

# Session 6 – Urban sociology

Benjamin GILBERT  
Sciences Po  
[benjamin.gilbert@sciencespo.fr](mailto:benjamin.gilbert@sciencespo.fr)

53882 (Monday, 3.30 – 5.30 p.m.)  
53883 (Monday, 5.40 – 7.40 p.m.)  
21/01/2023 – 24/04/2023

## Overview of the session

---

- 1) Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology (20 min)
- 2) Discussion by the designated discussants (10-15 min)
- 3) Opening of the discussion to the whole class (15 min)
- 4) Short break (10 min)
- 4) Overview of the second mandatory excerpt (30min)
- 5) Presentation of methods in sociology (20 min)





Don't forget the midterm on March 18<sup>th</sup>!

# Allocation of presentations and discussions

Date	Session	Text excerpt
24/01	Sociological approaches	
31/01	The individual in social context	Douglas (Mary). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. 2003.
07/02	Norms and deviance	Becker (Howard). Outsiders. 1963.
14/02	Stratification and inequality	Marx (Karl) and Engels (Friedrich). The Communist Manifesto. 1848.
21/02	Identity and identification	Brubaker (Rogers). Trans. Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities. 2016.
07/03	Urban sociology	Venkatesh (Sudhir) and Levitt (Steven). History and disjunction in the urban American street gang. 2000.

# Allocation of presentations and discussions

---

Date	Session	Text excerpt
14/03	The family	Edin (Kathryn) and Kefalas (Maria). Promises I Can Keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage. 2005.
21/03	Religion	Snow (David) and Machalek (Richard). "The convert as a social type". 1976.
28/03	Education	Khan (Shamus). Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St Paul's School. 2001.
04/04	Economic sociology	Esping-Andersen (Gøsta). 'Hybrid or Unique?: The Japanese welfare state between Europe and America'. 1997
11/04	Society and the state	Dubois (Vincent). The bureaucrat and the poor. Encounters in French Welfare Offices. 1999.
18/04	Movements and revolutions	McAdam (Douglas). The Biographical Consequences of Activism. 1989.

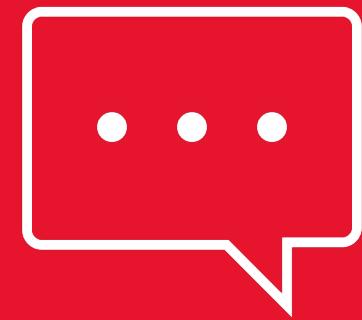
## Presentation of a classical excerpt in sociology

---

Today's presentation is on:

Venkatesh, S. A., & Levitt, S. D. 2000. "Are we a family or a business?" History and disjuncture in the urban American street gang. *Theory and society*, 29(4), 427-462.







## Jacobs (Jane).

---

Born in 1916, Jane Jacobs was an American-Canadian journalist, author, theorist, and activist who influenced urban studies, sociology, and economics.

She had no sociological training nor training in urban studies.

## Jacobs (Jane).

---

She was nonetheless very involved in organizing grassroots efforts to protect neighbourhoods from urban renewal and slum clearance. In particular, she was opposed to plans by to overhaul the Greenwich Village neighbourhood in New-York.

Some publications of Jane Jacobs include:

- The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961)
- Cities and the Wealth of Nations (1984)

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

*Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) is a book that is aimed directly at urban planners and at city councils:

*This book is an attack on current city planning and rebuilding.* (Jacobs, 1961)

*As in the pseudoscience of bloodletting, just so in the pseudoscience of city rebuilding and planning, years of learning and a plethora of subtle and complicated dogma have arisen on a foundation of nonsense.* (Jacobs, 1961)

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

In short, Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) is an attack on orthodox modern city planning and city architectural design.

Looking into how cities work in practice, rather than how they should work according to urban designers and planners, Jacobs effectively describes the real factors affecting cities, and recommends strategies to enhance city performance and livability.

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

Jane Jacobs argues that city planners are little aware of how cities work in real life and rather care about their ideal of what a city ought to be.

Furthermore, in their endeavour to build a city that works according to a set plan, they are often harmful to the development of cities and to the liveability of a city.

One example of such detrimental effects of city planning are patronizing and segregating *unslumming* policies.

## Elements of context on city planning

---

Jane Jacobs starts by briefly explaining influential ideas in orthodox planning and deconstructing their potentially harmful effects to cities.

What can you say about these examples of city-planning?

# Georges Haussmann – Paris



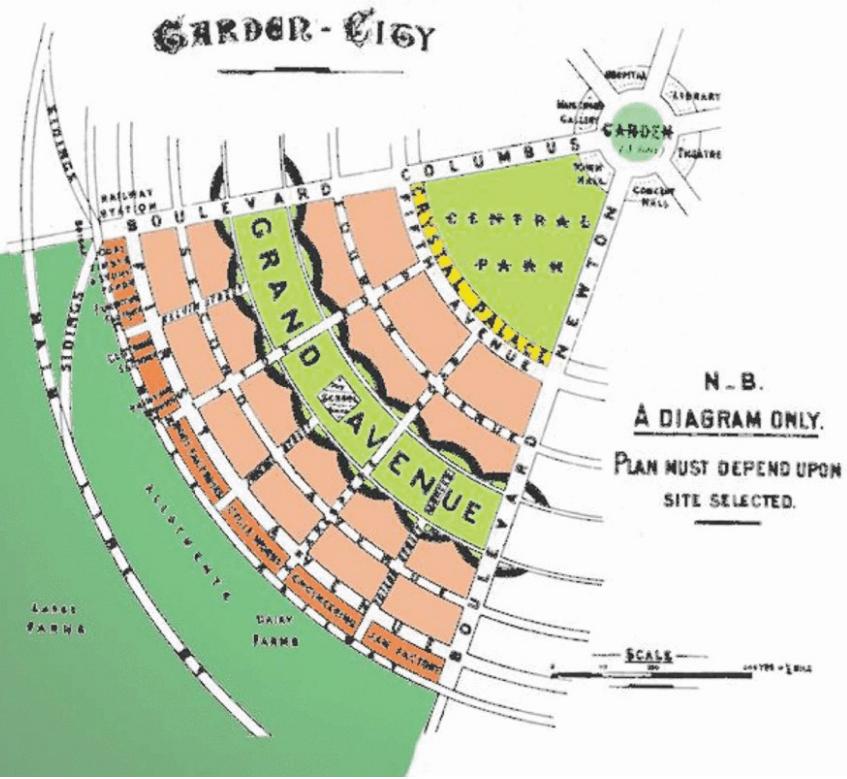
## Elements of context on city planning

---

George Haussmann's plans for Paris were built on hygienic ideals.

According to Walter Benjamin, “*the real aim of Haussmann’s works was the securing of the city against civil war. He wished to make the erection of barricades in Paris impossible for all time*”. (Benjamin, 1938)

# Ebenezer Howard – Garden City



## Elements of context on city planning

---

Ebenezer Howard's Garden city indeed constitutes a set of self-sufficient small towns, but such plan is ideal for all but those with a plan for their own lives.

*[Ebenezer Howard] conceived of planning [...] as essentially paternalistic, if not authoritarian. [...] he simply wrote off the intricate, many-faceted, cultural life of the metropolis. He was uninterested in such problems as the way great cities police themselves, or exchange ideas, or operate politically, or invent new economic arrangements, and he was oblivious to devising ways to strengthen these functions because, after all, he was not designing for this kind of life in any case. (Jacobs, 1961)*

# Le Corbusier – Radiant City



# Le Corbusier – Plan Voisin



## Elements of context on city planning

---

Le Corbusier devised in the 1920's a dream city which he called the Radiant City, which essentially amounts to building skyscrapers within a park, where all amenities are accessible within the park or the buildings themselves.

*Le Corbusier was planning not only a physical environment. He was planning for a social Utopia too. Le Corbusier's Utopia was a condition of what he called maximum individual liberty, by which he seems to have meant not liberty to do anything much, but liberty from ordinary responsibility.* (Jacobs, 1961)

**What can you say about city planning in these cities?**

# Fes, Morocco



# Cambridge, United-Kingdom



## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

In short, Jane Jacobs argues that all these examples are irrelevant to how cities work and therefore moves on to explain workings of cities in the first part of the book.

To do this, she starts by exploring the uses of sidewalks.

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

In studying sidewalks, she identifies three primary uses of them in cities:

- Safety
- Contact
- Assimilating children

## The social functions of sidewalks – Safety and contact

---

Jane Jacobs observes that insecurity arises in new, middle-income projects. She observes also that sidewalks provide security in streets.

In her words, security “*is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves*”. (Jacobs, 1961).

## The social functions of sidewalks – Safety and contact

---

In short, street safety is promoted by pavements clearly marking a separation between public and private places, and by spontaneous protection with the eyes of both pedestrians and those watching the continual flow of pedestrians from buildings.

As a contact venue, pavements also contribute to building trust among neighbours over time. Moreover, self-appointed public characters such as storekeepers enhance the social structure of sidewalk life by learning the news at retail and spreading it. Jacobs argues that such trust cannot be built in artificial public places such as a game room in a housing project.

## The social functions of sidewalks – Safety and contact

---

For instance, the further the activity goes through the night, the safer the street is, in the sense that restaurants and bars are key to maintaining an active and safe street.

Likewise, large windows and streets provide more safety than small dark alleys, in the sense that the first are at continuously under the gaze of inhabitants and passerbys, whereas the other is hidden away.

## The social functions of sidewalks – Assimilating children

---

Another function of sidewalks is to provide an environment for children to play.

This is not achieved in the presumably “safe” city parks, which are typically enclosed, and under the constant surveillance of parents.

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

In summary, under what condition can there be a vivid sidewalk life ?

*“A sidewalk life, so far as I can observe, arises out of no mysterious qualities or talents for it in this or that type of population. It arises only when the concrete, tangible facilities it requires are present.”* (Jacobs, 1961).

A sidewalk offers a place to gather, things to do and places to go to, and inherits safety from the presence of public characters: shopkeepers and eyes on the street.

## Jacobs (Jane). Death and Life of Great American Cities. 1961.

---

When these conditions are not met, city design can have detrimental effects. “*In city areas that lack a natural and casual public life, it is common for residents to isolate themselves from each other to a fantastic degree*” (Jacobs, 1961).

One instance of this is excessive *togetherness*: tendency of oversharing under absolute social homogeneity (“self-selected upper-middle-class people”).

# Don't Worry Darling (2022)



## Short activity – Victimization and feelings of insecurity

---

We ask ourselves three questions in this short activity:

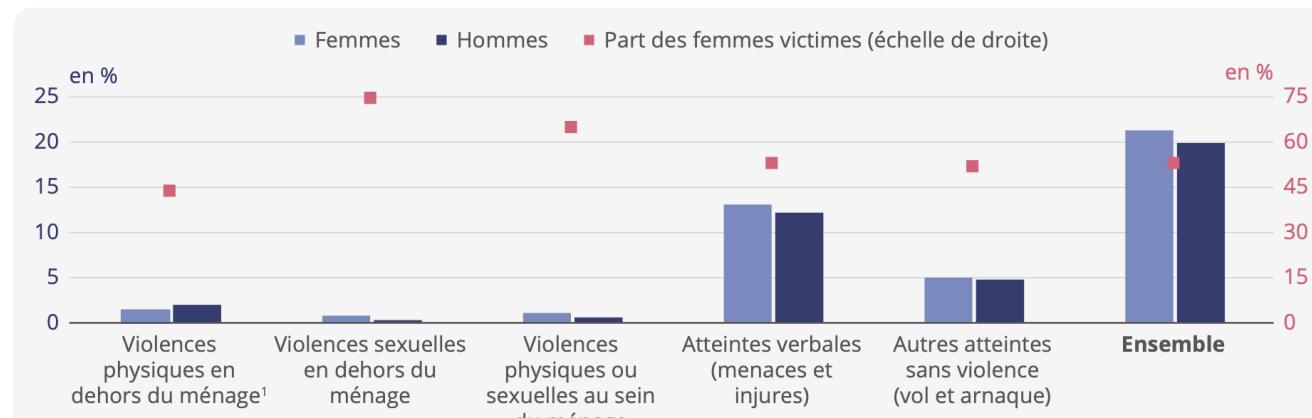
- What trends are there in terms of victimization outside the household?
- What trends are there in terms of feelings of insecurity outside the household?
- What are the interactions between victimization and feelings of insecurity?

**How would you measure victimization?**

**How would you measure feelings of insecurity?**

# Short activity – Victimization and feelings of insecurity

## ► 1. Taux de victimisation et part des femmes victimes selon le type d'atteinte personnelle subie, sur la période 2017-2018



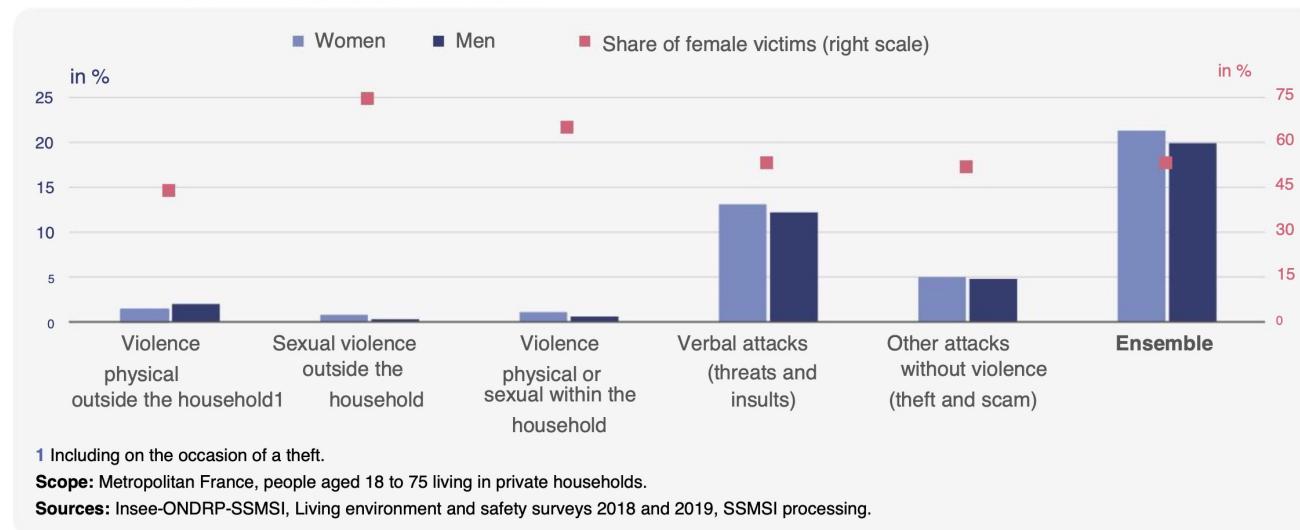
<sup>1</sup> Y compris à l'occasion d'un vol.

**Champ :** France métropolitaine, personnes âgées de 18 à 75 ans vivant en ménage ordinaire.

**Sources :** Insee-ONDRP-SSMSI, enquêtes Cadre de vie et sécurité 2018 et 2019, traitement SSMSI.

# Short activity – Victimization and feelings of insecurity

## ► 1. Victimization rate and share of female victims by type of personal harm suffered, over the period 2017-2018



# Short activity – Victimization and feelings of insecurity

---

► 3. Sentiment d'insécurité et renoncement à sortir selon le type d'atteinte subie et le sexe, sur la période 2018-2019

		Femmes (en %)	Hommes (en %)	Écart femmes-hommes (en points)
Victimes d'atteintes personnelles <sup>1</sup>	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	17,0	9,7	7,3
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	25,7	17,5	8,2
	Renoncement à sortir seul	23,3	5,0	18,3
Violences physiques <sup>2</sup> en dehors du ménage <sup>3</sup>	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	23,3	9,5	13,8
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	32,1	17,9	14,2
	Renoncement à sortir seul	29,1	6,1	22,9
Violences sexuelles en dehors du ménage <sup>3</sup>	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	20,1	22,6	-2,5
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	33,4	27,2	6,2
	Renoncement à sortir seul	30,7	2,0	28,7
Violences physiques ou sexuelles au sein du ménage <sup>3</sup>	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	15,5	6,3	9,2
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	26,3	13,9	12,4
	Renoncement à sortir seul	18,4	5,4	13,0
Atteintes verbales (menaces ou injures)	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	18,6	11,4	7,1
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	27,7	20,7	7,0
	Renoncement à sortir seul	24,6	6,1	18,5
Atteintes sans violence (vols ou arnaques)	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le domicile	13,1	5,4	7,7
	Sentiment d'insécurité dans le quartier/village	21,7	10,9	10,8
	Renoncement à sortir seul	20,9	3,3	17,6
<b>Ensemble des 18-75 ans</b>		<b>10,8</b>	<b>5,2</b>	<b>5,6</b>
		<b>15,5</b>	<b>8,5</b>	<b>7,0</b>
		<b>17,0</b>	<b>3,0</b>	<b>14,0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Victimations subies au cours de l'année précédente. <sup>2</sup> Y compris à l'occasion d'un vol. <sup>3</sup> Moyenne sur la période 2014-2018.

**Champ :** France métropolitaine, personnes âgées de 18 à 75 ans vivant en ménage ordinaire.

**Sources :** Insee-ONDTP-SSMSI, enquêtes Cadre de vie et sécurité 2015 à 2019, traitement SSMSI.

# Short activity – Victimization and feelings of insecurity

---

► 3. Feeling of insecurity and refusal to go out according to the type of attack suffered and the gender, over the period 2018-2019

		Women (in %)	Men (in %)	Gender gap (in points)
Victims of personal harm <sup>1</sup>	Feeling of insecurity in the home	17,0	9,7	7,3
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	25,7	17,5	8,2
	Refuse to go out alone	23,3	5,0	18,3
Physical violence <sup>2</sup> outside the household <sup>3</sup>	Feeling of insecurity in the home	23,3	9,5	13,8
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	32,1	17,9	14,2
	Refuse to go out alone	29,1	6,1	22,9
Sexual violence outside the household <sup>3</sup>	Feeling of insecurity in the home	20,1	22,6	-2,5
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	33,4	27,2	6,2
	Refuse to go out alone	30,7	2,0	28,7
Physical violence or within the household <sup>3</sup>	Feeling of insecurity in the home	15,5	6,3	9,2
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village sex	26,3	13,9	12,4
	Refuse to go out alone	18,4	5,4	13,0
Verbal attacks (threats or insults)	Feeling of insecurity in the home	18,6	11,4	7,1
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	27,7	20,7	7,0
	Refuse to go out alone	24,6	6,1	18,5
Attacks without violence (thefts or scams)	Feeling of insecurity in the home	13,1	5,4	7,7
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	21,7	10,9	10,8
	Refuse to go out alone	20,9	3,3	17,6
All 18-75 year olds	<b>Feeling of insecurity in the home</b>	<b>10,8</b>	<b>5,2</b>	<b>5,6</b>
	Feeling of insecurity in the neighborhood/village	15,5	8,5	7,0
	Refuse to go out alone	17,0	3,0	14,0

<sup>1</sup> Injuries suffered during the previous year. <sup>2</sup> Including on the occasion of a theft. <sup>3</sup> Average over the period 2014-2018.

**Scope:** Metropolitan France, people aged 18 to 75 living in private households.

**Sources:** Insee-ONDPR-SSMSI, Living environment and safety surveys 2015 to 2019, SSMSI processing.

## For next time...

---

- Read Levi-Strauss, C. 1971. The family, in H. Shapiro, Man, Culture and Society. Oxford University Press, p.261-285
- Read Edin, K. & Kefalas, M. 2005. Promises I Can Keep, Introduction, and Ch. 1. Berkeley, CA: UC Press
- When reading, remember to note the important elements of the text: question asked by the author(s), (hypo)theses of the author(s), methods used, references, writing style, argumentative construction, etc.
- Prepare the presentation and discussion (if concerned)