FC 84

Thinking (about) cities

February 13, 2006
Thinking cities

- Primacy
- Urban subjectivities
- Functional typologies

*Classical sociological theoretical perspectives*
- Preindustrial urbanism
- Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft
- Organic vs. Mechanical solidarity
- Urban mentalities
- Urbanism as a way of life
Kantō vs. Kansai

- Kantō is region centered on Tokyo, in the Eastern part of the country

- Kansai is region centered on Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe, in the Western part of the country
Tokyo/Kantō – the primate city

In urban studies, the concept of “primate” city refers to a city that entirely dominates the society of which it is a part:

- Political dominance
- Economic dominance
- Demographic size
- Cultural influence
- Institutional density
Changing modes of urban subjectivity

– how do people constitute themselves in thought and behavior as selves of a particular kind in relationship to a city?

– how do people identify themselves as urban?
Urban subjectivity (2)

– how do people understand and experience their participation in a particular urban way of life and identify themselves with a specific city (Tokyo)
Urban subjectivity (3)

– what are the contexts of culture, social structure, economic life, technology, and physical environment that shape, limit, constrain, or enable particular forms of subjectivity to come into being?
Urban subjectivity (4)

– Cities as cultural objects; people form their own subjectivity in relationship to those objects

– Urban subjectivity is both individual and collective

– Urban subjectivity is product of historical moment
THE EXHIBITION OF SEA AND SKY AT UENO PARK
Thinking about cities

• Spatially
• Infrastructurally
• Environmentally
• Functionally
• Demographically
• Socially
• Culturally
Functional typologies

• Ports
• Fortresses
• Religious centers (pilgrimages)
• Capitals
• Trading cities
• Manufacturing cities
• Centers for education, aesthetics, cultural production
Thinking about cities

• Thinking about the role of cities within larger societies or civilizations

• Thinking about the character of urban life
Sociological theories (mainly based on Western experience) that try to understand the social character of urban life as a distinct social type
Urbanism and urbanization

• Urbanism – the character of cultural and social patterns that exist within urban populations

• Urbanization – at least four meanings
urbanization

• The growth of cities (demographic)
• The growth of cities (physical, geographic)
• The spread of urban influence
• The transformation of a society from one kind of social order to another
The Pre-industrial City

Gideon Sjoberg (American historical sociologist, comparative urban studies)

Theorizing common characteristics of pre-industrial cities throughout the world

Sjoberg concerned with modernization and its relationship to urban life
The Pre-industrial City

Most obvious factor is that they are not industrial . . .

Lack of energy or mechanical infrastructure other than natural power (human, animal, wind, and water)
The Pre-industrial City

Social/political/cultural factors:

Rigid social stratification
Geographic segregation by class and occupation
Ritual (religious/political) significance of city
Economic activity subordinated to political structure
Importance of kinship and other traditional ascribed statuses for governing social participation
Ferdinand Tönnies – German sociologist – among the first to theorize the difference in the character of social life of urban places vs. non-urban places, in context of massive social change in 19th century Europe

- **Gemeinschaft** -- “Community of Fate”
- **Gesellschaft** -- “Association”
**Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft**

**Gemeinschaft** -- “Community of Fate”

- Ascribed status
- Traditional authority structures
- Religious/ideological basis for authority and status quo
- Multiple stranded social relations
- Diffuse, affective social ties
- High personalistic social relationships
- Social solidarity based on affiliation with primary groups
- Individuals subordinated to social organizations
Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft

**Gesellschaft -- “Association”**

- Social relationships are single-stranded
- Achieved statuses supersede ascribed statuses
- Relationships are specific, utilitarian, instrumental
- Contractual social order
- Market relations determine social order to greater extent
- Diminished importance of religious/moral order as determinant of social order
- Multiple secondary associations/groups more important than primary groups
Organic vs. Mechanical Solidarity

Emile Durkheim (French sociologist)

In similar vein, theorizing distinctions between the ways in which society is held together

Mechanical solidarity – solidarity through shared roles

Organic solidarity – through complementary roles and the social structures that coordinate them
Organic vs. Mechanical Solidarity

By definition, societies that are held together by organic solidarity, Durkheim argues, are more complex – require greater specialization of social roles and social institutions for control.

Theoretical evolutionary continuum between mechanical and organic solidarity
Urban Mentalities

Georg Simmel – German philosopher/sociologist

Time—Money—Urban Mentality

Theorized the urban condition as nervous stimulation, created by the accelerating effects of capital on time and relationship

Urban life is marked by transactions not relationships – quick, fleeting, possibly cynical
Urbanism as a Way of Life

Louis Wirth (American sociologist) – classic 1938 article (on JSTOR as reading assignment)

Synthesized views of Tonnies, Durkheim, Simmel, and his own research in Chicago

To create the classic sociological statement of urban anonymity (perhaps alienation) as inherent aspects of urbanism
Urbanism as a Way of Life

Sociologists approached this problem from the perspective of 19th century transition from agrarian to industrial societies.

Industrial revolution
Migration

How did new urban environments affect social ties?
Anthropologists approached this question from the starting point of small-scale isolated societies. How did cities reflect (or not reflect) similar cultural and social patterns? How could one understand cities, villages, etc. as being part of a single culture, if they are so different from one another?
Folk Urban Continuum

Wirth and Robert Redfield (American anthropologist) collaborated on creating a theoretical model, basically paralleling Tonnies on the differences between cities and non-cities as cultural spaces in a given society.
Great Tradition vs. Little Tradition

Redfield proposed that civilizations operate simultaneously on multiple levels, that both interact and maintain separate trends.

Great Tradition – elite culture – urban, urbane, sophisticated, systematic, self-conscious of itself as enduring body of knowledge, perspective, etc.
Great Tradition vs. Little Tradition

Little Tradition – informal, folk, word-of-mouth, does not attempt to create overarching synthesis of integrated knowledge, relatively unself-conscious of itself as enduring phenomenon
Great Tradition vs. Little Tradition

Clearly great and little traditions interact with one another

Each informing the other, each reformulating the principles and patterns of the other
The Cultural Role of Cities

Redfield and Singer article (in sourcebook)

Theorizing the culture of cities vis-à-vis their positions in world systems as well as their positions vis-à-vis their own civilizations

Heterogenetic cities
Orthogenetic cities
The Cultural Role of Cities

Heterogenetic cities – cities that link to the wider world, bring in new ideas, generate new kinds of activities, perspectives, technologies, heterogeneous populations

Orthogenetic cities – cities that crystallize a civilization, serve as a defender and formulator of traditional knowledge, conservative, focused more on itself than on outer world.
The Cultural Role of Cities

As the world system grows in strength and power, R&S, argue – heterogenetic cities become dominant

“cities on the main stream of the world”

New York
Hong Kong
Los Angeles
Singapore
Tokyo vs. Kyoto
Fox’s typology of cities

Four basic types

• Regal-ritual cities
• Administrative cities (core vs. colonial)
• Mercantile cities
• Industrial cities

Ritual, bureaucracy, trade, production
Fox’s typology of cities

These four types can be thought of as forming a matrix

One dimension is economic autonomy
One dimension is nature of state power

The position of a city along these two axes fundamentally structures its relationship to society
Fox’s typology of cities

Fox argues that because particular kinds of cities are embedded in social institutions of specific kinds, it is very hard for cities to adapt to new social conditions.

Redfield & Singer – note the pairing of cities of their two types, heterogenetic & orthogenetic.
Fox’s typology of cities

Another aspect of embeddedness is the hierarchy of central places and relationships established with hinterland by cities of a particular type e.g. administrative vs. regal-ritual vs. mercantile vs. industrial

Very different sets of ties and catchment areas within nested hierarchies
Central Place Theory or Regional Analysis

Abstract rendering
Central Place Theory

• The point of central place theory is to understand:
• Distribution/location of cities
• Hierarchies of urban places
• Importance of multi-stranded linkages between urban places and their hinterlands
Fox typology & globalization

Appadurai – global flows of capital, culture, people, technology, ideology

A rewiring of the circuitry that connects cities to other cities, and hence to their own hinterlands