecology—the study of the process of human group adjustment to the environment, which was inspired by the biologist, Charles Darwin. Whereas European thinkers such as Weber, Marx, and Simmel viewed the city as an environment where larger social and economic forces of capitalism played themselves out in a human drama, Chicago School sociologists avoided the study of capitalism per se, preferring instead a biologically based way of conceptualizing urban life. For them urban analysis was a branch of human ecology. Their ideas brought them closest to the work of the philosopher Herbert Spencer, a *social Darwinist*, who also viewed society as dominated by biological rather than economic laws of development. Economic competition, in this view, was a special case of the struggle for survival. All individuals in the city were caught up in this species competition and adjusted to it in various ways.

According to Park, the social organization of the city resulted from the struggle for survival that then produced a distinct and highly complex division of labor, because people tried to do what they were best at in order to compete. Urban life was organized on two distinct levels: the biotic and the cultural. The *biotic level* refers to the forms of organization produced by the competition of species over scarce environmental resources. The *cultural level* refers to the symbolic and psychological adjustment processes and to the organization of urban life according to shared sentiments, much like the qualities Simmel studied.

In Park's work, the biotic level stressed the importance of biological factors for understanding social organization and the urban effects of economic competition. In contrast, the cultural component of urban life operated in neighborhoods that were held together by cooperative ties involving shared cultural values among people with similar backgrounds. Hence, local community life was

organized around what Park called a "moral order" of cooperative, symbolic ties, whereas the larger city composed of separate communities was organized through competition and functional differentiation. In his later work, however, the complex notion of urbanism as combining competition and cooperation, or the biotic and the cultural levels, was dropped in favor of an emphasis on the biotic level alone as the basic premise of urban ecology. This led to some of the earliest critiques of the ecological perspective; faulting it for ignoring the role of culture in the city, or what Simmel would call the important influence of modernity, and for neglecting the basis of community (Alihan, 1938), which was social and not biological.

Other members of the early Chicago School translated the social Darwinism implicit in this model into a spatially attuned analysis. In 1924, Roderick McKenzie (one of Park's students) published an article titled "The Ecological Approach to the Study of the Human Community" that gives the definitive statement of this approach. The fundamental quality of the struggle for existence was position, or location, for the individual, the group, or institutions such as business firms. Spatial position would be determined by economic competition and the struggle for survival. Groups or individuals that were successful took over the better positions in the city, such as the choicest business locations, or the preferred neighborhoods. The less successful would have to make do with less desirable locations. In this way the urban population, under pressure of economic competition, sorted itself out within the city space. McKenzie explained land-use patterns as the product of competition and an economic division of labor, which deployed objects and activities in space according to the roles they played in society. Thus, if a firm needed a particular location to perform its function, it competed with others for that site. The study of urban patterns resulting from that competitive process would be studied by a new group of sociologists known as human ecologists.

BURGESS'S MODEL OF URBAN GROWTH

Ernest Burgess developed a theory of city growth and differentiation based on the social Darwinist or biologically derived principles common in the work of Park and McKenzie. According to Burgess, the city constantly grew because of population pressure. This, in turn, triggered a dual process of central agglomeration and commercial decentralization; that is, spatial competition attracted new business and commercial activities to the center of the city but also repelled other activities to the fringe area. This process forced other activities out and away from the core, and so the fringe itself was pushed farther out from the city, and so on.

The city continually grew outward as activities that lost out in the competition for space in the central city relocated to peripheral areas. This sorting and

survival of the fittest led, in turn, to further spatial and functional differentiation as activities were deployed according to competitive advantages. In Burgess's theory, the city would eventually take on the form of a highly concentrated central business district that would dominate the region and be the site for the highest competitive land prices as well as the main organizing functions of the society, while the surrounding area would comprise four distinct concentric rings. A copy of Burgess's map for the city of Chicago is shown in Figure 2.5 (the original map is displayed in the office of the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago).

The importance of Burgess's model cannot be overemphasized. First, he explained the pattern of homes, neighborhoods, and industrial and commercial locations in terms of the ecological theory of competition over spatial "position." Competition produced a certain ordering of space as well as a certain social organization in space. Both of these dimensions were pictured in the concentric zone model. Those who could afford it lived near the center; those who could not, arranged themselves in concentric zones around the city center.

Second, Burgess's model explained the shifting of population and activities within the space of the city according to two distinct but related processes: centralization and decentralization. His theory explicitly related social processes to spatial patterns—a most important link for all theorizing about the city that was to follow and a view that is quite compatible with the aims of the new urban sociology.

Finally, Burgess revealed that the characteristics of the social organization of the urban population were spatially deployed. A gradient running from the center to the periphery characterized the attributes of the urban population. Individual traits such as mental illness, gang membership, criminal behavior, and racial background were found to be clustered along the center/periphery gradient of the city. Cutting across the urban form from the central business district (known as the CBD) to the outskirts, Chicago School researchers, using census data, found that the incidence of social pathology decreased, while homeownership and the number of nuclear families increased. The inner zones, therefore, were discovered to be the sites of crime, illness, gang warfare, broken homes, and many other indicators of social disorganization or problems.

In practice, however, research on the internal structure of cities would contradict Burgess's view of concentric zones. The first critique of Burgess's model was proposed by Homer Hoyt (1933) and was called "sector theory." Hoyt argued that cities were carved up, not by concentric zones, but by unevenly shaped sectors within which different economic activities tended to congregate together; that is, agglomerate. Hoyt suggested that all activities, but especially manufacturing and retailing, had the tendency to spin off away from the center and agglomerate in

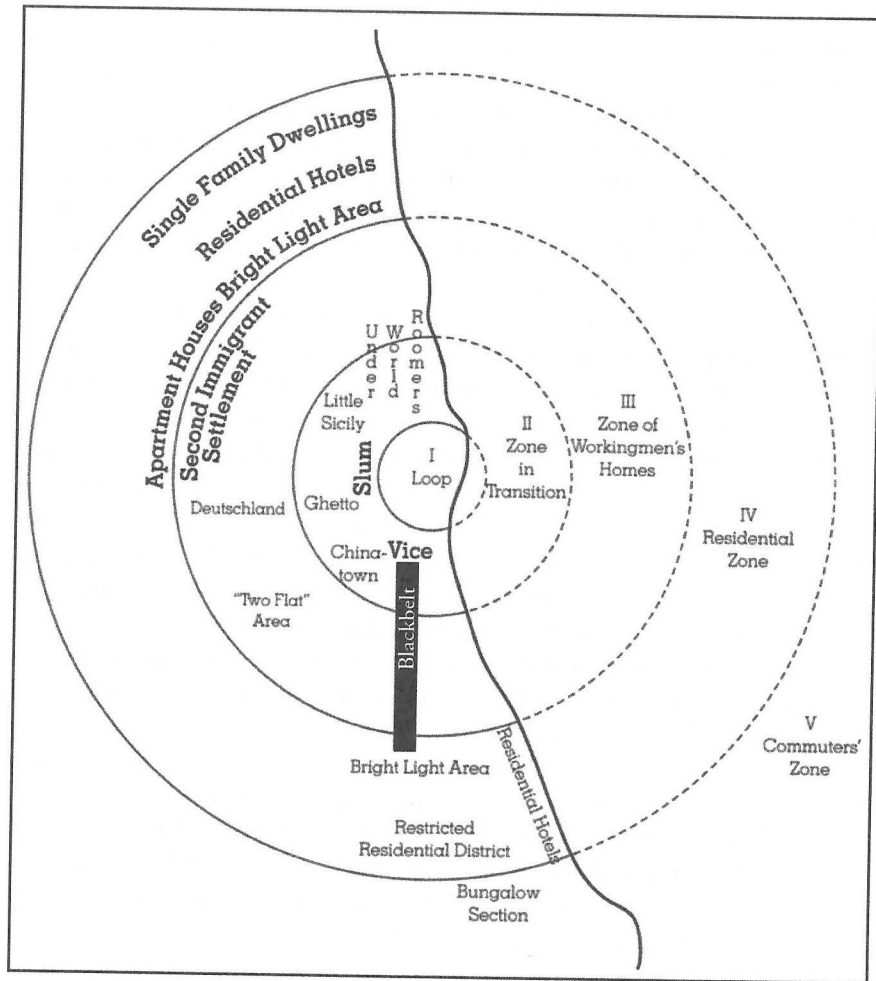


FIGURE 2.5 Burgess's Model of Concentric Zones. Ernest Burgess's model of the growth of the city shows concentric zones moving away from the central area; it also takes into account natural features (the lakefront) as well as areas of concentrated activities (such as the Bright Light Area on the north) and the location of ethnic communities (such as Little Sicily on the north and the Black Belt on the south). SOURCE: Reprinted courtesy of University of Chicago Press.

sectors that expanded outward. Thus, the city grew in irregular blobs rather than in Burgess's neat circles.

Other models argued that cities had *multiple* centers rather than a single urban core. Chauncy Harris and Edward Ullman (1945) suggested that within any city, there existed separate functions and particular needs that were concentrated within

specific and specialized districts. Thus, within cities, similar activities often locate in the same area, forming agglomerations, or minicenters. Cities often grow asymmetrically around these multiple nuclei. The idea of multiple nuclei as the shape of the city further developed Hoyt's break from Burgess and is similar to the current multicentered (MCMR) approach used in this book.

A common assumption of all of these models, however, and unlike the sociospatial approach of this text, is that the city remains the central place that dominates all other areas. In recent years this way of thinking about urbanized areas has been replaced by the regional perspective, which stresses the relative independence of multiple centers within the larger metropolitan region. While ecologists were concerned with location and with thinking of social activities as located in space, their biologically based explanation for perceived activities and spatial patterns has been rejected in favor of the new urban sociology with characteristics emphasized in this book (see Gottdiener and Feagin [1988] for an earlier analysis of this change in theoretical paradigms).

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL STUDIES

The work of the early Chicago School dominated urban sociology in the pre-war years. For about a decade, beginning in the early 1920s, a veritable flood of work poured out of the sociology department. Surveying the books alone (that is, not including MA and PhD theses produced at that time), the following list gives some idea of the range of studies and accomplishments of the Chicago School. Many of these works are classics in our field of study:

- Roderick D. McKenzie, *The Neighborhood: A Study of Columbus, Ohio* (1923)
- Nels Anderson, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (1923)
- Frederick Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (1927)
- Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (1928)
- Harvey W. Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (1929)
- Clifford R. Shaw, *The Jackroller* (1930)
- Paul G. Cressey, *The Taxi-Dance Hall* (1932)
- Walter C. Reckless, *Vice in Chicago* (1933)
- Norman Hayner, *Hotel Life* (1936)

This marvelous output was produced with a similar stamp. It took an important social phenomenon, such as suicide, and located the distribution of its incidence in the space of the city. Chicago researchers then analyzed it in terms of the relation between the individual and the larger social forces of integration/disintegration. Most often this meant that social phenomena were explained as products of social disorganization, particularly the breaking up of primary social relations through

city living, as Wirth's theory suggested. As a result, the Chicago School would later be criticized for reinforcing a negative view of city life. Yet, the marvelous field studies produced are often as inspiring academically and as interesting today as they were when first published.

Despite their limitations, we can appreciate the importance of these early efforts. First, Chicago School researchers explicitly connected social phenomena with spatial patterns; that is, they thought in sociospatial terms. Second, they took an interactionist perspective following the thought of Simmel. Individuals were studied in interaction with others, and the emergent forms of association coming out of that interaction were observed closely. Finally, they tried to show the patterns of adjustment to sociospatial location and developed a rudimentary way of speaking about the role of individual attributes in explaining urban phenomena. Nevertheless, they focused almost exclusively on social disorganization and pathology; the breakup of family relationships, for example, was given much more attention than questions of race or class. Now urban sociology perceives important phenomena differently, although nothing can be taken away from these earlier efforts.

One substantial project of the Chicago School was the creation of mappings of the city of Chicago that divided the city into seventy distinct community areas. The importance of spatial analysis in the Chicago School studies can be seen in the map shown in Figure 2.6, which shows the location of taxi (i.e., pay-to-play) dance halls in Chicago in the period from 1927 to 1930. Most of the Chicago School studies made use of a common base map of Chicago or Ernest Burgess's map of concentric zones, while some, such as the gang delinquency areas (Shaw et al., 1929) would overlay the concentric zones on the base map. Paul Cressey's *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life* examined a particular social institution—the taxi-dance hall—that developed to provide entertainment for single men in the industrial cities. It included not just the mapping of the location of the pay-to-play dance halls (shown in Figure 2.6) but also maps that showed where the customers who frequented the dance halls lived, and where the young women who worked in the dance halls lived. The for-fee dance halls were located in rooming house areas of the city, as were the patrons of the dance halls, while the taxi dancers (the young women) lived in immigrant neighborhoods on the north side of the city. Cressey's own ethnographic work in the dance halls further explains that the patrons were recent immigrants who lived in the single-room apartments of the rooming house districts. These were social facts discovered by Cressey's meticulous and inspiring field research.

Other studies took a similar spatial approach to the study of urban phenomena. Harvey Zorbaugh's study, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, made extensive use of maps to show where wealthy households (measured by persons listed in the social

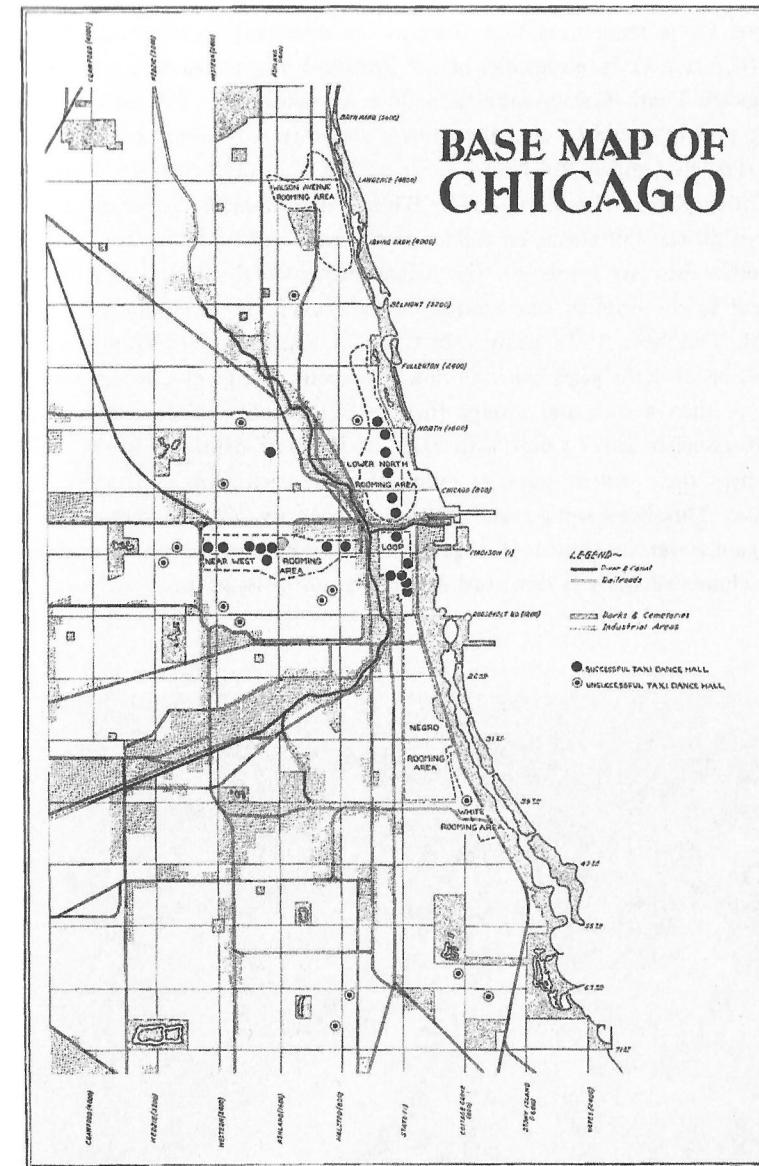


FIGURE 2.6 Location of Taxi-Dance Halls in Chicago, 1927–1930. Many of the Chicago School studies used the Base Map of Chicago to locate the groups and institutions that were discussed in the research; in this example, Paul Cressey mapped the location of Taxi-Dance Halls in Chicago. SOURCE: Reprinted courtesy of University of Chicago Press.

register in one case) lived along the Chicago lakefront (known as the Gold Coast), and areas where there were high delinquency rates and criminal activity (in the Slum) (Figure 2.7). Interestingly, one of Zorbaugh's maps shows a street intersection labeled Death Corner—the same location where the Cabrini-Green public housing project would be constructed over a twenty-year period beginning in the 1940s (Francis Cabrini Rowhouses in 1942, the Cabrini Extension in 1958, and the William Green Houses in 1962). These public housing experiments became notorious for their ill effects on residents and their social disorganization.

Another way to appreciate the achievements of the Chicago School is by returning to the original case studies. A particularly vivid ethnography is Frederick M. Thrasher's 1927 study, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Thrasher spent eight years tracking down the youth gangs of Chicago and identified more than a thousand groups that he called gangs. Today media coverage tends to associate street gangs with black or Hispanic teenagers in the inner city and lament their violent ways, as exemplified by such films as *Boyz N the Hood* and *Locas*. Thrasher's work takes us back to the city of some seventy years ago when gangs were as much of a problem, but their members were almost all white. Thrasher's study is described in more detail in Box 2.6.

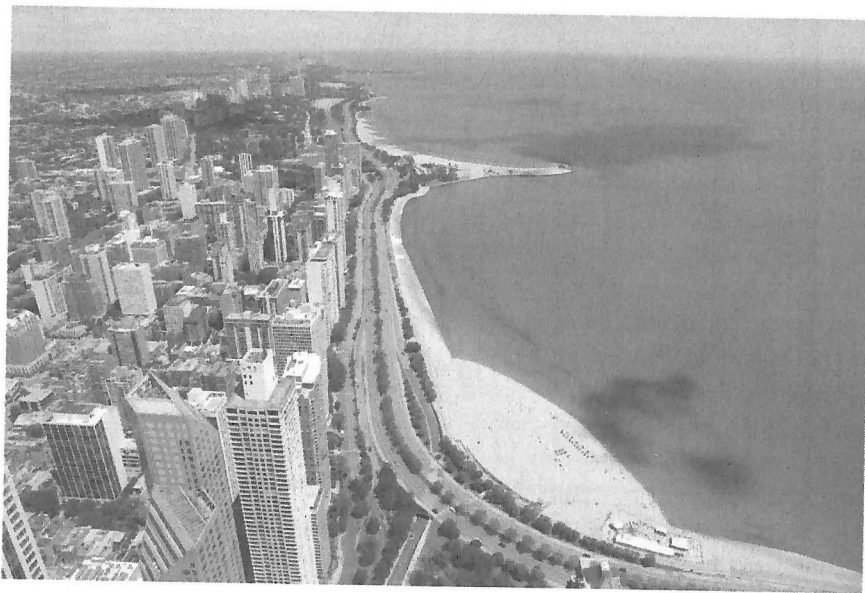


FIGURE 2.7 Harvey Zorbaugh's study, *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, showed where wealthy households lived along the Chicago lakefront (known as the Gold Coast). SOURCE: istock/©tupungato.

Box 2.6

Street Gangs in Chicago, 1927

In the 1920s most street gangs were composed principally of recent immigrants to this country. Thrasher's census of street gangs in Chicago (included some 25,000 members in a city of 2 million) showed that roughly 17% were known as Polish gangs, 11% were Italian, 8.5% were Irish, 7% were black, and so on, with the largest percentage of all gangs composed of "mixed nationalities." While roughly 87% of all gang members were of foreign extraction, they were organized by territory, not by ethnicity. According to Thrasher, the gang phenomenon was explained in part by the lack of adjustment opportunities for immigrants, in part by the carryover of Old World antagonisms, and also by the need to defend territory against "outsiders."

Thrasher's study demonstrates sociospatial thinking. As Robert Park comments in his introduction,

The title of this book does not describe it. It is a study of the gang, to be sure, but it is at the same time a study of "gangland," that is to say, a study of the gang and its habitat, and in this case the habitat is a city slum. (Park, 1936)

Park grounded Thrasher's study in a biological metaphor by his use of the word *habitat*. Today we would adopt the sociospatial perspective and say *territory* or *space*. Gangland is the city space where gangs lived. Their influence was felt all over. What Thrasher did was locate gangs in their space. In fact, he found "three great domains" of gangdom—the "northside jungles," the "southside badlands," and the "westside wilderness." Using Ernest Burgess's map of Chicago (see Figure 2.5), Thrasher provided details for each of these areas and the gangs they contained. Within gangland, "The street educates with fatal precision" (1927:101). The northside covered an area directly north of the Chicago Loop on the Burgess map and behind the wealthy neighborhoods that lined the shore of Lake Michigan. It was home to the "Gloriannas," the location of "Death Corner" and "Bughouse Square," and a gang so threatening that Thrasher disguised its real name.

The westside was the most extensive slum area producing gangs, and it encompassed the area west of downtown, spreading out both northward and southward. The westside was home to the "Blackspots," the "Sparkplugs," the "Beaners," and the "hard-boiled 'Buckets-of-Blood'" (1927:9). The South Side of Chicago, with its stockyards and miles of railroad yards, was dominated by Poles

continues

continued

and Italians, and gangs were known as the "Torpedoes" and the "So-So's." Also on the South Side, black gangs of the time were the "Wailing Shebas" and the "Wolves."

In a city divided by neighborhoods, Chicago pulsed with the give-and-take confrontations among the various gangs. Only the relative scarcity of killing weapons such as handguns kept the constant confrontations from erupting into the type of carnage characteristic of many cities today. For students of contemporary urban sociology, there can be no better example of spatially sensitive research than Thrasher's original study. Moreover, it is doubtful, in today's urban environment, that anyone could carry out the kind of exhaustive census on street gangs that Thrasher was able to accomplish. Certain parts of his study are now outdated, but like the Pyramids, it remains an inspiration across time.

Roderick McKenzie and the Metropolitan Community

Roderick McKenzie was principal investigator on urban trends for President Herbert Hoover's Committee on Recent Social Trends, and author of the chapter titled "The Rise of Metropolitan Communities" in *Recent Social Trends* (1933). McKenzie used this opportunity to apply the principles of urban ecology to a regional metropolitan approach. He viewed the development of the metropolitan region as a function of changes in transportation and communication that produced new forms of social organization. These stages of development were the pre-railway era (before 1850), the railway era (1850–1900), and the motor transportation area (1900 to present). McKenzie considered technological change to be the key variable in producing spatial patterns in urban society, as he states in his introduction to *The Metropolitan Community*:

Formerly independent towns and villages and also rural territory have become part of this enlarged city complex. This new type of super community, organized around a dominant focal point and comprising a multitude of differentiated centers of activity, differs from the metropolitanism established by rail transportation in the complexity of its institutional division of labor and the mobility of its population. Its territorial scope is defined in terms of motor transportation and competition with other regions. (1933:6–7)

McKenzie's ideas were recognized as a significant contribution to the field at the time. In some respects, his approach may be viewed as a precursor to the

general concept of the multicentered metropolitan region emphasized by the sociospatial approach, except for his technological determinism. McKenzie spent the last seven years of his life working on a manuscript that set forth a more systematic statement of the principles of urban ecology. Perhaps because this work was left unfinished, he is sometimes overlooked even by contemporary urban ecologists. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this oversight. In the 1950s, a new field of study, regional science, began investigating metropolitan regions from the perspective of economic geography—an approach with less appeal to urban sociologists. McKenzie's focus on the metropolitan region conflicted with the more general tendency of urban sociologists to focus their research and writing, as well as fieldwork, on the central city. A serious consideration of his regional perspective would have led urban sociology out of the city and into the suburban region, something that would not happen for several decades but is a central focus of this text.



FIGURE 2.8 Apartment building in a black section of Chicago, Illinois, April 1941. SOURCE: Russell Lee, Photographer Gelatin-silver print FSA-OWI Collection Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

FROM HUMAN ECOLOGY TO ITS CRITIQUE

Although the Chicago School established the discipline of Sociology in the US and innovated urban sociology as a scientific study of the city, critiques of its theory were short in coming. Most influential was an article that appeared in 1945 by Walter Firey who published a study of land use in Boston titled "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables." He noted that large areas of land in downtown Boston were reserved for noneconomic uses. Parks and cemeteries, as well as a forty-eight-acre area in the center of the city that had formed the original "commons" of the community, had never been developed. In addition, an upper-class residential neighborhood known as Beacon Hill retained its privileged position as a home to wealthy and established Boston families despite its location near the downtown area. Each of these observations ran counter to Burgess's concentric zone model. Firey suggested that "sentiment" and "symbolism" were important ecological factors that influenced spatial patterns of development in urban space (Firey, 1945). Although other sociologists have offered little systematic elaboration of the ideas Firey presented in this important piece of research, his work is often referred to as the "sociocultural school" of urban ecology. Today we can say that his work is a critique of the Chicago School and it is a prescient analysis focusing on the role of culture and affluent status in determining land use, much like the sociospatial approach's appreciation for these same factors. But, it was not until the 1980s, when Lefebvre's influence was felt, that this critique of human ecology was clearly understood.

SUMMARY

All theoretical paradigms are beset with potential problems and contradictions. Theoretical models borrow concepts from other fields of study, and are creatures of the concerns and beliefs of scholars at a particular historical moment. Robert Park wanted to create a new "science of society" and borrowed the model of biological ecology to formulate his model of human ecology. He incorporated the idea of conflict among competing land uses and competition among population groups, although it is unlikely that he envisioned the particular forms of conflict among class, ethnic, and racial groups that beset American society in the twenty-first century. Later ecologists would incorporate new methods of data analysis to answer new and even more challenging questions concerning urban life than the early Chicago sociologists could have imagined. But human ecology and its offspring, urban ecology, confront numerous obstacles when studying the complexities of the multicentered metropolitan regions that now characterize urban society in the United States and across the globe.

The human ecology paradigm gives undue prominence to just one factor—technological innovation—to explain urban growth and change. Roderick McKenzie viewed changes in the metropolitan region as the product of shifts in transportation technology. This approach created problems for other human ecologists who followed McKenzie. Amos Hawley, who was McKenzie's student and perhaps the best-known human ecologist, wanted to explain two aspects of change in the post-war period: the massive growth of suburbanization and the restructuring of central city areas away from manufacturing and toward administration. In explaining these changes, he dropped the early ecologists' concern for space itself. He viewed social organization as fundamentally produced by the technologies of communication and transportation. As the technology of these means of interaction changed, so did the patterns of social organization. No mention is made of the economic or political systems, nor of the influence of powerful actors in the production of space. Consequently, the approach is quite outdated.

Nevertheless, the ecological perspective remains active among urban demographers who study statistical changes alone. At the explanatory level, the core biological metaphor has been retained, as well as the central view that social organization should be understood as a process of adaptation to the environment. With metaphorical concepts we get locked up in the social logic of the metaphor and miss the actual social logic of urbanization, urbanism, and the nature of urban society. Human ecologists avoid any mention of social groupings such as classes or life along ethnic, racial, and gender lines. Demographers using ecological theory see urbanism as a process of adaptation to pre-existing conditions, rather than competition over scarce resources that often brings conflict. This is a very passive image of human beings that ignores human agency and the social production of urban space. They have a limited conception of the economy, which is still viewed as simply the social organization of functions and division of labor—a conception that neglects the dynamics of capitalism and the global system. Although they emphasize ecological location, they ignore the real estate industry and its role in developing space, something that the housing crisis of the first decade of the twenty-first century tells us is very important. Finally, urban ecologists have overlooked the important political institutions that administer and regulate society and affect everyday life through the institutional channeling of resources, another very important part of the current housing crisis. Their emphasis on the agent-side neglects the powerful structural-side causes of growth and change in the metropolis. We will examine the factors responsible for the development of the multicentered metropolitan region in the next chapter as we explore the new urban sociology.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What were some differences between the rural and urban ways of life?
- Explain some examples to show that religious codes were the earliest forms of urban planning.
- What were some of the earliest cities and what were some structural features and innovations that allowed them to prosper?
- Why was it necessary for cities to exercise power over their extended space? How did they do it?
- Name one early city and describe how it was built using symbolic codes.
- What is one difference between classical and medieval cities?
- According to Max Weber, what were some necessary elements of medieval cities?
- Name some features of the industrial city that differed from the medieval one.
- How are these same differences reflected in the difference between feudalism and capitalism as economic systems? How does this relate to Lefebvre's theory of urban space?
- Name some early urban sociologists and describe some of their main ideas.
- Why was there a "Chicago School" and what was its view of the city and city growth?
- Describe and contrast the approaches of Simmel and Wirth.
- What were some of the ideas promoted by Park, Burgess, and McKenzie as "Human Ecology?"
- How did the Chicago School neglect the role of capitalism and the role of government in urban development? That is, use the sociospatial perspective to critique them.

CONTEMPORARY
URBAN SOCIOLOGY

We began the book discussing several conceptual changes that are the hallmark of the new urban sociology. These include a shift to a global perspective on capitalism and the metropolis; the inclusion of factors such as class exploitation, racism, and gender, in the analysis of metropolitan development; integrating economic, political, and cultural factors into spatial analysis, paying special attention to the structural, pull factors of real estate investment and government intervention; and shifting our unit of analysis from just the city to the multi-centered metropolitan region (MCMR). This makes up what we call the *sociospatial* approach.

In addition to a change in perspective, the new urban sociology also involves important theoretical innovations in the way human environments are analyzed. The interesting theoretical developments began in the 1970s. Numerous writers in sociology, geography, and urban studies challenged the orthodox ideas of urbanization. Scholars working outside of the United States have been responsible for much of this theoretical work. Only recently has US urban sociology incorporated new theoretical insights into its core research questions. Regardless of the international scope and intellectual diversity, though, most of the new approaches have their origin in the application to city environments of Max Weber's, Karl Marx's, and Friedrich Engels's writings regarding the analysis of "political economy" and the city. While this perspective represents a considerable advance over those discussed in the previous chapter, mainly because the ecological perspective simply ignores the important role of economic and political interests, racism, inequality, as well as its inability to successfully explain change, it has its own limitations. Sociologists have tried to tailor the new theoretical ideas to the needs of their discipline. Thus, this chapter situates the sociospatial approach in its intellectual history as it unpacks the aspects of political economy and culture involved in the production of settlement space.