Introduction

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JSB421 Critical Urban Sociology

Structure of the lecture:

1/ Why urban??
2/ Why critical??
3/ Plan of the course
        - schedule
        - requirements + rankings
        - questions & answers
4/ Urban regions
5/ New urban sociology

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- **The world is urbanizing**
$\Rightarrow$ 54, 5 % of the population lives in urban areas (4 billion persons)
$\Rightarrow$ By 2030 two-thirds of the global population will reside in this type of settlement space
$\Rightarrow$ Most of the increase will happen in the developing world (Africa, Asia)
        -> most people will live in shantytowns & slums with incomes below the poverty level (UN 2016)
$\Rightarrow$ 21st Century as the „1st urban century in human history"
$\Rightarrow$ Well-being of human society will depend on the ability to create a safe and just urban environment
$\Rightarrow$ Urban sociology as an instrument to have knowledge to do so

Why urban??

The City?

- Various definitions
⇒ *Material environment* = physical space (buildings, streets, squares, sidewalks, infrastructure, technologies
⇒ *Social environment* = social space, „soft" component of the city, world of people and their interrelationships and interactions

- R. E. Park (1915): city is a product of culture which becomes natural environment for the life of a human + influences his actions and thoughts
   => dialectical relationship between man and space (Marx – spatial dialectics)
- R. Pahl (1970): city is a closed unit with visible center and closed socio-spatial system
- 21st Century: cities as fragmented formations of various neighborhoods and many centers (f. e. Dear (2002) 2005) or parts of urban regions and conurbations (comp. w. Jayne 2006: 13 – 14)

- Cities as places of global streams crossings – economical, information, social – and simultaneously places of everyday life (Castells 2004)
⇒ Cities as places of accumulated capital (centers of economy) and people (centers of culture **x** centers of many social problems); places of governance, science, services, health care, innovations…
⇒ A city is a perfect subject for sociological examination -> almost every possible social realities and facts are present in a city; however -> every city has a different reality, size, population, specifics…

- Urban sociology gives us the tools for understanding how urban regions grow and develop according to the law of uneven development
- Helps us to understand the impact of urban life on persons living in cities, suburbs and metropolitan regions, the greater impact of world urbanization on human societies and the natural environment, and the possibilities for change in our urban society

Various development & structure of cities

Brasília

- Planned city
- 1956 – 1961
- President Juscelino Kubitschek

Astana

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Krakow – Nowa Huta

Berlin – Karl-Marx
Allee

- Paris re-construction / Le Corbusier

- Various definitions of „urban" worldwide
- 2500 + (US, Mexico)
- 10000+ (Portugal)
- 20000+ (Turkey)
- 200+ (Iceland, Greenland)
- Also based on economic focus (5000 + and 75% + in nonagricultural sector – Botswana)
- Political and administrative definitions
- Combinations of political and population factors

- **Uneven development** & growth -> the largest urban agglomerations in the developed countries will grow slowly x other areas will experience explosive growth
- Faster urbanization rate in Africa & Asia + still remain mostly rural

World megapolis & mega urban regions

- 2017 – 7,6 bilion people in the world (UN World Population Prospects)
- Expectation 2050 – 9,8 bilion persons
- Almost 60 % of people living in urban areas; almost all of the global population growth is happening in cities and metropolitan regions
- 1950 – 746 milion people in cities x 2014 – 3,9 bilion
- 2030 – 662 cities over 1 milion inhabitants (UN prediction)
- Migration from rural areas + transformation of rural settlements

- Uneven growth of urban areas around the globe is punctuated by the rise of mega cities (10 mil. +)
- 2016 -> 500 mil. people in one of the 31 mega cities (UN)
- 2030 – 41 mega cities, 730 mil.
- „the third urban revolution"??
- *Hyperurbanization* – rapid growth and overwhelming sprawl of cities in the developing nations
- Differences in the growth and different challenges for the local administrations

Tokyo – 37 mil. in metro area

Delhi – 28,5 mil. in metro area

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Shanghai – 25,5 mil. in metro area

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Sao Paulo – 21,5 mil. in metro area

Mexico City – 21,5 mil. in metro area

- Asia & Africa
- Up to 100 new inhabitants/hour, i. e. 2400/day = ca 800 000/year (Delhi 2015 – 2020, BBC)
- Delhi, Shanghai, Dhaka, Kinshasa, Chongqing, Lahore, Bangalore, Lagos, Cairo, Beijing, Karachi…

Fast developing cities

Kinshasa (Congo)

Dhaka (Bangladesh)
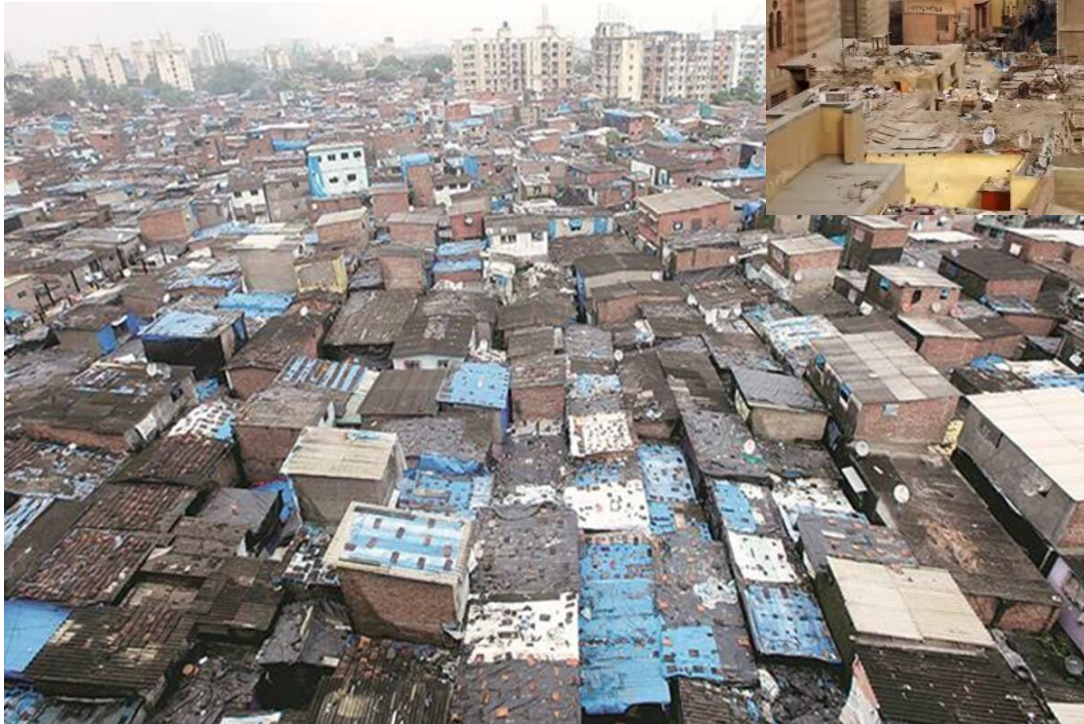
Lagos (Nigeria)

Slums

Mumbai

Cairo

Nairobi – Kibera
https://www.csfd.cz/film/645452-kibera-pribeh-slumu/prehled/
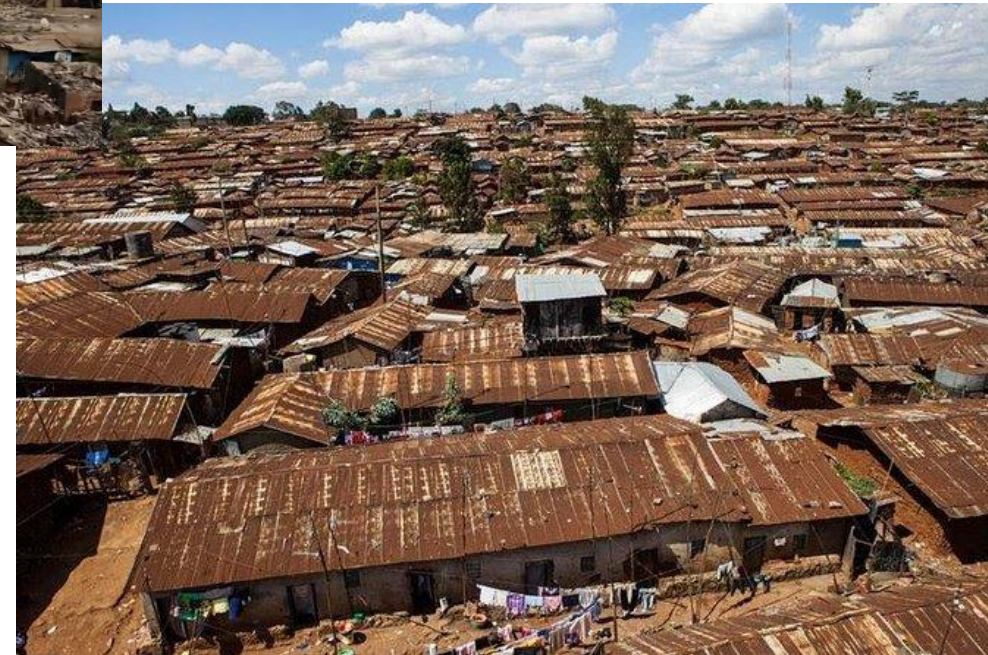
Classical European & industrial cities

London

Rome

American cities

New York

Los Angeles – city of angels/city of cars

Post-socialist cities

Warszawa

Kyiv

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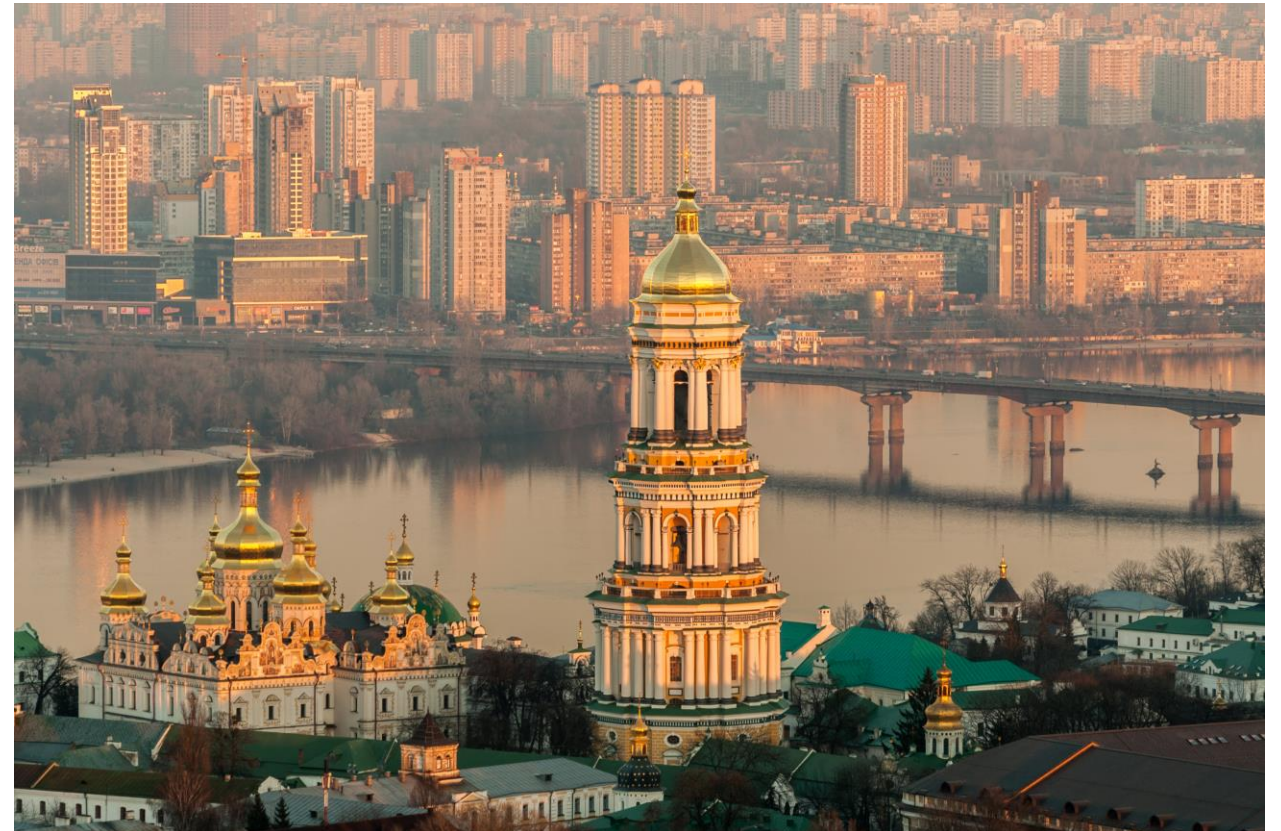
Prague – post-socialist past / commercialized, gentrified, overturistified capitalist present

Prague – The South Town

- Critical sociology
    => various meanings
    => *critical theory* -> critique of society and culture in order to reveal and challenge power structures (Frankfurt school – Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, H. Marcuse, …)
    => social problems are influenced and created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions than by individual and psychological factors
    => ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation
    => thoughts coming from western Marxism, Freud, György Lukács, Antonio Gramsci…

Why critical??

What do we mean when we say Critical Urban Sociology?

- The city is the cummulated center of current global neoliberal capitalism -> knowledge of the city and its processes focused on systemic and structural dimensions
- Evaluation of the processes of development, construction, traffic solutions, housing, environment, culture, affordability, sustainability (…) within current cities in the context of the prevailing dominant system

- **Critical Urban Theory** -> shorthand reference to the writings of leftist or radical urban scholars – Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Peter Marcuse (…)
- Rejection of inherited disciplinary divisions of labor and statist, technocratic, market-driven and market-oriented forms of urban knowledge
- Fundamental difference from mainstream urban theory (Brenner 2009)

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„Rather than affirming the current condition of cities as the expression of transhistorical laws of social organization, bureaucratic rationality or economic efficiency, critical urban theory emphasizes the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested and therefore malleable character of urban space—that is, its continual (re)construction as a site, medium and outcome of historically specific relations of social power. (…) It insists that **another, more democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanization is possible, even if such possibilities are currently being suppressed through dominant institutional arrangements, practices and ideologies**. In short, critical urban theory involves the critique of ideology (including social–scientific ideologies) and the critique of power, inequality, injustice and exploitation, at once within and among cities.“

Brenner 2009: 198

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Goals of the course
- To provide an overview of selected sociological approaches to the city
- To show inter-relations in the sociological examination of the city
- To develop the ability of critical scientific grasp of the urban and get knowledge of the key koncepts
- To focus on the socio-spatial perspective and be able to perceive the interconnection between the *physical* and *social* space
- To understand current processes tied to global capitalism and its urban manifestations
- To create an environment for critical discussion on current urban topics

Plan of the course

Course schedule

1) Introduction

2) The Origins of Urban Life and Urban Sociology

3) Contemporary Urban Sociology and Conflictual Perspectives

4) Suburbanization, globalization, post-socialist urbanization and how can we use New Urban Sociology in Prague?

5) Excursion: Urban NGOs: a visit to the organizations AutoMat (sustainable traffic) and Klub Za starou Prahu (heritage protection) / A visit of active neighbourhood communities in Prague (???)

6) Urban Social Problems: Racism, Poverty, Affordable Housing, Crime and Public Health and Actualization for Central Europe (focus on housing crisis)

7) Guest lecture: tbc (???)

8) Urban planning, gentrification and heritage protection

9) Excursion: A visit of inter-active exhibiton of new urban projects in CAMP (Center for architecture and planning) / A visit of the city magistrate and meeting of the deputies (???)

10) Urban Communities and Spatial Location

11) Urban Social Movements & NGOs

12) 12) Movie screening: Citizen Jane: Battle for the City (2016, 92 min.) / Push (2019, 92 min.)

http://www.pushthefilm.com/about/

Literature:

- mandatory & recommended
- Key text: Gottdiener et al. – The New Urban Sociology
- Important to read: Lefebvre, Harvey, Madden & Marcuse (housing), Stein, Sassen

Course requirements

- Course = 6 ECTS
⇒ to **be present** on the seminars and excourses (maximum **2 absences allowed**)
⇒ to **write a seminar essay** on selected topic (**5 – 8 standard pages**)
    - specific problems observed in the city; theoretical essay; use of minimum 3 texts discussed in the course (+ minimum 5 sources in general)
    - **necessary to announce** and consult the essay topic by **15th December**
⇒ to **pass a short test** on the discussed topics and mandatory readings
    - ca 20 minutes, open questions; 1st term on the last lesson

Voluntarily it is possible to prepare short presentations on the seminars (serves as an **equivalent of the seminar essay**)
    - 10 – 15 minutes on the mandatory/recommended prescribed readings (NOT on Gottdiener) -> summary of the text + ideas for its use in current urban life

Questions & answers?

To successfully finish the course and get 6 ECTS:
- Can I be missing more than 2 lectures?
    -> **No** (only in special justified cases)
- Can I write the essay on the topic of my hometown?
    -> **Yes**
- Can I prepare the presentation on the topic of my hometown?
    -> **No**
- If I prepare a presentation, do I need to write the seminar essay?
    -> **No**
- From what parts will consist my final grade?
   -> Test 49 % + Essay/presentation 49 %

Urban regions

- Low consideration of urban regions when speaking about the place we live in; the region focus is best instrument to understand urban growth and ways of life
- The distinction between the *city* and the *suburb* is no longer 100 % valid
- Many various metropolitan regions across Europe, Asia, America
    - -> biggest worldwide: Tokyo, Delhi, Mexico City, New York, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Mumbai
    - -> biggest in the US: New York-Newark-Jersey City; LA-Longbeach-Anaheim
    - -> biggest in Europe: London (13,6 mi), Paris (11,9), Madrid (6,4), Barcelona (5,4), Ruhrgebiet (5 mi) (Gottdiener 4 – 7)
- In the variety of regions, there is variety of social variables:
    - -> social class, race, gender, ethnicity, age, family status…
    - -> these interact with locational or spatial factors such as the clustering of homes according to family income, the journey to work or school, the diverse ways people pursue a specific lifestyle, the particular pattering of our social networks…

=> Everyday life embedded within urbanized settlement spaces => *multicentered metropolitan regions* (rather as cities, we may use this term)
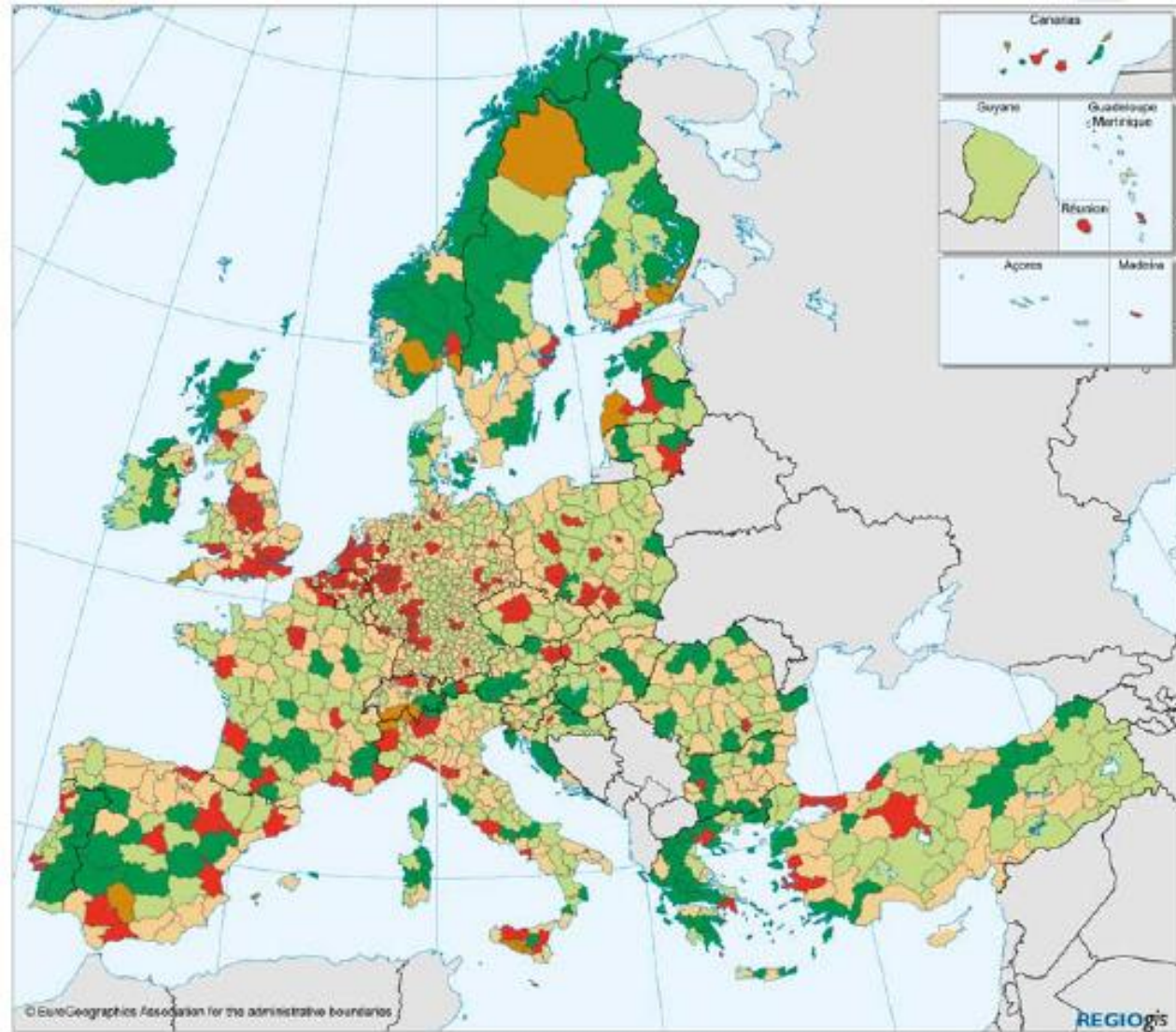
Type of NUTS3 region

- 🟥 Predominantly urban regions
- 🟧 Intermediate regions, close to a city
- 🟫 Intermediate, remote regions
- 🟩 Predominantly rural regions, close to a city
- 🟢 Predominantly rural, remote regions

Close to a city: at least 50% of the population of the region lives at less than 45 minutes travel by road to a city of at least 50 000 inhabitants.
Results for Turkey are provisional.
Sources : Eurostat, JRC, EFGS, LandScan, REGIO-GIS

0   500 Km

- Metropolitan regions usually spreads more than 100 km around our largest cities
- Contains a mix of cities, suburbs, vacant space, industrial parks, intensely farmed agricultural land, shopping malls, recreational areas; all of which are interconnected
- At present about 90 % of all Americans live in metropolitan regions
⇒ Relatively new phenomena – in the past, cities were compact spatial forms with a distinct center
⇒ No longer one focus or „downtown" in the biggest cities -> people live and work in widely separated realms
⇒ MCMR can be typified by two features:
    -> extends over a large region, spilling out across political, municipal boundaries
    -> contains many separate manufacturing areas, retail centers, residential areas

Urban region

- Composed of different *realms*; realms are differetiated to four factors:
     1) physical terrain
     2) physical size
     3) the level and kinds of economic and social activities within the realm (most particularly the parts of minicenters)
     4) the character of the regional transportation network

- Peopla living within each realm have a shared sense that they occupy an urban area that is different from other areas within the metropolitan region

Metropolitan region (US)

- Historical approach (US) – state of the inner cities considered as „urbanism" -> central business districts (Burgess tbc); 1900s – suburban growth, new need for planned development -> suburban communities , satellite cities, immigration
- Need of different categories for the urban areas (*metropolitan area*), metropolitan growth
- Important aspects of metropolitan growth in the US:

        1) the urban system includes a significant number of metropolitan areas with large populations

        2) the population living in the suburban region is often much greater than that of the older central city

        3) difference in growth between northeast and midwest and south and southwest (Rust Belt -> Sun Belt)

Bay Area

Europe x US x Asia?

- What are the differences in the structre of cities in different places of the world? What are the specifics of a post-socialist city? DISCUSSION

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New Urban Sociology

In contrast to other sociology approaches, the **new urban sociology has three additional dimensions**:

     1) the shift to a global perspective

     2) attention to the political economy of pull factors (government policies including mortgage guarantees for lenders, tax deductions for homeowners, and the like) in urban and suburban development

     3) an appreciation for the role of culture in metropolitan life and in the construction of the built environment

Gottdiener: 14

- The perspective of the course will be somewhere between the approach of the new urban sociology and critical urban theory as defined by Brenner

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Global capitalism and the metropolis

-   Patterns of everyday life observed in the contemporary metropolis -> consequence of the complicated and continuing interaction of economic, political and cultural forces (not always reflected in urban sociology)
-   Changes in economy and connection with cities and suburbs – importance of the link started to be appreciated (prior to the 1970s – biggest attention at local businesspeople = local focus, local patterns, local influences, local growth)
    -> study of *Middletown* (Lynd and Lynd 1929) – study of American industrial town, changes in ownership of local business (started to be owned by national companies) and the influence on the local life (+ *Middletown in transition,* 1937)
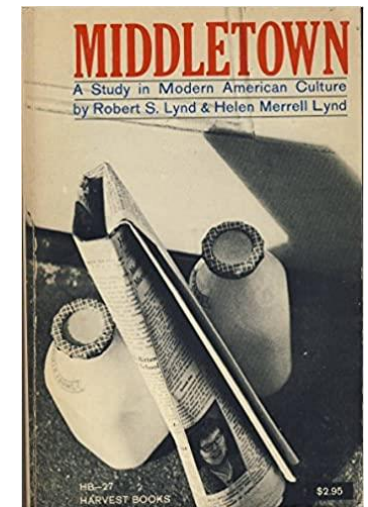
- increasingly, economic activity in metropolitan communities is controlled by decisions made at the global level; businesses owned and managed from distant locations (compare Sassen 1991); products imported from all over the world
- Economies across the globe interconnected, prevailing multinational corporations, no more space for local, family-run businesses
- Important epistemological/methodological factor -> prior to 1970s -> *ecological perspective* (Chicago school – human ecology) – cities emerged full-grown out of the independent personal decisions x today -> urban organization caused by the actions of powerful international and global interests
- Still, local political and economical forces and interests are significant => importance of consideration of all sociospatial levels: the global, the national, the local
- Since the 1970s -> increasing attention to the relationship between capitalism and the metropolis

Structural factors in urban development

- Agency x structure => classical dilemma in the construction of prevailing paradigmas in sociology
- The case of the urban -> since 1970s (birth of neomarxian x neoweberian streams of urban sociology) the structural factors are getting more attention (although agency still important)
- Two main sources of incentives in the development of metropolitan regions:
    1) government (local, state)
    2) the real estate industry

The role of the government in urban development

- State level: legislation; Local level (municipalities): local policies, spatial planning etc. (Czechia)

- General scale: regulations & tax spendings on public projects; suburbanization -> investment into own home rather than rent, mortgage programmes & support (US, Europe); housing policies; spatial rules; geographical shifts (the shift to the Sun Belt in the US)

The role of the real estate industry in urban development

- Big influence of national/international corporations on the development (x *ecological approach* => urban organization as an interplay of many separate interests)
- The real estate industry = most important source of special interests in the development of the metropolis
- Real estate sector = corporations & banks + land developers & construction companies
- Construction of new spaces proceeds mainly through actions of the real estate industry
- Real estate industry currently one of the most important and probably most stable economic sectors
- Secondary flow of capital (Lefebvre)
- Stein -> „real estate state" = real estate as the most influential and powerful sector

„At any given time and on any piece of land, real estate forces can converge to turn over the existing use and engage in development that changes the utilization of local space" (Gottdiener: 18)
- Driven by the pursuit of profit that comes as a consequence of development
- 2008 financial crisis –> started with the speculation with mortgages and real estate
- If we want to understand the development and current life of cities, we need to know their political economies

The importance of culture in the metropolitan life

- Necessity of study of cultural factors & fragments in current urban life -> cummulated societal life consists of communication (language), signs, different groups (ethnic, cultural, social), different spatial manifestations – consequence of culture
- => culture as necessary part of the new urban sociology programme (culture in the broadest sense incl. art)

Sociospatial perspective:

- Scientific approach of the *New urban sociology* (but also various authors associated with critical streams of urban sociology)
- „Discovering the formation of multicentered metropolitan regions, specifically the role that economic, political, and social institutions play in creating and changing them, and the processes by which these areas are given meaning by local inhabitants."
- Necessary perspective if we are to understand and explain our urban society as a „total social phenomenon" as well as to think about possibilities for change in the immediate future
- Examines the role played by social factors such as race, class, gender, lifestyle, economics, culture on the development of metropolitan areas + integrates social, ecological, political economy perspectives and research
- In other words -> development of dialectical relationship between people and space

Literature:

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