#### GOG - USP 125 The American City Spring 2017

#### Outline 1

These outlines are intended to give you a sense of the structure in the material – headings, some short explanations, and spellings of various names. They also expand on a few topics not discussed at length in class or in the readings. The outlines will be virtually unintelligible without the context of our classroom discussion. These are emphatically NOT comprehensive lecture notes.

*Syllabus Section 1*

**1.“Geohistorical approach”**

“The geohistorical evolution of urban form, and the dynamic relations between society and space in the specific context of urban agglomerations” (Edward Soja).

Interactions of among social and economic *processes* and *institutions* (organization, production, distribution, technology, society, work, the family, etc.), the urban *fabric* (built form, spatial layout, morphology, infrastructure), and *meaning* (symbols, ideology, culture); expression, representation and resistance.

Tools for visualizing: Google Earth (including historical imagery), Google Streetview, Bing Maps (including Bird’s eye view), Apple iOS maps, etc. Sanborn maps, KMZ overlays; city directories. Beware of erasure, be aware of the invisible.

**2. Space and Place**

Space (abstract, objective, geometric)

Shaping space and interaction, four urban morphologies:

i. stoop/townhouse spaces of the mid 19th century

ii. grids and social encounters (Jane Jacobs)

iii. streetcar suburbs

iv. cul-de-sacs (James Howard Kunstler)

(you can add to the list)

“Americans are convinced that suburbia is great for kids. The truth is, kids older than seven need more from their environment than a safe place to ride their bikes. They need at least some of the things adults need. Dignified places to hang out. Shops. Eating establishments. Libraries, museums, and theaters. They need a public realm worthy of respect. All of which they need access to on their own, without our assistance -- which only keeps them in a infantile state of dependency. In suburbia, as things presently stand, children have access only to television .. That’s their public realm … Suburban moms and dads wonder why their fifteen-year-old children seem so alienated. These kids are physically disconnected from the civic life of their towns. They have no access to civic equipment. They have to be chauffeured absolutely everywhere -- to football practice, to piano lessons, to their friends’ houses, to the library, and, of course, to the mall. All they live for is the day they can obtain a driver’s license and use their environment. Except then, of course, another slight problem arises: they need several thousand dollars to buy a used car and pay for insurance … Is it really any wonder that these kids view their situation as some kind of swindle?” James Howard Kunstler, *Home From Nowhere*, 1998

Shaping space, buildings with agendas (e.g. State Education Building)

Space, more abstract patterns and effects

diagnostic geographies

spatial patterns as causes and consequences

e.g. segregation: consequence and cause

independent (causal) and dependent (indicator) variables

relative location, differentiation of products and access

local access tends to convert pure to monopolistic competition

Place (variable, subjective, anchored to lived experience, meaning, and memory)

Elements of place: community of shared experiences and memories

authenticity versus the “tourist gaze” (John Urry)

Physical layouts, familiarity, psychological attachment, and social control

make spaces into places

e.g. microspace and social life; defensibility (Oscar Newman)

e.g. the grid: a space without places?

“place-making” as an agenda of contemporary planning

Placelessness (Edward Relph)

modernism, migration, and residential mobility

third places (Ray Oldenburg)

**3. Time and the urban fabric**

palimpsest

symbolic meanings

vernacular, historicizing, moralizing (e.g. Timothy Dwight)

invisible history: e.g. Tricentennial Plaza, Albany

modernism and the abolition of time

history commodified

**4. Two Key Terms: Urbanism, Urbanization**

*Urbanism*: (Hartshorn pp. 16-18) cultural institution of the city, dating from perhaps 6000 BP; an historically unprecedented way of life with many social, economic, and cultural consequences. Preceding the urban revolution, and making it possible, were innovations in agriculture and livestock herding. Some scholars speak of a Neolithic “agricultural revolution,” but the notion of a short intense period of domestication of staple plants and animals is being replaced by the concept of many long, complex and regionally diverse processes. Historically and archeologically the cultural invention of urbanism is often termed the “Urban Revolution.” This refers to the historical emergence of state-level societies, usually in major river valleys (Tigris, Euphrates, Nile, Indus) with some kind of socially-organized irrigation/flood-control and the production, collective organization, and storage of food surpluses supporting non-agricultural specialists, leading to new social stratifications of people not directly involved in subsistence, supported by literacy, record keeping, by many technological and cultural inventions, organized in a spatial relationship between a focal city and a surrounding “tributary area” or “hinterland.”

Over time several tendencies were typical including expansion of trade networks, rise to prominence of merchant classes, and political integration of autonomous city states into larger empires (e.g. Sumeria and Babylon in Mesopotamia). The issue of “which came first, trade or the city” has attracted a good deal of attention. The standard account tends to see cities developing on a rural subsistence base, “appropriating” agricultural surpluses directly (e.g. by military-religious domination), with extensive trade developing later. Another view sees long-distance trade and local economic activity based on valuable goods such as obsidian as a catalyst in the formation of the first cities.

The classic examples of primary urban centers in the Old World include Mesopotamia (beginning in Sumeria, 5500 BP) and Egypt 5000 BP; the Indus Valley “Harappan” civilization, and the Shang civilization near the Huang-ho river in China. New World primary centers of urbanism include the Maya, along with Toltecs, Aztecs and others in MesoAmerica, and the large but short lived Inca Empire in South America. Early African cultural centers, aside from Egypt, included Nubia, Mauritania/Ghana, and later Benin and Mapungubwe/Zimbabwe.

This is the “standard account” but you need to be aware than almost every year brings new discoveries pointing to varied, early, and diverse urban or protourban settlements.

Four classic definitions of city:

G. Sjoberg (1960) “community of large size and population containing a variety of non-agricultural specialists, including a literate elite”

F. Braudel (1973) “towns developed out of the oldest and most revolutionary division of labor: the field on one hand and the activities described as urban on the other … this town-country confrontation is the first and longest class struggle history has known”

P. Wheatley (before 1972) “set of functionally integrated institutions which were first devised … to mediate the transformation of relatively egalitarian ... kin-structured groups into socially stratified, politically organized, territorially based societies”

L. Mumford (1961) “permanent container and institutional structure, capable of storing and handing on the contents of civilization”

*Urbanization:* large scale movement of people to cities, growth in percent of population urban. In ancient times there were examples of large scale urbanization (e.g. in a few Roman, Chinese, and Meso-American centers), but as a persistent, widespread phenomenon, urbanization began with the industrial revolution and since then has been associated with persistent, world-wide, rural to urban migration (demographic urbanization). US: 5% of population urban in 1790; 80% metropolitan in 2000; city becomes dynamic rather than static; these processes produce a range of social and economic consequences that are studied by many social science and policy disciplines. In the countries of the west that began to industrialize in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, urbanization and industrialization were contemporareous and mutually reinforcing. In these places, urbanization accompanied the “Industrial Revolution.”

**5. Urban Sentiments, Pro and Con**

This is an outline of some of the principal strains of pro- and anti-urban sentiment and symbolism in our culture(s). There’s a lot of information here, and I hope at least some of these references are familiar to you. For now, don’t be anxious about unfamiliar names and references; treat this as background information only. We will be clarifying some of these ideas in more detail as the course proceeds.

PRO-URBAN:

* City as *source and locus of civilization*: (Latin *cives*: citizen). Cities as the source of innovation and cultural invention (writing; metallurgy; social control; religion; etc.), and cities as the repository and transmitter of these traditions (e.g. through so-called “dark ages”); destruction and decline of cities as the archetypal symptom of decline (e.g. the collapse of “classic” Mayan civilization, and the decline of the Roman Empire in Western Europe).
* City as focus of *prized political and religious institutions*: politics (Greek *polis*: city/state). Idealistic nineteenth century visions of the Athenian polis as the model society. In the early Christian era, "pagan" derived from the Latin *pagus*, meaning "countryside" or "rural". From Latin *urbs* (city, Rome itself) we get the words “urban” and “urbane.” The implied contrast was between the civilized Christian cities, seats of bishops and of social order, and the benighted, rural, pagan hinterlands. Seventeenth century American Puritans such as John Winthrop kept the idea alive in their metaphor of a New Jerusalem which stood in contrast to the “desert” wilderness.
* City as *locus of freedom:* in the feudal world of early medieval Western Europe, in seventeenth century Albany NY, in the Virginia plantations, and in nineteenth century Russia (among many other times and places) the rural landscape was a place of bondage (villeinage, serfdom, tenancy), and cities were self-governing, with freedoms enshrined in charters. A medieval German proverb said: “Stadtluft macht frei” [city air makes (us) free]. In the Albany area, the feudal domain was the Rensselaerwyck Patroon, and the city of Beverwyck (Albany) was declared free of the Patroon by Pieter Stuyvesant in 1652. The city received a Charter guaranteeing its freedoms from Governor Dongan in 1686.
* City as locus of *progress and progressive political ideas*: Max Weber and Karl Marx on the emergence of the urban based middle class, emancipating itself from feudalism: burgesses (English), burghers (German), bourgeois (French). Cities with their mercantile classes, particularly Boston and Philadelphia, were in the vanguard of the American Revolution. Bourgeoisie as a progressive force in classical Marxism; Marx on the “idiocy of rural life;” the urban proletariat as the vanguard class in classical Marxism and Leninism.
* *Pro-urban bias in art and literature:* Cities as sites of artistic patronage, production, and consumption. The Latin dichotomy of *urbs/rus* (urban/rural) enters into many European literary traditions as a contrast between urbane, sophisticated city life, and rural life with its connotations of the uncouth or boorish (e.g. Shakespeare's rustic characters). Literary glorification of urban elites (e.g. Virgil's *Aeniad* in praise of Augustus and Rome) and of urban culture. Visual assimilation and subordination of the country to a shining vision of the ideal city in Renaissance art. Augustan English culture of the late 18th century was strongly city-centered. Samuel Johnson said *“*when you're tired of London, you're tired of life;” similarly in Enlightenment France, Anglophile Voltaire saw London as a rival to Athens.
* City as *locus of opportunity and upward social mobility* in the industrial and modern world. Vast streams of migrants coming to cities, seeking jobs, opportunity, and a better life is the cardinal fact of cities over the past 200 years. In the United States the great movement of African-Americans from the rural south to the urban north in the early 20th century is a good example. Similarly, international migrants into the US today are still headed overwhelmingly for cities.
* City as the site of *justice, redress, and the rule of law*: St. Paul was saved from flogging and sent to Rome for trial in about 60 C.E., by virtue of Roman citizenship; 1900 years later the Southern cities of Selma, Montgomery, and Little Rock were crucial focal points of the Civil Rights Movement. Much more recently New York City has been hailed for its success in halving rates of violent crime.
* Glorification of the city and urban life in some strains of *popular culture*: “downtown, where all the lights are bright” (Petula Clark). Urban-based styles: ragtime, jazz, Tin Pan Alley, rock, rap, hip-hop, etc. From the 1960s to the 80s mass media tended to idealize the suburbs (*Leave it to Beaver*). Minorities (*Cosby Show*) and seniors (*Golden Girls*) were included in this vision, while the city itself was shown as dark, dangerous, and crime-ridden (*Blade Runner*, *Escape from New York, The Wire*). But more recent TV shows refocus on the city as a place of opportunity and advancement, especially for singles (*Girls*, *Entourage*, and (in re-runs) *Seinfeld and Friends)*.
* Recent *pro-urban social criticism* often takes the form of criticism of urban renewal (e.g. Jane Jacobs) and suburbanism as a way of life (e.g. Richard Sennett). The idea is that cities provide a diverse, creative environment, filled with economic, cultural and social opportunities and that they need a human-scaled diverse built environment to match. These critics argue that urbanism is indispensable to human psychological and social development because it provides people with chances to learn, grow, experience otherness, and learn tolerance in ways that rural and suburban environments never can. Historians such as Mary Ryan and students of contemporary culture such as Sharon Zukin show us how the symbolism in public spaces of cities has been, and continues to be, an important resource groups use to define their “place” in society.
* Some proponents of *sustainable* development and *population limits* point to a paradox. The number of megacities (with more than 10M people) is expected to grow from 20 to about 36 by the year 2015. Yet urbanization appears to lower the population growth rate. “The city is perhaps the most effective device for reducing the birthrate” (George Bugliarello). It may also be in these places that political pressures for sustainable systems will be strongest. Some even suggest that the future of sustainability lies in big cities.
* Compared to sidewalk-less suburbs, walkable cities are *healthier* places to live, at least by measures of weight and exercise. Citizens of walkable cities weigh a little less, on average, than residents of suburban sprawl. Meanwhile when residents of suburbs do try to exercise by walking or cycling, they are more likely to be hit by a car. Some scholars feel that aging baby-boomers are going to be much less willing to maintain huge pedestrian-inaccessible suburban houses and that their evolving preference for high-density, walkable living will result in what Arthur Nelson calls “the new urbanity.”

ANTI-URBAN:

* The city as site of *bondage and oppression*. In the Jewish tradition, the ancient Hebrews were a nomadic people. Their oppressors -- Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians -- tended to be urban. The prophets Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah fulminate against the city. The wilderness, not the city, is where prophets go to find wisdom. Anti-urbanism carries over into the Christian tradition. Thus in *Revelation* Babylon is a metaphor for sinful Rome. St. Augustine in *City of God* sees the city as a scene of sin and folly. In his *Confessions* Carthage is likewise a nest of iniquity: “to Carthage then I came, where a caldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears” (from T.S. Eliot's notes for *The Waste Land*).
* *Pastoral* traditions in art and literature from classical times until the Romantic Movement contrast the city unfavorably with life in the country (usually as a shepherd, hunter, or farmer). The bucolic and the pastoral are sites of innocence, authenticity, and romance, as in Virgil's *Eclogues.* He glorifies farming in his *Georgics.*  Juvenal writes insincere tirades against Rome in his *Satires: “*What can I do in Rome, who never learned to lie?”
* *Anti-urban orientation* of Jeffersonian democracy; ideal of “yeomen farmers.” Jefferson said: “I view cities as pestilential to the morals, health, and liberties of man,” while he saw agricultural as “the best preservative of morals.” The word “city” does not appear once in the US Constitution; *de facto*, cities are political stepchildren of states (which deal with them in different ways: e.g. municipal home rule states).
* Later, the *romantic discovery of nature* led to a different kind of criticism of urban living, one based on not on the ideal of a democratic *community* of farmers, but on new *individualistic*  sentiments about the uncorrupted beauty, moral value, and “nobility” of nature and scenery, e.g. and the English Lake poets (Wordsworth) and New England Transcendentalists (Thoreau, Emerson). “When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans; and I remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city” (Thoreau in *Walden*).
* Cities as *unhealthy*: flight from cities as the age-old reaction to plague and pestilence (Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Pepys’ *Diary*, Camus’ *La Peste*); recapitulated in mid-twentieth century white flight (for quite different reasons). Cities as places of danger, crime, and deviance. Recent perceptions as inner city as place of social, moral, and political breakdown, and outright civil war (Beirut, Belfast, cities of Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosovo, Iraq, etc.).
* Nineteenth century diagnoses of the *ills of the industrial city:* Engels on the conditions of the working class in Manchester. Many indicators of social malaise and public ill-health appeared to be empirically higher in cities. There was also in the years around the Civil War a very marked increased in civil disorder (such as the Draft Riots in NYC in 1863 shown in *The Gangs of New York*).
* The *urbanism thesis* of social scientistsin late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (e.g. Georg Simmel, Louis Wirth) argued that although city life offered new kinds of opportunities, it was also corrosive of the social order, breaking down traditional ties and values, producing *alienation* and *anomie*. Herbert Gans, Claude Fischer, and others have extended, qualified, and criticized this argument.
* Anti-urban bias of some twentieth century *political ideologies*: Mao's stress on the peasantry in China, Ho Chi Minh's in Vietnam, and the murderous anti-urbanism of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. Think about the urban-rural dimension and its relation to underlying ideologies and jihadism in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries.
* Anti-urban bias of many strains of twentieth century *high and popular culture:* blues, gospel, western, and country music see the city as the locus of sex, sin and booze, as the place where your life may come unstuck. In Edward Hopper’s paintings (e.g. *Nighthawks* and *Nightshadows*), and those of many other artists, speak of loneliness and potential danger in the modern city at night.
* Spreading cultural anxiety about “inner cities” as sites of danger, crime, drugs, dilapidation, “moral decay” and social “dysfunction,” fed by media stereotypes (e.g. the kind of stereotypes analyzed and criticized in S. Macek’s *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right, and the Moral Panic over the City*, 2006). This perception is sometimes linked to the idea that society as whole “subsidizes” many inner city residents who receive welfare or who live in public housing. This criticism tends to ignores the vastly larger “subsidies” by which society as a whole has supported suburban living (e.g. mortgage insurance and tax deductions, and highway funding).
* Criticism of contemporary urban landscapes in terms of *poor design and lost community.* This is not a criticism of urbanism per se, but a criticism of what cities have become. E.g. “Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last 50 years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy and spiritually degrading ... we have managed to ruin our greatest cities, throw away our small towns, and impose over the countryside a joyless junk habitat which we can no longer afford to support. Indulging in a fetish of commercialized individualism, we did away with the public realm, and with nothing left but private life in our private homes and our private cars, we wonder what happened to the spirit of community” (J. Kunstler, *Geography of Nowhere*). It is a small step to urban nostalgia and attempts to recapture the urban past in historic preservation, gentrification, and in the Neotraditional movement in American planning (“The New Urbanism”).
* Perhaps modern technologies of transportation and information have made cities *obsolete*. Perhaps the future lies in spatially dispersed but intensely connected patterns of settlement, “community without propinquity.” Obviously e-mail, cell phones, the web, Facebook and other social media, texting, etc. will change spatial patterns of community in profound ways, perhaps creating what Mitchell calls “e-topia.” Or perhaps it’s just old urban cores that are obsolete, and the future lies in new concentrations such as “Edge Cities” or “Stealth Cities.”

SUBURBS Later we will be talking about definitions of “city,” “urban,” “central city,” “urban fringe,” “urbanized area,” “metropolitan,” and “rural.” If by “city” we mean central cities, then more Americans now live in suburbs than either cities or rural areas. These people are metropolitan in the sense that they are thoroughly integrated functionally and economically with the center (e.g. through patterns of commuting, shopping, and cultural consumption). But they live in politically independent suburbs, and certainly do not consider themselves as city-dwellers. How do suburbs fit into the cultural dichotomy outlined above?

**6. Definitions of City:**

There are many ways to define cities and urbanism. Here are some important ideas. We’ll develop others as we go along.

*A. The political city*

The idea of the city as a political community was emphasized by the Greeks*.* Plato writes: “the origin of the city is to be found in the fact that we do not separately suffice for out own needs, but each of us lacks many things ... we gather many into one place of abode as associates or helpers and this dwelling together we give the name of city or state” *(polis)*. Note that he treats the words “city” and “state” as synonyms, and assumes a division of labor. The early Greek city state or polis was characterized by:

exclusive definition of “citizenship” enjoyed by a *place-based* and *hereditary* class of *free, male citizens*, who formed a land-holding elite and monopolized political power in a limited *direct* *democracy* of collective decision-making; membership in *place-based* religious cults (e.g. cults of ancestors, local gods, *lares* and *penates*) was a central aspect of citizenship; strong emphasis on *public life* pursued in *public space* (agora, stoa, acropolis, stadium, etc.) by free males; disenfranchised groups had limited roles or no formal role in public life: women, slaves, resident foreigners (*metics*); low status of trading and mercantile activity; often conducted by non-citizen metics; no large scale political integration of territory in the Hellenic period - Greece remained a mosaic of independent, sometimes warring city-states.

Greek political theorists discussed (not very conclusively) the ideal size for the city as a political body. Aristotle is rather vague: he says in *Politics* that neither 10 nor 100,000 people would be a city. A polis “must be self- sufficient for the purpose of living a good life after manner of a political community ... necessary for citizens to know each others' personal character.”

The Roman Empire, which succeeding in integrating vast areas under centralized political and military control, long retained the political forms of the city state. However in the Roman period the *place-based* norms and processes of the city state (local senates and assemblies, place-based religious cults, etc.) waned in the face of large scale mobility (e.g. the military and slaves), and the development of *non-place based* cosmopolitan religions, including Mithraism and ultimately Christianity. Roman citizenship was more and more widely available to free males.

Greco-Roman roots of urban words (G = Greek, L = Latin):

*polis* (G) both “city” and “state” (which were theoretically equivalent)

*metro* (from G “mother”), a metropolis was the home city of a colony

*urbs* (L) “city” – mainly Rome itself; gives us “urban” and “urbane”

*civis* (L) “citizen” and *civitas* (L) “city,” “state” give us “city” and “civilization”

*municipium* (L) “city,” from the word *munera* “duties”– gives us “municipal”

Latin also gives us words for various urban officials, ranging from “magistrate” to “vicar”

In the Classical world public space, and the *performance of roles* there, had particular political significance. In a world without technologies of mass communication, urban public space was where much of politics happened. Hence the importance of rhetoric and public speaking in elite education in antiquity, and the importance – at least to elite Roman men – of virtues such as *gravitas* and *dignitas*, having to do with how to comport yourself in public among social inferiors. We can distinguish two important actual or potential functions of public space in antiquity. These two ideas are very much with us today. We’ll call them: *theater of power* (enactment of the roles of power in public by elites to urban “audiences”), and *common ground* (use of public space to associate and deliberate with others on matters of mutual interest).

These two ideas of public space were, respectively, distant ancestors of two concepts developed by Jurgen Habermas to describe the public realm after the Enlightenment: *representative publicity* and *the bourgeois public sphere*.

Modern scholars such Richard Sennett, in his *The Fall of Public Man*, have admired the orientation of people to public life and communal welfare in early classical antiquity. He criticizes the modern apathy and withdrawal from public life: a social withdrawal into private spheres of intimacy, and a geographic retreat into politically autonomous suburbs. He compares this to the physical and psychological withdrawal from urban public life by elites in late antiquity. Note the word “man” in his book title. Public life had different and much more limited meaning for the majority of ancient populations -- women and slaves. The classical model informs a lot of thought about the importance of urban public space. Even in the age of cell phones, texting, and Facebook there are many “moralists of public space” – public intellectuals and academics such as Richard Sennett, Sharon Zukin, and James Howard Kunstler – who insist that real, physical, urban public space is central to psychological development and to social and political life.

In Greco-Roman consciousness the whole political state was subsumed in the forms and language of the city. As we shall see this was not true in many subsequent periods. In the European medieval world cities were often political “anomalies” embedded in a feudal agrarian landscape. Ultimately politically independent cities were absorbed in the emerging nation state, in varied political relationships. Some systems (e.g. UK and France) were historically highly centralized.

Not so the United States. The word “city” does not appear in the US Constitution, and cities are in effect creatures of the various states, some of which have home-rule provisions and some do not. In our federal system political units are vastly more diverse than they were when *polis* denoted a unitary city state. In fact the US presents a uniquely complex mosaic of incorporated and/or tax-levying areas, including municipalities and special-purpose areas such as school, sewer, and water districts. The political bounding of cities remains extremely consequential for local elections, tax-bases, school quality, and access to opportunity, but a typical modern metropolitan region may contain hundreds of “political” units. For example, there are something like 1,500 in the New York City area. We outlined the legal status of cities in New York State, where there are 4 “general purposes” levels of local government: county, town, city, and village. There are no size mandates for cities. We looked at some New York anomalies including Hempstead and Levittown.

*B. The economic city*

Max Weber in *Stadt* (1921) defined a city as a *permanent marketplace* “where local inhabitants satisfy an economically substantial part of their daily wants in the local market.” The medieval European city provides a good example of a city predicated on trade, which was strongly symbolized in the urban space (marketplace, guildhalls, etc.). Medieval cities were political anomalies in the landscape of feudalism (which was a fundamentally non-urban social order, based on hierarchic tenure of agricultural land). See Hartshorn pp. 21-23. Cities were often chartered as free-standing entities, with rights and privileges, including exclusive jealously guarded citizenship, with exemptions from feudal obligations in exchange for taxes, tolls, and other duties to kings, bishops, and other feudal overlords. Often this exclusiveness was mirrored in the physical urban form by walls and gates, and in laws by rules such as curfews for non-residents. Scholars today feel that Weber over-generalized the idea of the “city as market.” For example we’ve already pointed out that trade was not formative of the very earliest cities, nor did it have high status in the Classical period.

At many points in this course we will be emphasizing the economic importance of cities in the landscape (e.g as *entrepôts,* *central places*, *centers of a commuting area*), and the importance of the *economic base* to growth and survival of cities. More on these ideas later.

*C. The city as a social world and a place of strangers:*

The idea of the city is very prominent in social theory. Essentially urban living is viewed as an historically new and unprecedented mode of social organization, is which the essence of everyday life is being surrounded by *strangers* (others who are known stereotypically rather than personally). Many new roles develop (stratification), family structures change, and “the individual” finds him- or herself in a new world that is not so bound by traditional ways of doing things and in which there are new kinds of freedoms, but also new kinds of threats and new ways of being alienated and isolated. We will discuss some of the key ideas in more detail later. For now, I’ll point to two things:

i) Space, place, and location play a key role in dealing with strangers:

L. Lofland *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space*, 1985; *The Public Realm* 1998.

*Pre-urban order*: personal knowing of others, gemeinschaft, folk society; strangers were socially problematic.

*Preindustrial urban order*: categorical knowing of others by appearance; mutual recognition of elite; identity as performance; sumptuary codes; gesellschaft; intense multiple uses of public space.

*Industrial urban order*: decline of sumptuary order; mass production of clothing, institution of fashion etc.; functional segregation of urban space; more single-use spaces; increasing reliance on spatial cues to stereotype others.

ii. For many early twentieth century social thinkers (basing their ideas on the turmoil of the industrial city) the city was seen as a place of actual or potential social disorder.

G. Simmel *Metropolis and Mental Life* 1903: psychological and social impact of cities: cities characterized by i) size, ii) division of labor, iii) money-rationality; formal control rather than direct interaction in groups; assault on individuality; custom replaced by formal control; individual commitments spread across many social circles; scope of individual freedom increases; social relations become highly impersonal; consciousness of self heightened; social life fragmented; commodification of all spheres of life.

L. Wirth *Urbanism as a Way of Life*, 1938: essence of urban living is found in the *size*, *density*, and*heterogeneity* of urban settings; reduction of personal knowing; transitory and segmented social relationships. The individual gains: emancipation, freedom of choice, alternative styles of life. The individual loses: norms, cohesion, support, sense of participation. Life becomes anomic; moral deregulation leads to formal rather then informal supports and controls; net effect of urban living: corrosion of social structure.

This classic “disorder thesis” has been amended by more recent scholars (e.g Gans, Fischer) as we’ll see when we get to the readings by Hutter.

*D. US Census Definitions:*

The US Census definitions relevant to cities and urban areas are important because they provide the framework for an enormous amount of data used in research and analysis throughout the worlds of academia and public policy. The definitions are complicated and for the purposes of this course you do not need to be aware of all the fine details.

i. The basic ideas:

The Census has historically tried to get at three entities. These are my descriptions, not formal Census definitions:

a) *City* – this is a clearly focused entity, usually legally incorporated, with its own municipal government, possessing a center or downtown, with a clear-cut legally defined boundary, and an historically based self-awareness as a “place.” Today the Census treats concept of city in the more general category of *Place*.

b) *Urbanized Area* – this is the physical built-up area as it might appear from a airplane or on GoogleEarth; obviously to be precise you have to take into account the *density* and *contiguity* of development.

c) *Metropolitan Area* – a wider area functionally integrated with a central city by factors such as economic exchanges, newspaper circulations, and commuting patterns. In modern designations of the US Census, these units are CBSA’s (see below).

The “city” obviously came first historically. For many decades the Census defined a place (usually incorporated but sometimes designated by the Census) as a city if it had a population of 2,500 or more, and met some other criteria. Today, the boundaries of such cities are very relevant for matters such as taxation and elections, but they are not *functionally* very relevant, because they tend to greatly *underbound* both the urbanized area and the metropolitan region. For example, the western boundary of Albany is on Western Avenue close to the campus entrance. It’s not at all obvious. An urbanized landscape stretches as far as you can see in both directions.

At the other extreme, outside of New England, the Census has traditionally defined a metropolitan area as one or more whole counties that meet certain conditions. Albany County is one of five counties in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy metropolitan area. Albany County contains three cities (Albany, Cohoes, Watervliet), some villages, and a lot of suburbs, but is mostly “rural.” Some it is is mountain and forest. Obviously the metropolitan area greatly *overbounds* the cities and the urbanized area.

Some other terms are also in common use. The term *municipality* usually refers to a single administrative entity, a village, a town, or a city, usually with a corporate (council) form of self-government. But the use of the word and its legal status varies from state to state. Some states have boroughs, townships, parishes and other units which may or may not be recognized as legal municipalities. Counties are usually not considered as municipal units. Another term that occurs in official language and in the media is *locality*. This has no precisely defined meaning. Sometimes it refers to a identifiable settlement, which may or may not be legally incorporated. Sometimes it refers to administrative units in their roles as gatherers of taxes or receivers of funding from other levels of government.

ii. Some details

In the 2010 Census these are some of the definitions used. You DON’T need to memorize them. They illustrate the problem of trying to deal precisely with urban sprawl:

*Urban --* Territory is defined as *Urban* if it meets certain criteria of settlement density. A smaller agglomeration is called an *Urban Cluster* and contains at least 2,500 but fewer than 50,000 people. A larger agglomeration with at least 50,000 people is called an *Urbanized Area.* All territory that’s not *urban* is considered *rural*. These areas need not consist of whole counties (unlike CBSA’s).

*Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA)* -- These units are based on whole counties (except in New England), and they define *metropolitan* or *micropolitan statistical area*s. The general concept of a CBSA is that of a core area containing a substantial population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. A *micro* is a CBSA with at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but fewer than 50,000 people. A *metro* is a CBSA with at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more people. The Census has a set of definitions of which counties qualify, and also makes distinctions within CBSAs between “central” and “outlying” counties. When social scientists and other using federal data talk about “metropolitan areas” these county aggregates are often what they mean. Here are three examples in our area from Census 2010:

The Albany-Schenectady-Troy Metropolitan Statistical Area has a population of 870,716 and contains 5 counties: Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie.

The Amsterdam Micropolitan Statistical Area has a population 50,219 of and contains one county: Montgomery.

The Kingston Metropolitan Statistical Area has a population of 182,493 and contains one county: Ulster.

More details are available at:

<http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_urbanrural.html#uc>

and

<http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_cbsa.html#mesa>

Note: the Census reports data at many other levels. Smaller geographic units, which are typically used as the building blocks of the urban concepts outlined above, include places, zip-codes, census tracts, block groups, and blocks.