



URBAN SOCIOLOGY THEORIES

OVERALL AIM:

Gaining knowledge of the main theories developed worldwide thus understanding the different perspectives on the role of society to foster urban regeneration and CH valorization



Erasmus+

Classical theoretical perspectives

- Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels - macro-sociological
 - People in preindustrial, traditional societies were generic, tribal beings
 - Rise of city was transition from barbarism to civilization
 - People realize political and economic freedom, productive specialization
 - Social evolution of humans not complete until capitalism was transformed into socialism
 - Emphasis of economics and problems of inequality and conflict



Classical theoretical perspectives

- Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936) - macro-sociological
- Considered social structure of city
- Defined and described two basic organizing principles of human association or two contrasting types of human social life, a typology with a continuum of pure type of settlement:
 1. community : people in rural village work together for the common good, members bound by common language and traditions, recognized common friends and enemies,
 2. association: large city, city life is a mechanical aggregate characterized by disunity, rampant individualism and selfishness, deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings
- There are three types of community relationships: Kinship, Friendship, and Neighborhood or Locality



Classical theoretical perspectives

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) - macro-sociological

- Considered social structure of city
- Social solidarity-the bond between all individuals within a society
- Developed model of contrasting social order types: both types are natural
- Mechanical solidarity: refers to social bonds constructed on likeness and largely dependent upon common belief, custom, ritual, routines, and symbol; social cohesion based upon the likeness and similarities among individuals in a society.
- Organic solidarity: social order based on social differences, complex division of labour, greater freedom and choice for city inhabitants despite acknowledged impersonality and conflict, undermined traditional social integration; created a new form of social cohesion based on mutual interdependence, the order and very survival of society depends on their reliance on each other to perform their specific task.



Classical theoretical perspectives

- Georg Simmel (1858-1918) - micro-sociological
- Considered importance of urban experience, i.e. chose to focus on urbanism (life within the city) rather than urbanization (development of urban areas), “
- Unique trait of modern city is intensification of nervous stimuli against rural setting where rhythm of life and sensory imagery is more slow,
- Individual learns to discriminate, become rational and calculating, respond with head rather than heart, don't care and don't get involved
- Social distance



Classical theoretical perspectives

- Max Weber (1864-1920) - macro-sociological
- Considered social structure of city
- Ecological-demographic characteristics: the city was a relatively closed and dense settlement
- Defined urban community, an ideal type, required:
 1. trade or commercial relations, e.g. market
 2. court and law of its own
 3. partial political autonomy
 4. militarily self-sufficient for self-defence
 5. forms of associations or social participation whereby individuals engage in social relationships and organizations
- Suggested that cities are linked to larger processes, e.g. economic or political orientations, instead of city itself being cause of distinguishing qualities of urban life, i.e. different cultural and historical conditions will result in different types of cities, same as with Marx & Engels who argued that human condition of cities was result of economic structure.



Classical theoretical perspectives

- D. E. B DuBois – The Racialization Paradigm and Critical Race Theory
- Concerned with the centrality of “race” {racialized power dimensions} in the analysis of social structure
- presented cogent arguments for considering race as the central construct for understanding inequality.
- The precursor of the modern ***critical race movement***.
- Broadly defined “critical race theory” or a “critical theory of race” attempts to examine the human interactions both in their historical context and as part of the social and political relations that characterize the dominant society.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

URBAN ECOLOGY (Robert Ezra Park (1864-1944) of the Chicago school)

- Coined concept of Human Ecology as a perspective that attempts to apply biological processes/concepts to the social world since maintained that the city and life in the city is a product of competition in the natural environment, i.e. the natural environment is an instrumental force in determining city characteristics.
- Believed city to be a social organism with distinct parts bound together by internal processes, not chaos and disorder
- City was also a moral as well as physical organization suggesting evaluative judgements
- Focused on the physical form of the city and human's adjustment to the ecological conditions urban life
-



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

URBAN ECOLOGY (Robert Ezra Park (1864-1944) of the Chicago school)

- Theoretical premises: Influence of natural sciences arguing there is a similarity between the organic and social worlds, i.e. the idea that natural laws can be adapted to society; a form of Social Darwinism
- Symbiotic versus societal organization: mutual interdependence between 2 or more species, Processes characterizing the growth and development of plant and animal communities applied to human communities.
- Community (plant, animal, human): defined as individual units involved in struggle and competition in their habitat, organized and interrelated in most complex manner
- ***Essential characteristics of a community***: 1. Population, territorially organized; 2. More or less completely rooted in the soil it occupies; 3. Its individual units living in a relationship of mutual interdependence that is symbiotic rather than societal.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

URBAN ECOLOGY (Robert Ezra Park (1864-1944) of the Chicago school)

- Human community (city) organized on two levels:
 1. Biotic or symbiotic (substructure): driven by competition, structure of city resulting from inhabitants' competition for scarce resources, idea is that cities were similar to symbiotic environments
 2. Cultural (superstructure): driven by communication and consensus, way of life in the city which was an adaptive response to organization of the city resulting at the biotic level; at the cultural level city is held together by cooperation between actors.
- Symbiotic society based on competition and a cultural society based on communication and consensus.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

- Louis Wirth (1897-1952) U. of Chicago - micro-sociological
- Developed first urban theory in US, previous urban sociology comprised essentially descriptive studies
- Focus on urbanism--urban lifestyle--more than on structure
- Definition of city: large, dense with permanent settlement and socially and culturally heterogeneous people, and so urbanism was a function of population density, size and heterogeneity:
 1. *Population size*: creates great diversity because large numbers of people coming together logically increase potential differentiation among themselves, and with migration of diverse groups to city; creates need for formal control structures, supports proliferation of further labour specialization; organizes human relationships on interest-specific basis (urban ties are relationships of utility); creates possibility of disorganization and disintegration



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

- Louis Wirth (1897-1952) U. of Chicago - micro-sociological
 2. *Population density*: intensifies effects of large population size on social life; manifests quality of separateness, e.g. economic forces and social processes produce readily identifiable distinct neighbourhood, "ecological specialization"; fosters a loss of sensitivity to more personal aspects of others, instead tendency to stereotype and categorize; results in greater tolerance of difference but at same time physical closeness increases social distance; may increase antisocial behaviour
 3. *Population heterogeneity*: with social interaction among many personality types results in breakdown of the rigidity of caste lines and complicates class structure, thus increased social mobility; with social mobility tend to have physical mobility; leads to further depersonalization with concentration of diverse people.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

- Ernest Burgess' Concentric Zone Theory
- Cities grow and develop outwardly in concentric circles, i.e. continuous outward process of invasion/succession
- The jobs, industry, entertainment, administrative offices, etc. were located at the center in the City Business District (CBD)
- Felt that zone development resulted from competitive processes, i.e. competition for best location in the city
- Zones:
 1. Commercial center
 2. Zone of transition
 3. Working class residences
 4. Middle class residences
 5. Commuter zone



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Homer Hoyt's Sector Theory (1939)

- City develops not in concentric circles, but in sectors
- Each sector characterized by different economic activities
- The entire city can be thought of as a circle and various neighborhoods as sectors radiating out from the center of that structure. These factors or principles direct residential expansion:
 1. High grade residential areas tend to originate near retail and office centers.
 2. High grade residential growth tends to proceed from the given point of origin, along established lines of travel or toward existing retail office centers.
 3. High rent areas tend to grow towards areas which have open space beyond the city and away from sections enclosed by natural or artificial boundaries.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Homer Hoyt's Sector Theory (1939)

4. Higher priced residential areas tend to grow towards the homes of leaders in the community.
5. The movement of office buildings, banks and stores tends to pull higher priced residential neighborhoods in the same general direction.
6. High rent neighborhoods continue to grow in the same direction for a long time.
7. Deluxe high rent apartment areas tend to gradually appear in older residential areas near the business center (gentrification, downtown condos and high rent lofts).
8. Real estate developers may bend the direction of high grade residential growth, but they cannot develop an area before its time or in another direction very easily.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Harris and Ullman's Multiple Nuclei Theory (1945; more advanced stage of urbanization):

- Cities do not have a single center, but have many "minicenters"
- Similar activities locate in the same area and create minicities within the larger city
- Distribution of housing of certain type and value along communication corridors
- Topography: higher land, better (more expensive) housing
- Effect of adjacent land on housing quality
- Certain areas/activities tend to locate where they are most: effective, desirable and financially feasible



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Thematics of an Urban Sociology Today

(N. Jayaram, 2017. Revisiting the City: The Relevance of Urban Sociology Today. N. Jayaram (ed.), Social Dynamics of the Urban, Exploring Urban Change in South Asia)

- Sociology is not the only discipline interested in the city or the urban form;
- anthropology, architecture, economics, geography and other disciplines have been enriching our knowledge of the city.
- It is important to cross disciplinary boundaries, while being firmly located in the fundamentals of the parent discipline.
- This implies a willingness from urban sociologists to work with practitioners of other disciplines, and openness to the methods, tools and techniques that they deploy in their approach to the city.
- this will also help urban sociology to overcome the blinkers of its former dominant paradigms.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Thematics of an Urban Sociology Today

- The primary focus of revisiting the city in urban sociology would be on people and their culture, rather than on the physical dimensions of the habitat called the city.
- Focussing on the people and their culture in the cities, the key issues appear to centre around
 - (a) citizenship, local relations and cosmopolitanism,
 - (b) the articulation and experience of community and identity,
- The dialectics of these two foci, namely, **community** and **cosmopolitanism** constitutes the contemporary relevance of urban sociology.
- The scope of the new urban sociology is variegated, just as its thematics are vibrant.



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Thematics of an Urban Sociology Today

- The dialectics of community–cosmopolitanism implies that community and cosmopolitanism constitute two opposing polar tendencies.
- Apparently, this parallels the dichotomous typologies suggested by early sociologists to grapple with changes that the European society was experiencing due to rapid industrialisationcum-urbanisation.
- However, what the dialectics of community–cosmopolitanism suggests is something more than the two contrasting types or an evolutionary trajectory
- The dialectic draws attention to the inevitable contradiction that the juxtaposition of community and cosmopolitanism raises in urban existence



Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Thematics of an Urban Sociology Today

- The concept of community, as used in the urban context, no more refers to a spatio-temporal entity in which face-to-face interaction is by definition important.
- The definitional criterion of the concept of community now revolves around identity, which has to do more with imagined commonalities even among people who may not be personally acquainted, than with face-to-face interactions among people living in physical contiguity.
- Accordingly, we have such expressions as religious communities, caste communities, linguistic communities, migrant/diasporic communities etc.
- it is easy to understand how community (emphasising collectivity, with its narrower and more rigid articulation of identity) and cosmopolitanism (emphasising differences and universal individualism, with its broader and more flexible articulation of multiple identities) are polar tendencies in the city





**Project "SURE - Sustainable Urban Rehabilitation in Europe"
implemented in frames of Erasmus+ Programme
Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership Projects
Agreement n° 2016-1-PL01-KA203-026232**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).



**Project "SURE - Sustainable Urban Rehabilitation in Europe"
implemented in frames of Erasmus+ Programme
Key Action 2: Strategic Partnership Projects
Agreement n° 2016-1-PL01-KA203-026232**

This publication has been funded within support from the European Commission.

Free copy.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

**Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union**

