Sustainable
Urban
Rehabilitation in
Europe

FROM URBAN SOCIOLOGY
TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE CITY

OVERALL AIM:
Gaining knowledge of the shift towards the sociology of the city perspective

Erasmus+

The current situation

- Urban sociology has largely been understood as a sub-discipline that studies urban society
- There is general agreement that today's urban sociology, and North American urban sociology in particular, is in crisis.
- Urban sociological study has focused on urban life around, for example, race, poverty, crime, immigration, and sexuality gradually losing its supremacy within urban studies
- This crisis has led a number of leading urban theorists to reflect on the future of urban sociology

Castells' position

Castells (1968):

- urban sociology has no subject matter, therefore it should not be considered as a scientific sub-discipline distinct from sociology

- Indeed, today's urban sociology pays little attention to its subject matter or cities per se, instead focusing on social problems in an urban environment

- urban sociology, and in particular the Chicago School, lacked the combination of theory and substantive focus necessary for an explanatory science

Castells' position

- The dominant sociological writings of the time focused on urbanism and on urbanization both of which are social processes

- The study of urbanization or urban growth is essentially the analysis of a particular historical and geographical formation. As a result, urban sociology has no distinctive feature that sets it apart from general sociology

- Castells' critique led to a fundamental reformulation of urban sociology and the emergence of a new urban sociology

Toward a sociology of the city

- The city is not merely a physical entity but is itself an effect of more fundamental political, economic, and cultural forces.

- Cities are shaped by structural powers that affect all aspects of human life. In general, the consensus became that to study urban society was to study how cities reinforce, mediate, and articulate the effects on social life of structural level factors such as consumption culture, political power, and capitalism

- However, while these neo-Marxian and neo-Weberian approaches emphasize the role of macro-level structural factors, they overlook the role of the city itself.

Toward a sociology of the city

- The focus of debates about the city as a "growth machine", the city as an "entertainment machine", and the rise of the "creative class" is on social phenomena such as land markets, consumption, culture, and human capital.

- The city is a container for social processes such as cultural consumption, competition, or collaboration between agencies and political power

- But a dominant, substantive focus is still missing.

Toward a sociology of the city

- The founders of American urban sociology certainly recognized that the city is more than a geographical territory or a container for general social processes.

- The city is not a physical mechanism or an artificial construction; instead, it is "a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions"

- However the city often is reduced to a place where social problems are located

- urban sociology should be understood as the sociology of the city. <u>The city is the subject matter</u>.

Toward a sociology of the city

- Cities are individual social units, they are real objects, and they have lives and destinies.
- The main task for the sociology of the city is to explore how cities as individual or collective social units foster institutions and lead to future changes.
- For example:
- Weber (1958) argues that the presence of politically autonomous cities lead to Europe's rise in the medieval and early modern years.
- Saskia Sassen (2001) shows how the growing number of global cities leads to the formation of strategic global transnational networks
- Batty (2008) also draws attention to how size, scale, and shape enable cities to function in different ways.
- Jeong (2015) explores how urban conditions such as transportation density affect the walkability of cities

Toward a sociology of the city

- Current urban sociology has largely focused on social processes tied to urban phenomena

- The sociology of the city encourages us to explore urban explanations for urban phenomenon. Such an approach allows us to distinguish between the social and the urban

Toward a sociology of the city

Table 1 Approaches to the city: Chicago School Sociology, New Urban Sociology, and Sociology of the City

	Chicago school sociology	New urban sociology	Sociology of the city
Subject matter	Social problems in cities	Structural power	The city
Perspective on cities	Places/locations where social problems are located	Container of social processes; effects of structural power	Autonomous social units; the object of the city
Cause of urban growth	Civilization, industrialization, and modernization	A result of competition/ collaboration between agencies; from culture	A result of how the city itself interacts with other cities, and other social processes

Toward a sociology of the city

- The Chicago School tradition studies social problems located in cities and this, in turn, promotes the development of sociologies of, to name a few, race, gender, sexuality, and social movements.
- This reduces cities to places where social problems are located.
- To explain urban growth, the Chicago school draws attention to the division of labor and other social processes resulting from civilization, industrialization, and modernization.

Toward a sociology of the city

- New urban sociology emphasizes the role of macro level economic, political, and cultural power.
- New urban sociologists treat the city as a container of social processes and consider the effects of structural power
- More recently, Silver and Clark (2010, 2015) develop a theory of urban scenes whereby the specific combinations of neighborhoods, physical structures, heterogeneous individuals, and social activities defined by the values that people pursue, create a variety of distinct urban scenes that lead to the growth or decline of particular neighborhoods.

Toward a sociology of the city

- However, it is not clear how such an approach is distinct from political economy or cultural sociology.
- Urban growth, for these new urban sociologists, is an outcome of social production or cultural consumption.

Toward a sociology of the city

- The sociology of the city promotes a distinctive perspective on social problems and urban phenomena.
- Instead of treating the city as a place where social problems are located or a container of social processes, the sociology of the city approaches the city as an autonomous social unit and considers how cities and urban groups affect social life and collectivities.
- The city itself is the major focus of the study.
- Sassen (2010) argues that the urbanization of major processes, such as globalization, the rise of new information technologies, and the intensifying of transnational and translocal dynamics repositions the city as an object of study.

Toward a sociology of the city

- How cities interact with these social changes creates specific conditions, contents and consequences.
- Therefore, the city should be brought back as a lens for social theory
- Under this approach, urban growth is a result of urban production, which relates to the location of the city, the characteristics of the city, and the history of the city.
- The sociology of the city also aims to develop an ordinary city approach
- Under such an approach, more meaningful comparisons can be carried out across cities and urban groups (e.g. Asian/European cities, big/small cities, and old/young cities).

Toward a sociology of the city

The main task for the sociology of the city is to describe and explain the differences and similarities across individual cities and urban groups and to
explain how these differences and similarities affect social life and collectivities.

Heritage value in contemporary society

- Any discussion of values, including heritage values, begins in the realm of ethics and morals
- For millennials philosophers and other thinkers have been captivated by ethical complexities inherent in the fabric of society
- One classical line of reasoning considers value to be generated by individual actions and linked responsibilities
- Another line considers value to be determinated by the orientation of the will, not the consequence of acts.
- Value is based on the conception that freedom is the most fundamental element of human existence and the foundation for moral and ethics.

About the concept of value

- Another line of thinking contends that acts are morally right or justified if they cause the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

- The value assigned to acts therefore corresponds to the resultant effect on quality of life and/or promotion of the greatest public good

- By analyzing the concept of value a number of common themes have emerged related with the questions of how to define and apply heritage values in contemporary society

Heritage values and social contexts

- a concept of value lies at the heart of any cultural resource (or heritage) management

- Every time we protect a site, allocate public funding, or interfere with someone's ability to develop their own property, we are making a judgement that something is of value to a wider community

- Indeed, all heritage is based on the assertion of a public interest in something, regardless of ownership.

Heritage values and social contexts

- Heritage is often understood as an exchange relationship

- Most denitions of heritage elaborate on its quality as a thing (or those things) that are passed on to future generations.

- The difficulty in quantifying these exchange relationships is that they are negotiated and mediated, often imperceptibly, over long periods of time.

Heritage values and social contexts

- The themes include suppositions that value is assigned and influences the quality of life for individuals, communities, and nations and that choosing whether or not to value the past has important consequences

- key features of heritage values could be defined in terms of freedom and responsibility, fairness, inclusiveness, stewardship, social obligations, and extensive array of similar ideals.

Heritage values and social contexts

- Heritage values underpin the basis for management and policy formation relating to our collective cultural heritage

- The effort to connect the past in meaningful ways is nothing new, even if many stakeholdersinvolved in heritage decision maing are just beginning to address how to define and apply heritage values in contemporary society

- In some countries how the past should be transposed into the present and future has been debated for generations, while in others this process has not been smooth or equitable, since many conflicing ideals influence the ascription of value in the realm of heritage

Heritage values and social contexts

- Governments and interantional organizations are engaged to balance heritage values with the needs of contemporary society
- The success of failure depends on th eperspective and relative position of those who are measuring
- There are multiple perspectives on heritage values
- 2006 ICOMOS charter ask to ensure inclusiveness in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites, by fostering the productive involvement of all stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretive programmes
- The inclusion of multiple stakeholders is one of the important themes in defining and applying heritage values

Heritage values and social contexts

- The dialogue among stakeholders brings into focus fundamental and challenging questions:
    - whose heritage are we concerned with preserving?
    - Who is allowed to have a voice and who has the authority to make decisions?
    - How should heritage be interpreted and presented when stakeholders' voices are in conflict?
    - Does the past belong th everyone, or do some stakeholders have a stronger claim to particular pieces than others?
- There must be also a clear understanding of how heritage values influence our daily lives and how shared heritage connects us to our past as individuals and as communities and nations.

Heritage values and social contexts

- To capture the full extent of heritage value it is necessary to examine:
    - intrinsic value (individual experience of heritage)
    - Instrumental value (associated social or economic aspects of heritage)
    - Institutional value (process and techniques institutions use to create heritage value)

Heritage value is not economic value

Heritage value in contemporary life

- The value of heritage in contemporary life frequently lies on the importance of heritage for protecting identity of a community/an individual.

- Balancing the past with needs and concerns of contemporary society is essential to mantaining relevance to contemporary society.

- This balance requires applying legal, ethical, management and scientific perspectives in a way that is accountable and sustainable

- This way should include ethical responsibility to interact, consult, and work with stakeholders to advocate the quality of life for future generations.

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Further readings

- Smith G. S., Messenger P. M., Soderland H. A., 2009. Heritage Values in Contemporary Society, Routledge, London-New York

- Wu C., 2016. Moving from Urban Sociology to the Sociology of the City, American Sociologist . Mar2016, Vol. 47 Issue 1, p102-114

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