CITY LIGHTS

URBAN-SUBURBAN LIFE IN THE GLOBAL SOCIETY

THIRD EDITION

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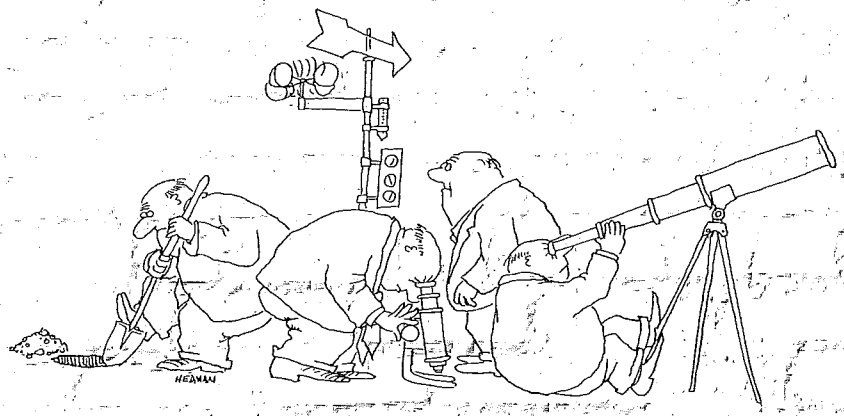


urbanists see different aspects of city life, depending on what parts they explore.

Richard Hedman

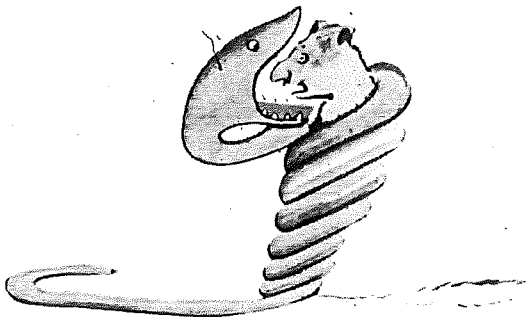
CHAPTER 2

THINKING ABOUT CITIES

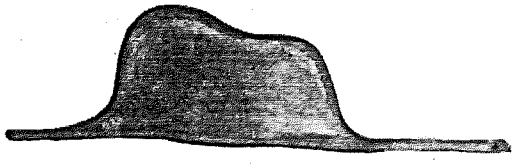
WHAT YOU SEE DEPENDS ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT

Reality lies in the eye of the beholder. This truism is whimsically illustrated in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's tale *The Little Prince*:

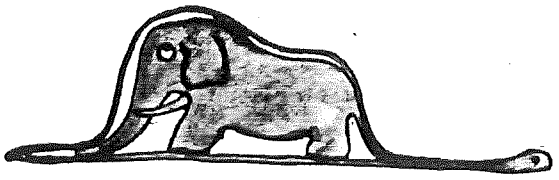
> Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called *True Stories from Nature*, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.



> In the book it said: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion."
>
> I pondered deeply, then, over the adventures of the jungle. And after some work with a colored pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:



> I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: "Frighten? Why should anyone be frightened by a hat?"
>
> My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing: I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



> The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. . . . Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.
>
> So then I chose another profession, and learned to pilot airplanes. I have flown a little over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can distinguish China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable.
>
> In the course of this life . . . [whenever I met a grown-up] who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my Drawing Number One. . . . I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say: "That is a hat."
>
> Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man.
>
> *([1943] 1970:3–5)*

Whether we identify with the imaginative pilot or the sensible grown-ups in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's modern fable, the point is clear: *What you see depends on how you look at it.* People can look at the same thing and see it through different lenses. Urbanists are no exception. Like other human beings, urbanists filter what they see through lenses. Whatever lens we use, our vision is necessarily limited, for some things are not focused on (like an elephant inside a boa constrictor) or are seen only partially or with distortion.

Here's a more concrete example: an urban street scene. Walking down a familiar street every day, you may not see birds overhead or hear teenagers singing. You may filter out information that seems extraneous, missing the less visible and ignoring the overall picture.

How people see and make sense out of the world depends on many factors, including their age, sex, social background, past experience, present purposes, and so on. Also, spatial perspective can be key. For example, is the person observing through a microscope, a magnifying glass, or a high-powered telescope? In a phrase, scale counts! A book by the late Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) astrophysicist Philip Morrison, his wife Phyllis, and designers Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of Ten: A Book About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe and the Effect of Adding Another Zero* (1985) (and the 1968 movie by Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of 10*, updated/changed by others for the contemporary Internet) shows that what you see depends on the scale used. In the contemporary Internet version, we see the universe from various vantage points—at 10 to the power of 23 and 10 to the power of −16. Depending on where you focus, you see very different macro- and micro-cosmoses.

For a moment, let's concentrate on ways of seeing based on three differences. These are differences in (1) modes of understanding, (2) academic and occupational perspectives, and (3) mental maps.

DIFFERENT MODES OF UNDERSTANDING

Most schools stress reason and logic, not emotion or holistic thought. We aren't taught to see boa constrictors, primeval forests, or stars. We are taught to break down wholes into their component parts, to dissect complex phenomena logically. Of course, the sequential, analytical–rational mode is very useful, even essential, to science. After all, as Saint-Exupéry said (tongue-in-cheek), reason helped him to know whether he was flying over China or Arizona.

In his fable, Saint-Exupéry isn't saying that intuition and acquaintance with something should replace reason and systematic thought. Rather, he seems to say, isn't it a shame that sensible grown-ups have lost the childlike quality of imagining, of seeing beyond the information given? Grown-ups who don't use holistic thought and flashes of intuitive insight are robbed of an entire dimension of understanding.

This brings us to another way of ordering information: academic and occupational perspectives. While useful, they too can lead to partial or distorted vision.

ACADEMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

People's perception of the world is influenced by many factors—age, gender, motives, academic training, and so on. An exercise developed by Larry Susskind (1978) of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT illustrates these perceptual differences. Susskind begins by drawing a series of maps on the blackboard. Each represents a different way of seeing a city. Taking San Francisco as our example, Figure 2.5 presents several subjective or mental maps of the city—that is, **cognitive maps**. The bare outline of San Francisco (2.5a) is shared by all; the other maps are not. Figure 2.5b shows how transportation engineers might see the city. From this perspective, San Francisco is a vast array of transport networks: a ferry terminal, bus lines, cable car tracks, underground rapid transit, major arteries, and a street grid.

The environmentalist may see one city (Figure 2.5d), while others may see another. The urban designer (Figure 2.5c) may pick out the Transamerica "Pyramid," the city's most visually dominant structure. A bioregionalist may focus on native plants and ecosystems, mapping what's wild in the city. A sociologist concerned with issues of class and race may focus on neighborhoods of extreme contrast, such as white, affluent Pacific Heights and densely settled Chinatown (Figure 2.5e); other parts of the city may fade out altogether. By contrast, a bride-to-be, searching for a gown, might focus on the location of bridal shops, thrift stores, and boutiques . Finally, a poet may see an altogether different city. He or she may focus on the beauty of Golden Gate Park in springtime bloom or share the disgust of poet and long-time political dissident Ahmed Fouad Negm, who wrote (perhaps about his native Cairo) "Glory for the crazy people/In this stupid world" (in Slackman, 2006).

Is it possible that people just don't see parts of the city? Doesn't this exercise using cognitive maps grossly overstate the case? Empirical evidence suggests not.

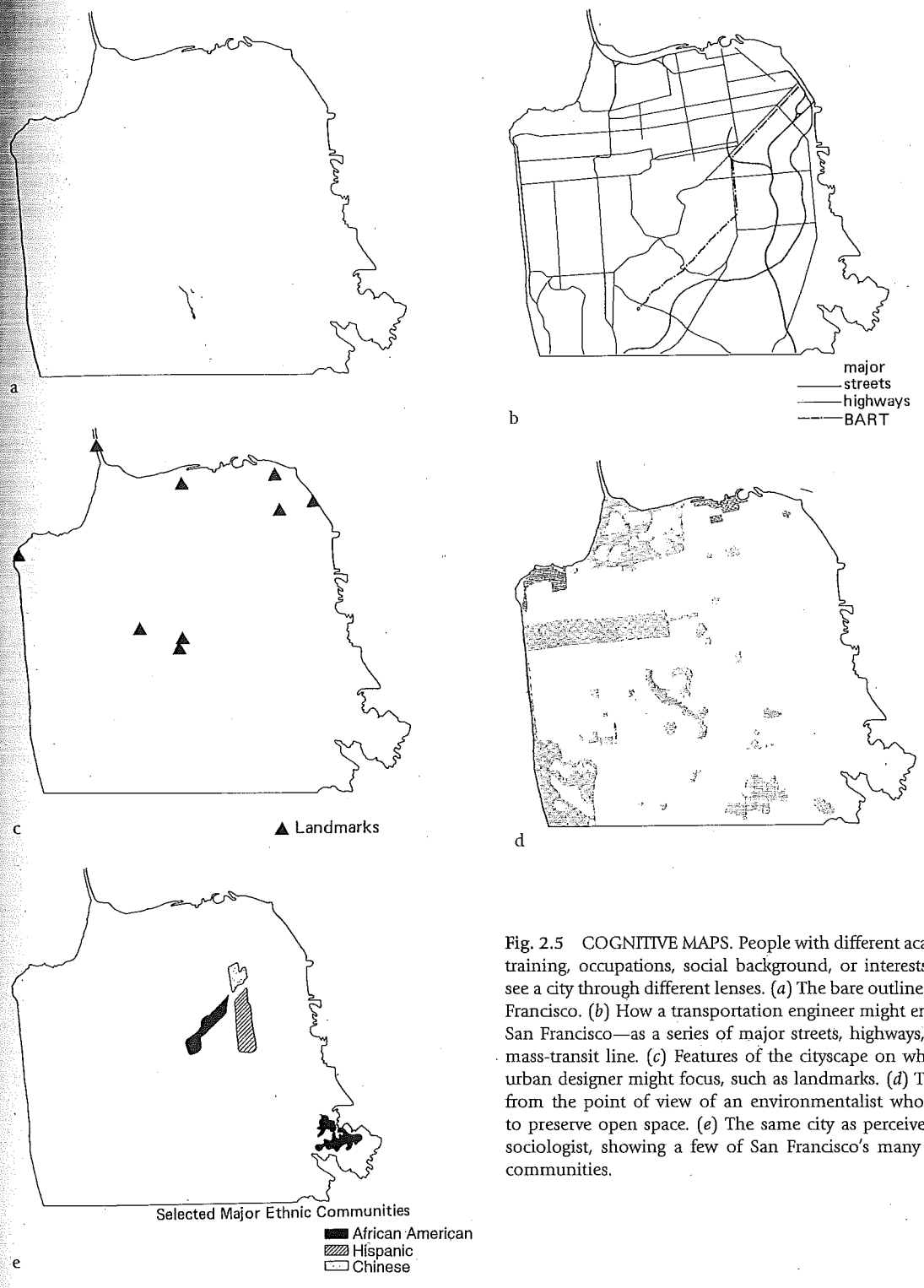


Fig. 2.5 COGNITIVE MAPS. People with different academic training, occupations, social background, or interests often see a city through different lenses. (*a*) The bare outline of San Francisco. (*b*) How a transportation engineer might envision San Francisco—as a series of major streets, highways, and a mass-transit line. (*c*) Features of the cityscape on which an urban designer might focus, such as landmarks. (*d*) The city from the point of view of an environmentalist who wants to preserve open space. (*e*) The same city as perceived by a sociologist, showing a few of San Francisco's many ethnic communities.

When Kevin Lynch ([1960] 1974) asked Bostonians to draw maps of their city, he found that the interviewees consistently left out whole areas.

And what about unseeable parts of the city? How can we focus on some aspect of city life if it is uncharted? Take, for example, information flows. An important global market in money exchange depends on up-to-the-minute information via telecommunications (Brand, 1987:chapter 12). These information flows may be more important to a local economy than, say, feed grain or tourism. Yet the journey of information remains unmapped...and probably unnoticed.

EVEN ROAD MAPS CONTAIN A POINT OF VIEW

All maps are cognitive maps. They seem to be objective, even natural. But, as Denis Wood points out, every map contains a viewpoint because "every map shows this...but not that." The upshot: "maps construct—not reproduce—the world" (1992:17, 48).

Even an ordinary state map contains hidden messages. For example, by promoting private, car transport (over mass transportation or bike paths) state highway maps support those who profit from the highway system

To conclude: What this implies is that all of us have blind spots. The question is how to reduce them and expand our vision.

EXPANDING OUR VISION OF THE CITY

One way to reduce the blind spots is to look at urban life from many perspectives and then to combine insights. Alas, this is easier said than done. Hardly anyone today is a Renaissance person who, like Leonardo da Vinci, is a serious student of the social and physical sciences as well as a creative artist.

FRAGMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The expansion and specialization of knowledge in our high-tech society make it difficult for anyone to study systematically the many facets of any complex phenomenon, including the city. Academically speaking, this proliferation of knowledge has led to a splitting up of the world into specialist **disciplines** and professional territories such as sociology, history, and economics.

Subdisciplines (e.g., *urban* or *rural* sociology) and hybrids (e.g., economic sociology, political economy) have also developed as further responses to the knowledge explosion and to real-world concerns. This was not always the case.

In the nineteenth century (before the knowledge explosion and computerized databanks), influential social thinkers argued vigorously against carving up the world into narrow disciplines. Thinkers who agreed on little else—such as sociology's founder Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, and Cardinal John Henry Newman—agreed that social phenomena are so inextricably linked that studying one small category of the social world was fruitless. Cardinal Newman summed up this point of view in 1852. He wrote that a true university education should provide the power of viewing many things at once as "one whole, and referring them severally to their true places in the universal system, and understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence" ([1852] 1919:137).

Many contemporary educators reaffirm Newman's lofty vision. A former president of Dartmouth College, for one, believes that specialization discourages students from becoming educated (Freedman, 1987:47).

Yet, despite such calls for holism, specialist disciplines continue to multiply. This fragmentation can lead to expertise in a specialized area—say, ethnic voting behavior. But scholars risk knowing more and more about less and less.

Some theorists say that there is no rational way to classify the social sciences, for distinctions among them are artificial (e.g., Duverger, 1964). Some call for new college courses, ones that do not package learning into disciplines. For example, the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University brings together professors from 35 disciplines studying urban development; the group features researchers on a variety of subjects, ranging from desert-water ecology to energy-saving building design. Nonetheless, at present, most of higher education is organized along disciplinary lines. Thus, most everywhere in the world, there are departments of sociology, history, geography, and so forth. And each discipline has developed particular perspectives on the world it tries to better understand.

What constitutes a discipline's perspective? Its substantive content, **paradigms** for doing research, and research methods. Thus, an economist and a sociologist look at the world through different lenses.

However, times are changing—and so are scholars. Increasingly, teachers, grad students, and researchers are becoming **interdisciplinary** or **multidisciplinary.** Adolph Reed, teaching at the University of Pennsylvania, exemplifies this approach. His research focuses on urban politics and twentieth-century American social thought. Reed teaches in an academic department, but his research and thought criss-cross disciplinary boundaries. (Reed also combines theory and practice; he is a founding member of the Labor Party in the United States and remains a core member.) Similarly, Texas A & M professor Joe R. Feagin draws on insights from political sociology, U.S. history, international economics, and urban geography to understand the "urban real estate game": how corporations decide where to locate, how government subsidies affect urban growth, and how citizens' movements can help control urban redevelopment (Feagin and Parker, 2002). Likewise, Rahsaan Maxwell, a 2008 Ph.D. in political science, studies the integration of Caribbeans and North Africans into French and British political life (2006); he draws on sociological insights, analyses of political institutions, and various methodologies—from statistics to interviews—to enrich his understanding and research. Increasingly, research centers and think tanks cross disciplinary boundaries. Concerning climate change, to take one example, some argue that its causes and effects can be understood *only* via an interdisciplinary approach. The director of the Center for Environmental Policy and Administration at Syracuse University (New York) put it like this: "Trying to consider the technical, economic, political, and sociological aspects all at once is the only viable way to do anything about [climate change]" (Wilcoxin in Rodgers, 2005:2).

Others, including Arizona State University, have abolished some traditional departments in favor of "transdisciplinary" institutes. Likewise, Stanford University has created many new multidisciplinary centers and programs, hoping to promote teamwork and cross-fertilization. Stanford's vice president for strategic planning says that her university's mission, in part, is to do away with "segregated academic silos" (in Theil, 2008:59): "Research in a purely academic vacuum was probably never sufficient but particularly not in this day and age."

At New York University (NYU), among others, students are being offered new international learning experiences. Students will be rotated among NYU's branches in New York City, Abu Dhabi, Florence, and other cities, including Shanghai and Buenos Aires.

Thus, this may be a time of great change in the structure of U.S. universities toward multidisciplinarity and internationalism. This shift was acknowledged by the president of Harvard University, historian Drew Faust. Shortly after being named to her post, she said she was thrilled to be at the helm of a great university at a time when the disciplines were "breaking down" (Faust, 2007). She said that she looked forward to her university's struggle to "reconfigure knowledge."

WAYS OF EXPANDING OUR VISION

This book attempts to expand our vision of things urban in several ways: (1) by encouraging both acquaintance with and knowledge about the urban world; (2) by drawing on and trying to connect insights from different disciplines, professional fields, and arts; (3) by presenting a range of ideological perspectives on urban conditions and policies; (4) by examining why honest people disagree about how cities work; (5) by reexamining what seems so obvious, such as the way people walk down busy city streets or behave on subways; and (6) by exploring the links among local, national, and international conditions. My approach will be from the point of view of urban studies. A word about this subject area is appropriate here.

URBAN STUDIES

Urban studies is a relative newcomer to academia. It developed in the 1960s as a response to the needs of academics and practitioners who sought a less piecemeal approach to urban phenomena.

It is variously called "urban studies," "urban affairs," "metropolitan studies," and "urban–suburban studies"; academics don't agree on what to call it or where to put it. It is sometimes a department, a program, or an entire school. No one label identifies its theorists

and researchers. Some call themselves "urbanists" or "urbanologists"; others shrink from such labels.

Whatever it's called, urban studies is a *field of study*, not a discipline. It is often viewed as either a multidisciplinary or an interdisciplinary field focusing on urban-related theory, issues, and policies. In academia, some see it as a promising development; others call it nothing more than "a sphere of rather disconnected interdisciplinary inquiries" (Savage and Warde, 1993:32). Popularly, it is often associated with the attempt to solve urban problems.

As a field of study, urban studies has rather ill-defined boundaries. Neither its physical nor its intellectual boundaries are well delineated. For some, urban studies means the study of cities and suburbs. For others (including myself), it encompasses global theories, data, and perspectives.

Some scholars maintain that it is no longer possible to make meaningful distinctions between things urban and nonurban. They argue, and I agree, that in an interdependent world, urban life cannot be divorced from rural, let alone national and international, life. I call this the "urban-schmurban" stance. My guess (there are no reliable data here) is that many, if not most, contemporary urbanists share this stance.

Ideally, urban studies students are encouraged to achieve interdisciplinarity. As one scholar puts it, "Almost none of the great questions of science, scholarship, or society fit in single disciplines" (Kates, 1989:B1). Brown University, for one, embraces this: Its New Curriculum, adopted in 1969 and still in place, encourages interdisciplinary courses because, today, learning requires chances to experiment and to synthesize across disciplines. synthesis. Its collage of interdisciplinary centers ranges from the Brain Science Program to the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. So much for traditional disciplinary boxes!

Many scholars are trying to remake urban theory from an interdisciplinary standpoint. For one, Edward W. Soja (2000) draws on a variety of perspectives, including what he calls "geohistory," architecture, and feminism. Similarly, MacArthur fellow and self-described "Marxist-environmentalist" Mike Davis ([1992] 1995, 2006a, 2006b, [2004] 2007) has an unusual résumé for academe: truck driver, meat cutter, political activist, historian, student of economics, and biographer of Los Angeles. His eclectic writings—whether about urban politics, the global threat of avian flu, or ethnic communities in Los Angeles—are refreshingly colorful. Another theorist, Michael Peter Smith, moves far beyond his original home base of political science to revisit *Urban Theory* (1996) and transnational urbanism (2005).

And then, in a class all by himself, is the poster child for interdisciplinarity: Manuel Castells. Castells has taught sociology, city and regional planning, the information society, communications, and technology and society. His scholarly work—over 20 books and innumerable articles—covers a broad spectrum of subjects and combines insights from a number of disciplines and fields, including history, cultural studies, law, global politics, city planning, economics, sociology, and geography. Castells, arguably the best-known contemporary urbanist in the world, speaks six languages, including his native Spanish, and has conducted research or taught on most continents. But even for Renaissance-like scholars such as Castells, synthesizing insights among disciplines is difficult, sometimes impossible. Decades ago (and it remains the case), one urbanist described the recipe for many so-called interdisciplinary studies like this: "Take a physical planner, a sociologist, an economist; beat the mixture until it blends; pour and spread" (Alonso, 1971:169). In other words, synthesizing unlike insights or data sets is like blending oil and water; it won't work.

Without basic agreement on conceptual frameworks—which does not presently exist—interdisciplinarity remains an ideal. Meanwhile, scholars often achieve some degree of integration when they work in an interdisciplinary team.

Most commonly, research team members approach the city from the perspective of their own disciplines. An example will help to clarify the various disciplinary approaches to the same phenomenon: slums.

DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES: THE EXAMPLE OF SLUMS AND MEGASLUMS

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), a slum is

> a street, alley, court, etc., situated in a crowded district of a town or city and inhabited by people of a low

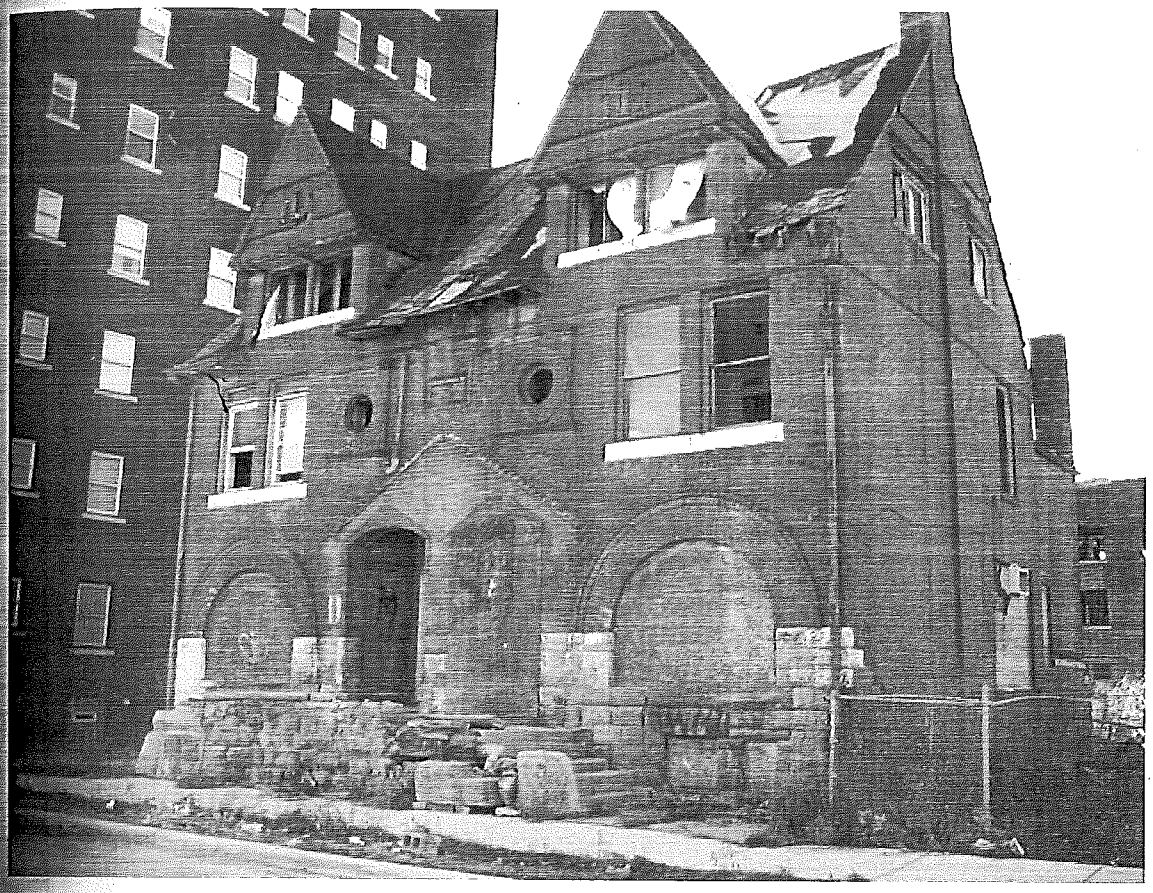


Fig. 2.6 SLUM. An apartment building in the slums of Detroit, Michigan. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971), a slum may be defined as "a thickly populated neighbourhood or district where the houses and the conditions of life are of a squalid and wretched character." People living in areas called "slums" may not see it that way. (Leonard Pitt)

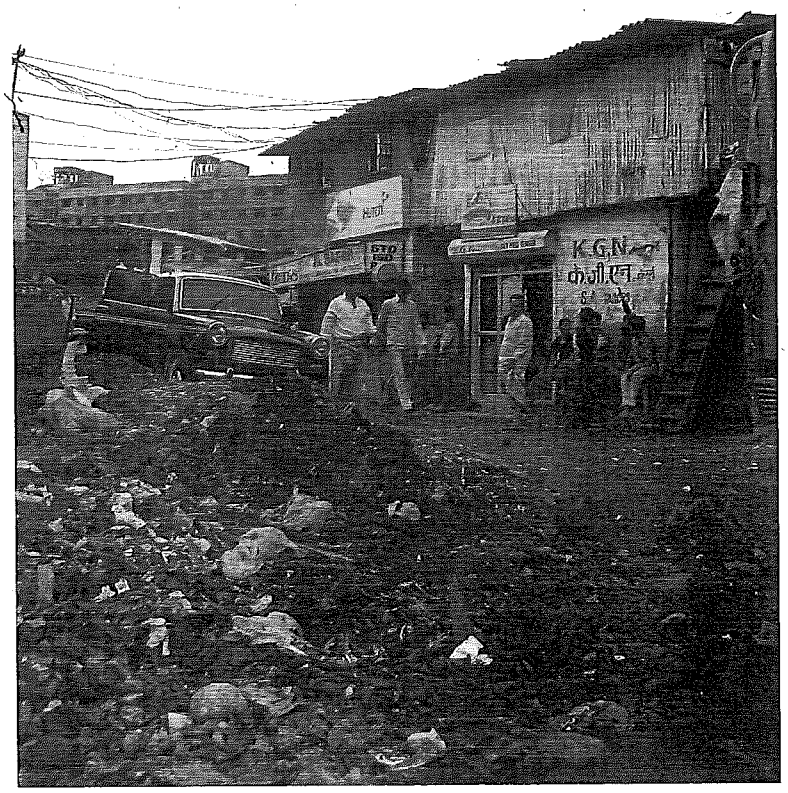
> class or by the very poor; a number of these streets or courts forming a thickly populated neighbourhood or district where the houses and the conditions of life are of a squalid and wretched character.
>
> *(1971:2874)*

People concerned with the history and use of language would be interested in the derivation of the word *slum* (British provincial slang), its first recorded usage (1825, in England), and its changing meanings over time (by the 1890s it connoted crime, viciousness, and debauchery—in other words, bad people as well as bad physical conditions).

The term **megaslum** is used by maverick urban theorist Mike Davis (2006a) to describe gargantuan slums worldwide: huge shantytowns and squatter settlements of gut-wrenching poverty such as the world's largest—Mexico City's slum of an estimated 4 million plus inhabitants. In Davis's colorful language, megaslums are "stinking mountains of shit."

Typically, people in megaslums suffer from unspeakable poverty and live in "informal housing" on the urban periphery of so-called Third-World (read "poor," "non-North American," and "non-European") cities. These cities and their urban peripheries often house the extremely poor together (but not side-by-side) with billionaires.

Worldwide, how many people live in slums? During the last half-century, slums and megaslums



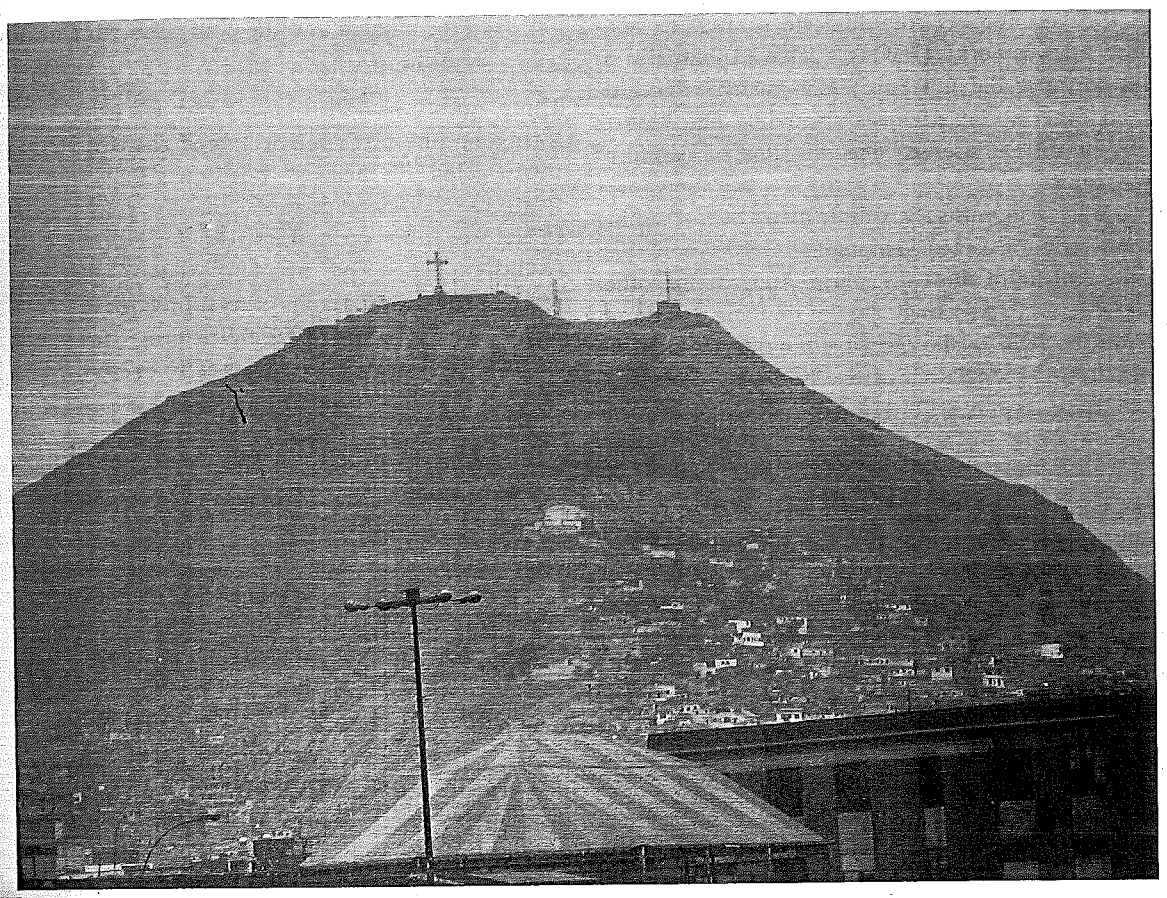
a

Fig. 2.7 MEGASLUMS. (*a*) Piles of garbage or "stinking mountains of shit," to use Mike Davis's phrase, characterize the Dharavi slum in Mumbai, India, vividly portrayed in *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). (*b*) A squatter settlement on the outskirts of Lima, Peru. Many residents there maintain their religious faith. ([*a*] Kiran Shroff, [*b*] Andrée Abecassis)

have exploded in size. By 2005, the United Nations (UN) estimated that about 1 billion people lived in slums and put the number at double—2 billion—by 2030 (UN-HABITAT, 2003).

People living in areas called "slums" (by people who don't live there) would undoubtedly have more pressing concerns than understanding where the word *slum* came from. In other words, what is of utmost importance to one group of people may be of much less concern to another.

This observation also holds true for urbanists: What is of primary importance to people trained in one discipline or field may be peripheral to, even neglected by, those trained in another. To illustrate, we'll look at various disciplinary approaches to slums.



b

Fig. 2.7 (*continued*)

First, a word about disagreements *within* a discipline or field. Rarely, perhaps never, do urbanists, sociologists, political economists, or others in any disciplinary hybrid or field share a paradigm or research model. Historically, mainstream social science has rejected the assumptions of many contending visions, from creationism to parapsychology, but some scholars continue to work in alternative paradigms. In recent times, there seems to be an opening within mainstream social science, providing room for some of the dissenting outsiders.

ECONOMICS

"Intuition." "Whimsy." "Imagination." Economists are not normally associated with such words. One exception is Steven D. Levitt, coauthor with Stephen J. Dubner of the best-selling book *Freakonomics* (2005) and economics professor at the University of Chicago. Using research tools common to most economists (and a few uncommon ones, including personal observations), Levitt asks intriguing questions, including these: Why do drug-dealers still live with their mothers? What is the relationship between *Roe v. Wade* and the drop in U.S. crime? His counterintuitive thinking led to this research finding: "If you both own a gun and have a swimming pool in the backyard, the swimming pool is about 10 times more likely to kill a child than the gun is" (Levitt and Dubner, 2005:146).

Few economists communicate so well to nonacademics as Levitt. (Having a talented journalist as his coauthor did not hurt.) Alas, many economists (and other social scientists) read like practitioners of "the dismal science," the one-time nickname of economics.

Most economists share more than a dismal writing style: Economists agree among themselves more than do members of most disciplines. Indeed, "no other social science has a single way of thinking that dominates the field to the overwhelming degree that the neoclassical model dominates economics" (Coughlin, 1993:A8). As one scholar puts it, "80 percent agree with 80 percent of it." The neoclassical model's bedrock assumptions are these: (1) people are rational calculators who act in their self-interest and (2) they operate in a free, competitive market.

Still, that leaves 20 percent. Two groups—feminist economists and radical economists—fall into that 20 percent category, questioning the basic assumptions of neoclassical economics.

What follows is a discussion from the neoclassical viewpoint. Then, a feminist view is considered. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of radical and libertarian visions.

Neoclassical or Mainstream Economics

Economics is primarily concerned with *choice*: how individuals, global corporations, or societies choose to use their scarce productive resources (land, labor, capital, know-how) to produce and distribute goods and services. Whether economists study a complex economic system, such as that of the United States or the United Kingdom, or the economic organization of child care in one city, they ask three basic and interrelated questions:

1. *What* goods and services are produced, and *how much* of alternative commodities is produced? For example, does the U.S. economy produce many weapons for national defense and few housing units? A mix of both? Or many housing units and few weapons?
2. *How* are goods produced? For instance, is high technology used? What resources are used?
3. *For whom* are the goods produced? For example, how are certain kinds of housing distributed to the affluent and the poor or to whites and nonwhites?

These questions—*what, how,* and *for whom*—inform an economist's perspective on the issue being investigated. To answer these questions, economists use a variety of tools, mainly quantitative in nature. In an economics text, for instance, we would expect to find numbers, statistics, mathematical equations, graphs of relationships between factors involved, and econometric projections. It is the rare economist who is trained in or uses qualitative research methods common to anthropology and sociology, such as in-depth interviewing and participant-observation.

Looking at urban housing, one does not have to be a sophisticated economist to understand *what* poor people get: high-density, physically deteriorating slums (or less, a street space). Indeed, it has been said that if all of New York City were as densely populated as parts of Harlem, the entire population of the United States would fit into three of New York City's boroughs.

Why do the poor live in densely populated dwellings, usually near the center of the city, rather than on the city's fringes? The answer is not so obvious. Here, neoclassical economists' logic and models can help to explain. The key to their explanation is a heuristic device showing the way urban land prices vary in a market-based economy: the **bid rent curve**.

Figure 2.8 depicts a bid rent curve. It shows the relationship between two factors that economic analysts consider essential to explain urban land use: (1) the price of land per square foot and (2) the distance of the land from the central business district (CBD).

Important note: During recent decades in the United States, the decentralization of department stores, services, entertainment, and tourist sites, plus the rise of decentralizing information technologies, have put the logic of the bid rent curve into question. Urban economics texts (e.g., O'Flaherty, 2005), however, retain this heuristic device from the 1960s. Thus, before discussing its serious limitations (and growing irrelevance, some say) in later chapters, we will first discuss the logic behind it: Near the center of the U.S. city, land is expensive—the most expensive in the city. In Figure 2.8, it is about $235 per

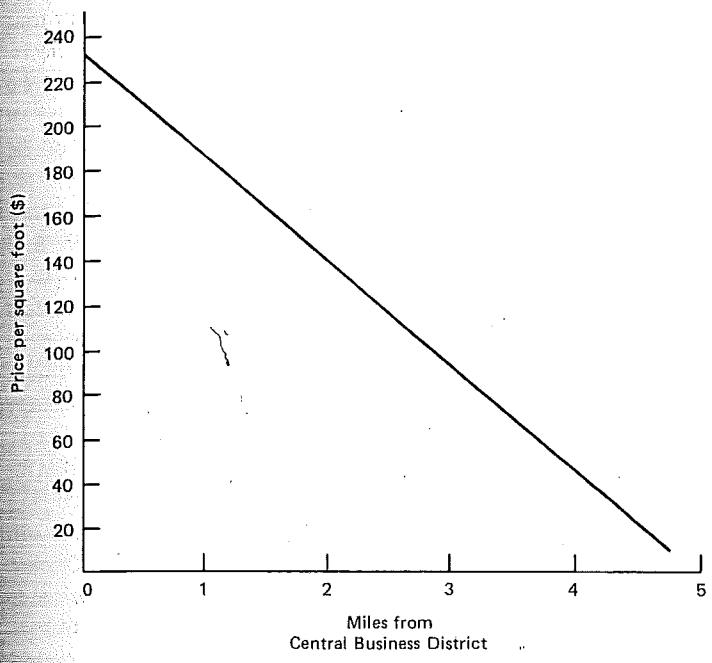


Fig. 2.8 A SIMPLE ECONOMIC MODEL. This bid rent curve shows that the price of land per square foot decreases as the distance from the central business district increases.

square foot per year. The price of land declines the farther it is located from the city center. Here, it is about $20 per square foot per year at 4.75 miles from the center of the city.

There is no norm for prices of centrally located land. The price varies widely from city to city (and from year to year, depending on the economy). For example, downtown offices in San Francisco rented for just over $33 per square foot in 2006; stores just across the Bay from San Francisco on Telegraph Avenue, the shopping street near the University of California at Berkeley's campus, rented for much less—about $1.50-$2.00 per square foot. In comparison, prices in the Mayfair district of London, the world's most expensive location to rent office space in 2006, were about $205 per square foot. (Next most expensive worldwide: Hong Kong.) Central London was also the most expensive place in the world to buy a luxury property; top-end properties sold from about $5,700 to $8,000 per square foot in 2006, while New York City's top residential properties, in comparison, rented for about $5,100 per square foot, followed by Tokyo and Hong Kong. (Parking spaces in New York City's borough of Manhattan cost about the same as an apartment per square foot!)

City land prices can and do change quickly—and dramatically. Global economic shifts, national and regional economic growth rates, housing meltdowns, and local tourism levels are important factors. In 1989, for example, Tokyo's Ginza district was the world's most expensive shopping street (in terms of rent price per square foot or square meter). By 2003 it had slipped to fifteenth most expensive, but by 2005 the Ginza moved back up to the fifth spot. (Economic crisis can change land prices very swiftly. After the Wall Street "makeover" in 2008, for example, millions of square feet of office space in U.S. financial capitals became vacant—and much cheaper. In San Francisco's Financial District, for example, class A office space dropped, on average, from $53.14 per square foot in winter 2007 to $41.34 per square foot 1 year later [Temple, 2008:C1+]. By early 2009, as companies dumped hundreds of thousands of square feet onto the market, prices nosedived.

In 2005, New York City's Fifth Avenue between 50th and 59th Streets was the most expensive shopping street in the world; its ground-floor rent averaged $1,300 per square foot. (In 1994, it was also the most expensive shopping street worldwide, but rent was

much cheaper, with an average retail rent per square foot of $375.) In 2005, next came Hong Kong's Causeway Bay area, leapfrogging past Paris's Champs d'Elysées and other expensive areas. (Analysts point to a resurgent Asian economy and increases in tourism from mainland China as major factors in Hong Kong's leap to second place in 2005.)

Question: In the U.S. bid rent curve pictured in Figure 2.8, why is downtown retail and office space so expensive, relative to land farther out? *Answer*: Because centrally-located land is prime land, close to the nerve center of the city with its corporate headquarters, large department stores, banks, and so forth. At the U.S. city's edges, land is cheaper because it is not as convenient to jobs or amenities. (*Note*: "Postsuburbia," discussed in Chapter 8, plus technologies such as high-speed Internet call these assumptions into question. Yet, judging from their texts, it appears that economists retain the bid rent curve, a bedrock urban concept.)

Why urban slums in the United States are found near the center of cities rather than on the periphery, where land is cheaper, is a seeming paradox. (This is not necessarily the case outside North America. For instance, poverty-stricken suburbs ring parts of Paris, and megaslums in Latin America typically lie on cities' peripheries.)

Studying land costs in the United States, the late regional scientist William Alonso concluded that land prices are connected to *the amount* of land affordable by rich and poor. "At any given location," Alonso said, "the poor can buy less land than the rich, and since only a small quantity of land is involved [for living space], changes in its price are not as important for the poor as the costs and inconvenience of commuting" (1973:54). What Alonso claimed, then, is that the rich make a trade-off. They are willing to take more trouble and time commuting to work in exchange for living farther away from the city center (where, presumably, it is more comfortable and pleasant).

Following Alonso, the simple model in Figure 2.8 shows the value of U.S. land declining from $235 per square foot at the city's center to $20 per square foot at the city's edge. How does this relationship between the price of land and its location help us understand why the poor live in crowded settlements called "slums"? The economic analyst would point out that since centrally located land is expensive, any housing built there must try to minimize land costs: by building up or by packing people in. In the case of poor people with little money, both situations occur, resulting in slums.

To answer the *what* question, neoclassical economists frequently employ the concept of supply and demand. In a market economy (also called a "free-enterprise" or "competitive" economy), classical theory holds that goods will be supplied in the marketplace according to people's ability to pay for them. However, in the case of housing, some economists say that there is a large "noneffective" demand—that is, people want decent housing but can't afford to pay for it. The economic logic is this: The laws of the market work to give people only what they can pay for—in this case, physically deteriorating housing. (Others, particularly Harvard housing economist Edward L. Glaeser et al. [2005] are not so sure. Glaeser and his colleagues point to government regulations that slow down housing construction.)

How is slum housing provided? With the exception of a small amount of publicly assisted housing, no new housing for poor people in the United States is produced by the market. Instead, older housing units are occupied by successively lower-income groups, and this housing eventually "trickles down" to the poor. Urban economists call this the **filtering** process. Some economists argue in favor of public policies to provide more housing to upper- and middle-income people on the assumption that more and better housing will then filter down to the poor more rapidly.

However, others note than in many U.S. cities the market encourages "trickling up" (gentrification). In this process, lower-income inner-city neighborhoods are rehabilitated for upper-income housing (Palen and London, 1984). As real estate developers gentrify these neighborhoods, displaced tenants move to places they can afford—slums, in many cases. (Non-market-based [forced] gentrification occurs in many places, including Beijing, China [in the run-up to the Olympic Games in 2008], and near Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where police routinely burn poor shantytowns to make way for new, upscale buildings.)

To conclude: Neoclassical or market economists tend to see the provision of slum housing in a market economy as an outcome of the workings of the law of supply and demand. Such factors as land costs and the journey to work determine the behavior of urbanites, whether as buyers or as renters of urban land, as owners of slum property, or as slum dwellers. Crowded, physically deteriorated slum housing, in this way of thinking, tends to trickle down to poor people or trickle up to more affluent people because of underlying market forces. In either case, in this perspective, underlying market forces are the key determinants of who lives on what land.

Feminist Economics

As a field, feminist economics emerged in 1992 with the formation of the International Association for Feminist Economics. But in the United States it dates at least to the late nineteenth century and the writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (e.g., [1898] 1998).

How does feminist economics differ from other forms of economic inquiry? First, it is not only a form of inquiry; it combines theory and practice. For feminist economists, academic research is not enough. They want to affect policies affecting women—and men—worldwide. Second, mainstream economic analysis is attacked for being "masculinist" or "gender-blind." On the contrary, feminist economists are not gender-blind. And they fault those who look at the economy from only the viewpoint of men's experience and who define the typical economic actor as "rational economic man." To correct this perceived bias, they apply gender-based analysis and a feminist critique of gender inequality to economic theory, economic life, and policy making.

Feminist economists try to construct alternative theoretical approaches and economic concepts which include women's experience and "feminine values" such as "caring, cooperation, and provisioning" (Matthaei, 2005). (*Note*: Calling *any* value "feminine" or "masculine" is risky. Research into the cultural and genetic characteristics of gender and their interplay is an ongoing project.)

In their research and activism, feminist economists highlight women's disadvantaged economic position in the labor market and in the household. They also examine gender differences in occupations and earnings.

Briefly, then, feminist economists reject the neoclassical model of the rational, self-interested actor. Instead, they focus on economic activities that are more cooperative and social.

Concerning slums and ghettoes, some feminist economists stress the approach they call "women in development." For example, World Bank researcher Maria Elena Ruiz Abril (2002) claims that women play key roles in "upgrading" slums (*barrios*) outside Caracas, Venezuela.

Concerning U.S. government poverty guidelines, feminist economists think they are very problematic. Why? Because dollar amounts may change each year, but the bases remain constant. Essentially, the poverty guideline in the United States is based on a family's *pretax* income, the number in a "family unit," and the ages of the members. Noncash benefits, such as food stamps, are not counted. In 2003, excluding Alaska and Hawaii but including Washington, D.C., the poverty threshold (again, pretax) for a "family unit" of one with a person under 65 was $9,573 and $14,824 for a family unit of three—an adult under 65 with two children under 18. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Feminist economists suggest that the United States needs a new definition of poverty. Their proposed redefinition of poverty is based on a *basic needs budget*, taking into account such services as child-care expenses that a poor, single, working mother must pay to continue working outside the home. In their view, the federal government's baseline for determining poverty is too low to ensure a minimally sufficient standard of living for working, single mothers. One inference of their work: Government definitions help determine who ends up in poverty—or not. Another inference: Many, especially women, might be considered poor if the U.S. poverty baseline was raised and, thus, more people (again, particularly women) would be (1) considered poor and (2) eligible for government funds to leave substandard or slum housing.

GEOGRAPHY

"Geography is fate." At least many think so. This way of thinking may have special appeal to those of us with ancestors, family, or friends caught up in war,

genocide, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and other disasters. Often, but not always, it is the weak, the poor, the ill-housed, and the elderly who have little warning or resources to escape tragic fates.

Geographers, whether Central American specialists or urbanists, stand on common ground: space and place. Yet, like most social sciences in recent decades, geography has experienced increasing specialization and blurred boundaries (Coughlin, 1987:9). Some geographers even joke that their field is the Los Angeles of academic disciplines: It's spread over a large area, it merges with its neighbors, and it's hard to find the CBD! At the same time, scholars from neighboring disciplines, particularly those influenced by three French scholars—historian Fernand Braudel ([1986] 1990), philosopher Michel Foucault (1980), and philosopher–urbanist Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1991)—are making geography central to their analyses of social life.

In the past generation, the geographer's central concepts of space and place have traveled to other disciplines, thereby reinvigorating urban theory. Take, for example, two important sociological studies discussed in this book: (1) *Urban Fortunes* (Logan and Molotch, 1987), which focuses on the political economy of place, and (2) *The Informational City* (Castells, 1989), which discusses urban spatial structure and the "space of flows."

Mapping is a key tool. Geographers also use mathematical and computer-assisted models, field observation, and other social science methods plus such high-tech tools as satellite observations, sometimes to do mapping. And, thanks to the Internet, millions of people not trained as geographers are doing cartography, that is, making maps. These maps are often annotated with images, video, text, and sound. Reporter Miguel Helft (2007) believes that these citizen-mapmakers are "reshaping the world of mapmaking and collectively creating a new kind of atlas that is likely to be richer and messier than any other." He concludes that Internet mapmakers are also turning the Web into a medium "where maps will play a more central role in how information is organized and found." For example, there are maps of global hydrofoils, biodiesel fueling stations in the Northeast United States, and the paths of two whales that swam the wrong way, up the Sacramento River delta in 2007. The upshot, Helft predicts, is that people will "discover many layers of information" about a place of interest.

Investigating slums, a geographer might map their location and/or construct a model to predict where they will be located 50 years later. Or they might do as John Snow, a doctor–geographer, did in London during a nineteenth-century cholera pandemic. Snow and his students mapped deaths in the densely populated Soho district, pinpointing where each death occurred and where each new case was reported. Snow reasoned that it was the water pump that linked contaminated water and cholera, not bad air or physical contact, as London authorities had thought. After the pump was closed, new cholera cases dropped sharply (De Blij, 2005:42–43).

A starting point for the description of housing patterns in U.S. industrial cities, including the location of slums, is Ernest W. **Burgess's model** of urban space. This model, developed by sociologist Burgess at the University of Chicago in the 1920s, was central to urban geography for several decades and shows the interdisciplinary roots of much urban theory.

Figure 2.9 depicts the Burgess model of urban space. It suggests that U.S. **industrial cities** (i.e., cities like Chicago that developed in the era of manufacturing) expand outward from the CBD in a nonrandom way—through a series of zones or rings. One implication of this model (discussed in more detail in Chapter 16) is that poor people live in slums because they are pushed there—by changes in the city's land-use patterns.

Briefly, the logic behind the model is this: The city's changing environment leads to the sorting and sifting process that segregates individuals by social class, ethnic background and race, and family composition. As a city's population grows, demand for land in the CBD (the city's core) can be satisfied only by expanding outward. Property owners in and around the CBD will let their housing units deteriorate, for they can profit by selling their land to businesses expanding there. The result of this growth process, the Burgess model predicts, is that the poor living in slums near the CBD will be pushed out into new slums a bit farther out from the CBD.

Today, scholars doubt the relevance of Burgess's model to postindustrial cities (see Chapter 16).

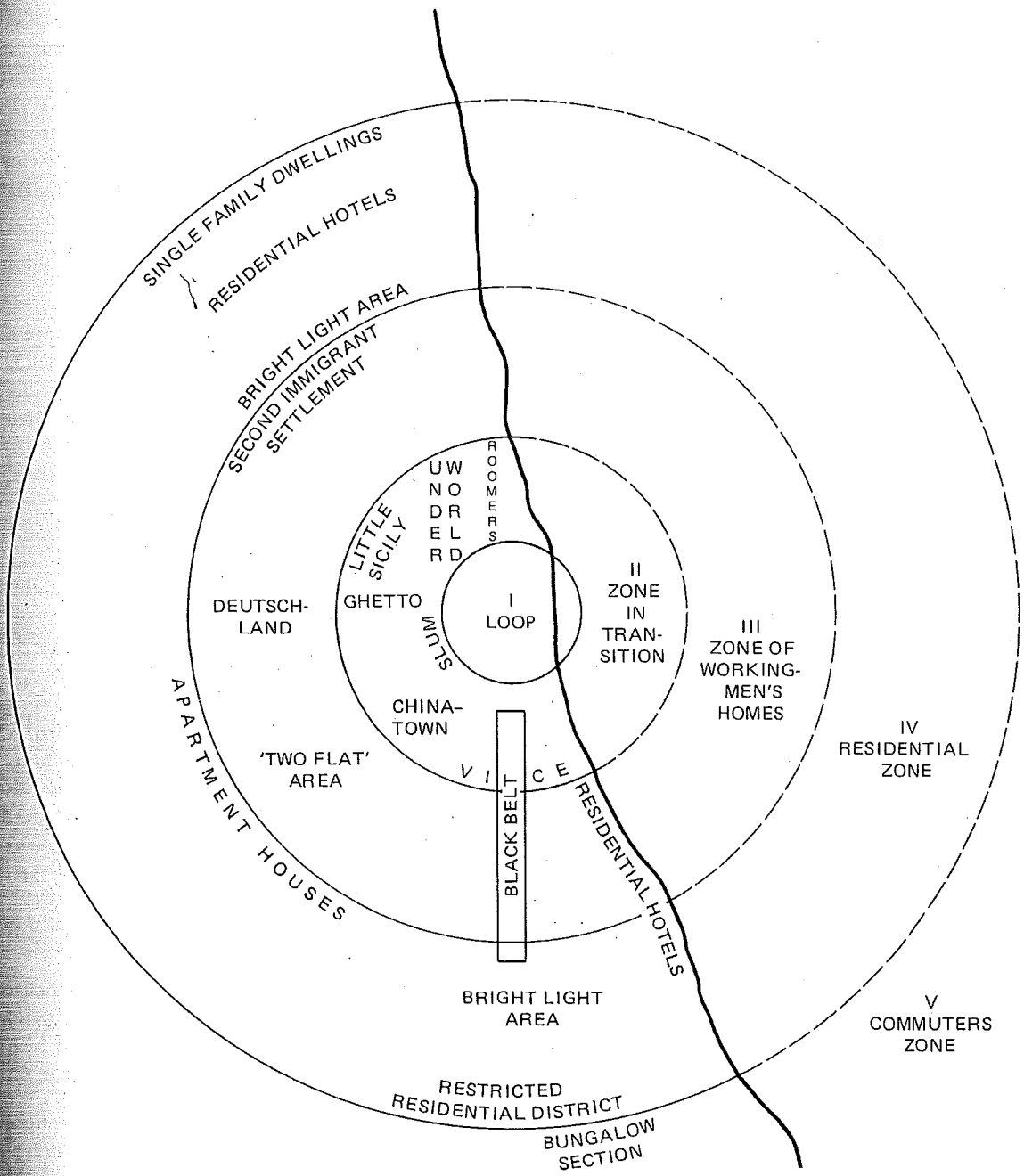


Fig. 2.9 BURGESS'S CONCENTRIC ZONE MODEL. Applied to Chicago, the zonal model shows that "the Loop" (Chicago's central business district) is surrounded by low-income neighborhoods in zone II. (Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie, *The City* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1925) 1974], p. 55. Copyright © 1967 by the University of Chicago. Reproduced by permission of the University of Chicago Press. All rights reserved.)

Nonetheless, it is an important intellectual grandparent of land-use models.

In addition, the Burgess model is of special interest here because of its interdisciplinary nature; it combines economic assumptions about the way the world works (economic competition for urban space) with patterns of spatial and social order. For instance, it predicts that the higher people move up the socioeconomic ladder, the farther away they will live from the CBD, zone I.

Mike Davis brings Burgess's model up to date. Davis's model ([1992] 1995) of metropolitan space, also interdisciplinary, uses Burgess's "dartboard" of concentric zones where the CBD is the bull's-eye. But there are important differences between the models. First, Davis models metropolitan Los Angeles, not Chicago. Second, Davis adds what he calls a "decisive new factor" to Burgess's model: fear. Years before 9/11, Davis wrote this about reimagining Burgess's model: "My remapping of the urban structure takes Burgess back to the future. It preserves such 'ecological' determinants as income, land value, class and race, but adds a decisive new factor: fear" ([1992] 1995).

To Davis, modern Los Angeles and big cities generally are "feral" places where different social groups adopt security measures to protect themselves (e.g., gated communities, video monitoring). The upshot, Davis argues, is a militarized landscape composed of special enclaves, which he calls "social control districts." This vision of metropolitan space, clearly influenced by Burgess's model, also seems to be inspired by William Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (1984) with its horrific view of urban futures.

Another type of space—and attitudes toward it—is worth noting: cyberspace. Although world-famous scholars, including the late historian Fernard Braudel ([1963] 1995), considered space to be a key to understanding civilizations, today some think that *virtual* space has caused a radical break with space as we've known it. Indeed, some consider cyberspace to be the latest U.S. frontier. And they fear it will be used for nefarious purposes, including a new kind of colonialism. For example, Florian Röetzer, a Munich-based media theorist, writes that in the United States

> The conquest of cyberspace follows the example set by the settlers, cowboys, heroes of the Wild West and soldiers who subjugated a continent that, in their eyes, didn't belong to anyone—pure colonialism.
>
> *(1998:131)*

Scholars are just beginning to think about the impacts of cyberspace. But many theorists who deal with space, including some geographers and architects, question the continuing relevance of any geographical boundaries in the digital, multinational age.

SOCIOLOGY

Sociologists study people: how they act, think, produce things and ideas, and live. They may study social interaction between as few as two individuals or as many as the entire world population. Their major interest lies in better understanding human action. Normally, sociologists are not concerned with one person's action.

Sociologists start with the assumption that things are not always the way they seem. For instance, universities exist, according to their high-principled mottos and public-relations brochures, to expand the frontiers of knowledge and (more recently) to provide career training. Those are their official reasons for existence, their **manifest functions**. Looking below the surface, however, sociologists may uncover some hidden or unintended purposes of universities, their **latent functions**. These include lowering the unemployment rolls by keeping people off the streets and instilling habits useful in the labor market, such as following orders from authority figures. These latent functions can't be seen with the naked eye or discovered by common sense; they emerge as one explores the connections among people, institutions, and ideas.

The sociological perspective attempts to better describe and understand the social forces that mold the lives of individuals, perhaps without their own realization. It can be applied to many events that, on the surface, seem to be purely personal experiences.

A sociologist investigating any topic, including slums, might ask the following questions:

1. *What are people doing and thinking here?* For instance, do slum dwellers vote, join church groups, or feel satisfied with their lives?
2. *What kinds of people are here?* What are their social characteristics?

3. *What rules govern behavior here?* In the case of slum dwellers, are they expected to passively accept their substandard housing?
4. *Who says so?* For example, in slum buildings, who or what group has the power to make rules and enforce them?
5. *Whose interests do these social arrangements serve?* For example, what social functions do slums serve? Do some groups in society benefit more than others from their existence?
6. *What powerful people, institutions, and structures influence these arrangements?* For example, what roles do government agencies and private developers play in creating or eradicating slums?

The work of John R. Seeley represents one approach to the study of slums. Seeley ([1959] 1970) argued that slums cannot ever be eradicated because the definition of the word "slum" is relative to how other people live. He reasoned that people at the bottom of the social ladder will still be perceived by those higher up as living in slums even if their living conditions are improved. Further, Seeley maintained that in a society where economic and social inequality exists, as in the United States, there are bound to be those who will be labeled "slum dwellers."

In his analysis of slums, Seeley employed a device common to many scientific disciplines: a **typology** or classification scheme. His typology differentiates slum dwellers on the basis of length of residence and reasons for residing in the slums. He distinguished among four major types of people who live in slums: (1) the "permanent necessitarians," who live there permanently and by necessity; (2) the "temporary necessitarians," who aspire to leave the slums but live there out of necessity; (3) the "permanent opportunists," who stay in the slums primarily because it affords them opportunities to escape the law or live the high life; and (4) the "temporary opportunists," who want to pursue dominant cultural values like success (these include recent arrivals to the city).

A now-classic study of what some (not those who lived there) called a "slum" in Boston's West End is sociologist Herbert Gans's *The Urban Villagers* (1962). In his ethnography of this working class, shabby, Italian American neighborhood—just before it was razed by urban redevelopment—Gans did not find alienation or a drive to upward social mobility among its residents. Instead, he found an "urban village." True, most residents worked at low-wage jobs and lived in tenement apartments. Yet, they lived in close proximity to family and friends and enjoyed a strong sense of community.

Writing nearly a half-century later, sociologist Sharon Zukin (2007) offers a different perspective on studying the West End—or any city neighborhood. She thinks that neighborhoods can't be studied in isolation. Instead, she advises researchers to understand a neighborhood's hierarchical relationship to other areas of a city In the case of Boston's West End, she thinks that its destruction by urban renewal cannot be understood without understanding the creation of Route 128,(Boston's Silicon Valley), the spatial domination of Boston's downtown, and other larger historical phenomena or processes. Looking backward, Zukin argues, we can now see that so-called urban renewal of U.S. cities by government-led agencies (starting with the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 and continuing until 1972 when the federal government withdrew from financing construction of public housing) "was part of the continuing drama of how to balance capital investment, social integration, and democratic state power—a crisis of modernity" (47). Thus, according to Zukin, whatever they are called—"slums" or "urban villages"—their destruction cannot be understood in just a local context.

Other sociologists explore face-to-face encounters among slum dwellers, paying special attention to how people interpret each other's actions and bring meaning to their interaction; this approach typifies the symbolic interaction school of sociology. Elijah Anderson's study *Streetwise* (1990) is exemplary. Anderson finds an influential "oppositional" youth subculture in the slum. He says this oppositional subculture is based on gangster respect and the romanticization of violence, not the values of work, love, and hope. For instance, one teenager told Anderson that he had committed murder because he was "just having a bad day." Such a study seems particularly relevant, policywise, in a time when (1) big-city violent crime increased by 40 percent from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, fear of crime increased 30 percent, and possession of firearms increased over 120 percent (Suarez, quoting a report of the Milton Eisenhower Foundation, 1999).

Sociologist Barry Glassner uses a different time line and different statistics. As a result, he ends up posing different questions about crime in *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* ([1999] 2000). For example, Glassner wonders why, in the 1990s, two-thirds of Americans believed that crime rates were soaring when, actually, crime rates plunged throughout the decade. Why, Glassner asks, did 62 percent of people in the United States describe themselves as "truly desperate" about crime by 1995—almost twice as many as in the late 1980s when crime rates were higher?

Other sociologists take a more global view. Some link urban happenings to government's intervention in local affairs, the growing inability of urban politics to decide who gets what housing to live in, and the global restructuring of urban space. This approach typifies the so-called new urban sociology (Gottdiener and Feagin, 1988), an approach which was new in the late 1980s.

In a related vein, a generation ago several French sociologists studied "les grands ensembles": large, multi-unit housing developments, sponsored by the French government, located on the periphery of Paris and other big cities. These studies were concerned with possible ghettoization, exclusion, and segregation of the poor. One such study, by Kaës (1963) *Vivre dans les grands ensembles* (*Living in Large Developments*), bemoaned these postwar grands ensembles as places that promoted apathy and tedium, not democratic activity. (These 1960s studies may contain some explanations why, starting in 2005, some grands ensembles in suburban Paris—by then housing poor immigrants, mainly people of color—became hotbeds of antipolice activity, car burnings, and "acts of resistance" or "riots." "May" is the operative word here. First, observers disagree on the reasons for the events, reflected in the various terms to describe them: "resistance," "riots," and "civil disorders." Second, to claim that the buildings themselves are key to understanding human behavior is environmental determinism, discussed in Chapter 17, a much-disputed notion.)

Many sociologists combine approaches and methods. Take, for example, Löic J. D. Wacquant (1989). Wacquant combines participant-observation and an analysis of statistical data with macroeconomic theory to understand Chicago ghetto life. Wacquant says that no one factor can account for the plight of the ghetto, but "there is no denying that the accelerating decline of the inner city finds its deepest roots in the ongoing structural transformation of American capitalism" (1989:510). He adds that public policy has also played a role in perpetuating ghetto life: "the rolling back of state and federal payrolls (for example in the post office) has also reduced access to legitimate channels of upward mobility out of the ghetto" (512).

Whatever approach or method is used (ranging from mathematical models to firsthand participation and observation), sociologists focus on the social forces that shape individual lives. They look for traits that cannot be explained simply by referring to individual psychological states.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Traditionally, political scientists have been concerned with questions of power and governance: Who governs? How do they govern? To what end? Or, as political activist Sidney Hillman (1887–1946), founder of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (now UNITE!) so neatly put it, "*Who* gets *what*, *how*, and *why*?".

As in other disciplines, the range of topics within political science is broad. But the nature of political processes and political outcomes is central to the discipline.

The research tools of political science include mathematical models, attitude surveys, and observation of events. Most U.S. political scientists today use some form of sophisticated statistics in their work.

In the case of slums, political scientists may investigate a number of issues. Some study citizens' attitudes toward government housing policy; others explore the relations between different levels of government (federal, state, local) in establishing housing policy. Still others look at comparative political systems, exploring how different countries handle housing policy. A political scientist exploring power relationships might study conflicts of interest in which local and international decision makers stand to gain personally from land deals to raze slums. And a political philosopher might question the nature of a political system that either allows or perpetuates slums.

One classic study of slums from the perspective of political science is *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest* (1955) by Edward Banfield and Martin Meyerson. This study centers on the decision-making process that led to the construction of low-income public-housing projects in Chicago. (These housing units, meant—at least by government definition—to provide standard housing for the poor, came to be known as "slums.")

Banfield and Meyerson found that Chicago's aldermen (city councillors) had effective veto power over public-housing construction in their wards. The proposed housing projects were going to house poor people, the majority of whom were black. Middle- and upper-class residents of predominantly white neighborhoods vigorously opposed the suggestion that such public-housing projects should be located in their neighborhoods. These affluent whites believed that if the projects came in, crime would increase, property values would decrease, and the aesthetic character of their areas would change. Their opposition to public housing was sufficient to block the original proposal: that public-housing projects be scattered throughout the city. Eventually, much less public housing than originally contemplated was built, and virtually all units were placed in a very few wards that were already nearly all African American.

Banfield and Meyerson recognize other influences but stress political factors. They focus on the politics of class and race, as well as on "clout" (influence and power), rather than on concepts central to other disciplines, such as urban growth over space.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Since the nineteenth century, anthropologists have made significant contributions to the study of urbanization and cultural change from a cross-cultural point of view. In recent years, they turned their attention away from folk or so-called primary or primitive cultures, such as that of the Trobriand Islands, focusing instead on urbanizing and urban cultures.

Wherever anthropologists work, their primary method of investigation remains fieldwork. However, many use newer tools, including DNA analysis and computer modeling. These tools have changed *what* some do and *where* they do it.

The late U.S. anthropologist Oscar Lewis used fieldwork methods to get an insider's view of family life in Mexico City. He wanted to find out what it meant to grow up in a slum tenement within a city undergoing rapid social and economic change, such as Mexico City. Using a tape recorder to take down the life histories of one Mexican family in *The Children of Sanchez* (1961), Lewis recorded their personal statements and feelings about a wide range of issues, including religion, kinship patterns, interpersonal relations, and social mobility.

But Lewis was interested in much broader issues: the effects of industrialization and urbanization on the peasant and urban masses. He sought to develop a conceptual model of what he called the "culture of poverty," that is, "a design for living which is passed down from generation to generation" among "those people who are at the very bottom of the socioeconomic scale" (1961:xxiv–xxv).

A generation later, Lewis's culture of poverty model remains hotly contested. Many scholars dismiss it, arguing that chronically poor people's "ingenuity and aspirations are not different from working people's, but that their chances of success are small" (Sharff, 1987:47–48). Critic Adolph Reed, a political scientist–historian, rejects Lewis's basic assumption that poor people have different behavior or values: "Some percentage of *all* Americans take drugs, fight in families, abuse or neglect children, and have children out of wedlock. These behaviors don't cause poverty. Poor people aren't poor because they have bad values or behave improperly" (in Leopold, 1992:3–4). Reed blames public policy choices—not the victims of poverty—for ghettoization: "It's not as though jobs just up and left the cities. The shape and character of the domestic economy is guided by public policy." Citing a federal bias since the 1940s toward road construction over mass transportation, toward suburbs over cities, and toward owner-occupied housing over rental housing, Reed says, "We let government off the hook for the role it's played in increasing poverty by redistributing wealth upward."

Another critic, sociologist Ramon Grosfoguel (2003:28), argues that the culture of poverty logic has been supplanted by a "*neoculture* of poverty" argument. In his view, this newer version of the Lewis concept

legitimates cultural racism. Clearly, the debate about this concept is far from settled.

In the meantime, there have been other developments in urban anthropology. For example, in recent decades, a subdiscipline of urban anthropology, urban archeology, has been tapping a rather ingenious source of information: garbage. As the head of a "dig" in Atlanta, Georgia, put it, "People's garbage never lies. It tells the truth if you know how to read it" (in Weathers et al., 1979:81). From a Newburyport, Massachusetts, garbage dig, urban archeologists discovered evidence that nineteenth-century Irish and Canadian immigrants, long presumed illiterate, could read and write. From interviewees in Tucson, students in the "Garbage Project" found that there was a wide gap between what people say they do and what they actually do. For instance, many vastly underestimated their weekly beer consumption. And according to archeologist William Rathje, head of the Garbage Project and coauthor of *Rubbish!* (Rathje and Murphy, 1992), there is a gap between good intentions and behavior: Based on their analysis of garbage, the students found that many people buy both healthy fresh vegetables and salty, cholesterol-filled microwave dinners but often throw away the veggies—untouched. (*Note*: In May 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that garbage bags outside the home and its immediate surroundings can be legally searched. The ethics of trash searching remains controversial.)

From looking at "ecofacts" (food remains, evidence of past environments) and archival records, anthropologists reconstructed one bit of African American history; they found that in Buxton, Iowa, a coal-mining town from 1900 to 1925, there had been a majority population of African Americans who prospered and interacted with local whites harmoniously (Gradwohl and Osborn, 1984).

Wherever they go to study people, anthropologists seek "to provide convincing accounts of what is happening to people in varied real life situations and to set these in a broader framework of time and space" (Southall, 1973:4). Their emphasis on the diversity of human experience, as well as the search for common or universal themes, gives anthropologists a particular perspective on the social and material world.

HISTORY

His-story and her-story—the range of humankind's experience over time—is the subject matter of historians. Some focus on a small piece or area of the whole. Others are grand (some say "grandiose") thinkers, trying to see patterns throughout human experience. Historians have contributed a variety of studies about urban life and culture, starting with the earliest known settlements in the Middle East.

They use a range of tools to investigate urban life. These include the analysis of written records, oral histories, and, more recently, quantitative techniques such as computer-aided statistical analysis.

One influential historian of urban culture is the late Lewis Mumford (1895–1990). In *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (1961), Mumford paints a picture of the forms and functions of the city throughout the ages. He also pleads for a "new urban order" that emphasizes "local control over local needs." In his historical tour from the early origins of the city to the contemporary megalopolis, Mumford stops to comment on the development of European industrial cities between 1830 and 1910. First, he quotes his mentor, the Scots planner Patrick Geddes, who influenced a generation of U.S. city planners, and then he offers his own comments on slums:

> "Slum, semi-slum, and super-slum—to this has come the evolution of cities." Yes: these mordant words of Patrick Geddes apply inexorably to the new environment. Even the most revolutionary of contemporary critics [like Friedrich Engels] lacked genuine standards of building and living: they had no notion how far the environment of the upper classes themselves had become impoverished.... [Even Engels, the revolutionary critic] was apparently unaware of the fact that the upper-class quarters were, more often than not, intolerable super-slums.
>
> *(Mumford, 1961:464–465)*

Thus, according to Mumford, the new industrial cities were not only bleak environments for the poor but also just as intolerably overcrowded, ugly, and unhygienic for the nonpoor.

A pioneering work in U.S. urban history, Arthur M. Schlesinger's *The Rise of the American City, 1878–1898* (1933), makes the claim that innovation and

social change are uniquely associated with city life. Schlesinger maintains that overcrowding in slums, intense economic and social interactions in the CBD, and other aspects of urban life lead city dwellers to adopt new lifestyles in order to survive. This theme echoes the findings of theorists from other disciplines, including the Chicago school of sociology.

Other historians trace changes within one city, often using the case study approach to illuminate issues common to other cities or to generate broader theory. Sam Bass Warner, Jr.'s, "If All the World Were Philadelphia: A Scaffolding for Urban History, 1774–1930" (1968), is a case in point. In this article, Warner looks at housing patterns in Philadelphia at three points in time: 1774, 1860, and 1930. Using historical data, Warner argues that at the time of the American Revolution, poor people in Philadelphia lived around the fringes of the city, not near the city's core. He maintains that both racial segregation and the relocation of slums near the CBD in Philadelphia were nineteenth-century phenomena. What caused these changes in settlement patterns? Warner says that improvements in transportation within the city and the creation of large business organizations led to the changing residential patterns. In conclusion, Warner states that the organizing principle of the big city in the nineteenth century became "intense segregation based on income, race, foreign birth, and class" (35).

Still other historians have different takes on how poverty and inequality (and slums) work. Take, for example, Alice Kessler-Harris. This Columbia University history professor won the coveted Bancroft Prize for her book *In Pursuit of Equity* (2001). One of her aims is to show gender's key role in shaping working-class culture in the United States. Professor Kessler-Harris links the status of women in the United States to what she considers their historic restriction to economic opportunities.

PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY

Is there an "urban personality" or an "urban way of life"? Do city folk suffer more mental illness than rural people? What effects do growing up poor or rich have on urbanites' beliefs about themselves and others? These are some questions explored by psychologists, social psychologists, and social psychiatrists.

A classic study in social psychology is Louis Wirth's "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1938). This still-controversial essay, excerpted in Chapter 6, contends that city dwellers—whether slum residents or the super-rich—share certain characteristics, including indifference to others, sophistication, rationality, and calculating behavior. Presumably, urbanites develop these personality traits in order to defend themselves and preserve their sanity amid the intensity and stimulation of city life.

A generation later, Robert Coles explored the psyches of rich and poor children in both urban and rural America. In so doing, he created a new subdiscipline: social psychiatry. In his five-volume series *Children of Crisis*, Coles uses a mixture of clinical observation, oral history, narrative description, psychiatric approaches, and social comment to look at how wealth, power, cultural background, and historical influences mold the character of children and their expectations of what life can offer them. In the latter two volumes of his study, *Eskimos, Chicanos, Indians* (1977a) and *Privileged Ones: The Well Off and the Rich in America* (1977b), Coles paints a portrait of growing up poor, outside the mainstream of American culture, versus growing up wealthy. He notes striking differences. Rich children, for instance, are routinely trained to believe that their way of life is worthwhile; they grow up believing they're special. In Coles's words, the children of the wealthy have a "continuous and strong emphasis . . . on the 'self'" (1977b:380). In contrast, poor children, some trapped in the slums, are discouraged from being independent and assertive. They are routinely trained by parents and their environment to keep their thoughts to themselves and not to cultivate a sense of being special persons.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Historically, the professional field of public administration emerged from the discipline of political science in the United States. The field is intimately connected with the efforts to reform the U.S. city. As Dwight Waldo stated in his influential study *The Administrative State*, "Much of the impetus to public administration came from the municipal reformers [of the early 1900s], who were genuinely inspired by a City of the Future" (1948:73). Interestingly,

in contrast to the intellectual bias against the city held by many social scientists in the first quarter of this century, public administration writers rejected Jefferson's idea that cities are menaces to democracy and sores on the body politic. Instead, they thought that the good life is an urban life...

It is tempting to say that what public administrators do is to manage the public business, carrying out decisions made by political leaders. But this creates a false distinction between administrators and politicians. Early theorists of public administration attempted to distinguish between administration and politics, but current thinkers reject this distinction, demonstrating that administration *is* politics. In other words, the administration of public programs, such as school busing, is a highly political process. Indeed, bureaucratic politics (e.g., the politics of constructing a city or national budget) has increasingly captured the imagination of public administration scholars.

In the case of slums, U.S. theorists and practitioners in the field have written about a number of issues, ranging from the interface between professionals and their welfare clients (e.g., Riccucci, 2005) to evaluations of government programs designed, in theory at least, to alleviate poverty and slum conditions.

CITY PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

Mike Davis (2006a:30), multidisciplinary theorist, estimates that there are more than 200,000 slums all over the world, including megaslums where squatter settlements and shantytowns merge in continuous belts of "informal housing and poverty, usually on the urban periphery" (2006a:26). According to Davis (2006b),

> In slums the world over, squatters trade safety and health for a few square meters of land and some security of tenure. They are pioneers of swamps, floodplains, volcano slopes, unstable hillsides, desert fringes, railroad sidings, rubbish mountains, and chemical dumps—unattractive and dangerous sites that have become poverty's niche in the ecology of the city.... Today, new arrivals to the urban margin confront a condition that can only be described as marginality within marginality, or, in the more piquant phrase of a desperate Baghdad slum dweller quoted by *The New York Times*, a "semi-death."

From a global and multidisciplinary perspective, including urban planning, Davis offers this typology of slums:

A. Metro Core
1. Formal
   (a) tenements (e.g., Mexico City's Casa Grande, made famous by Oscar Lewis in *The Children of Sanchez* [1961])
      (i) hand-me-downs (e.g., Harlem brownstones; the most unusual example of inherited housing is Cairo's City of the Dead, lodging one million poor people where people use Mameluke tombs as prefab housing)
      (ii) housing built for the poor (e.g., Berlin's *Mietkaserne*; Buenos Aires's wood-and-sheet metal *inquilinatos*)
   (b) public housing (the rule in Europe)
   (c) hostels, flophouses, and the like, often rooms for single males, such as those on the outskirts of Soweto, near Johannesburg
2. Informal
   (a) Squatters—those who possess land without sale or title
      (i) authorized (settlers purchase a guarantee of tenure from powerful leaders, including gangsters or criminal cartels, such as the Triads in Hong Kong, although land is government-owned)
      (ii) unauthorized (often ingenious, such as rooftops in Phnom Penh; often located on hazardous, nearly worthless land)
   (b) pavement-dwellers (more than an estimated 100,000 homeless in Los Angeles; an estimated one million homeless in Mumbai, formerly Bombay)

B. Periphery
1. Formal
   (a) private rental
   (b) public housing
2. Informal
   (a) pirate subdivisions—"substandard [and private] commercial residential subdivisions" of squatters
      (i) owner-occupied
      (ii) rental

(b) squatters
  (i) authorized (including site-and-service)
  (ii) unauthorized

3. *Refugee Camps*, which hold international refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), such as Gaza with 750,000 IDPs and Bogota with 400,000 IDPs (Davis, 2006a:30).

According to Davis, there has been an exponential growth of slums since the 1960s, particularly in poor countries (which he and many others often call "the South"). He argues that today's megaslums are unprecedented and not accidental. In particular, he blames the International Monetary Fund/World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the mid-1970s, which he calls the equivalent of a "great natural disaster" (2006a:152). In Davis's view, SAP policies enslaved or "reenslaved" many poor people with their "devastating" consequences, including "a virtual demolition of the local state" (e.g., reduced or deteriorated urban services such as health care, sanitation, and transport in Africa), lower wages, repression, and the urbanization of poverty. (Among other culprits named by Davis: kleptocracies, charismatic churches in the Congo which promoted fears of "witch children," and neoliberal advocates of "bootstrap capitalism.") Davis claims that contemporary megaslums "pose unique problems of imperial order and social control that conventional geopolitics has barely begun to register" ([2004] 2007:131).

Davis is far from the norm. Neither his radical politics, his attention to the global *Planet of Slums* (2006a), nor his obvious outrage, made clear in his take-no-prisoners prose, about *why* much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor typifies the attitudes or scholarship of most U.S. city planners or urban designers.

Initially influenced by ideas and methods of architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture, U.S. graduate programs in city planning usually offer training in economics, information science, and policy analysis, as well as the more traditional fare. Some programs, responding to fears of natural disasters and urban terrorism, offer courses in security techniques, such as ways to protect a city's water supply.

Planning—whether for city growth or social purposes—has not had the acceptance in the United States that it enjoys in many other nations, including England and France. In France, for instance, "It is the state that embodies and guarantees the collective interests; the rest is selfish individualism" (Grunberg in Traub, 2006:40). In stark contrast, the United States, according to the late U.S. political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, is "the most anti-statist country in the developed world" (in Burdman, 1995:A11). In large part, this reflects American individualism and nonconformity dating from frontier days, captured in this old backwoods lyric:

> I'll buy my own whiskey, I'll drink my own dram,
> And for them that don't like me, I don't give a
> damn!

It also reflects many Americans' long-standing preference for private enterprise and reliance on the market to regulate economic matters, including what gets built where. However, with the enlarged reach of corporate business and the expansion of federal, state, and local governments since World War II, more economic and physical (but relatively few social) planners have been added to private and public payrolls.

Wherever they work, city planners and urban designers are, of necessity, political animals. More than most urban professionals, they find themselves at the center of perpetual controversy and in a maelstrom of conflicting demands from numerous groups. They can hardly ignore the clout of private developers; citizens' preferences either for preserving the character of the community or attracting new people, business, and money; federal regulation of local programs; the political environment in which they work; and differences in aesthetics and perceived needs among local groups. Even the most functional and aesthetically pleasing (in the planners' minds, at least) design plan remains a plan until both private and public interests decide to fund it and back it.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

"*Who* says *what* in *which channel* to *whom* with *what effect*?" That was the question asked by political scientist Harold Lasswell (1943), a pioneer in the

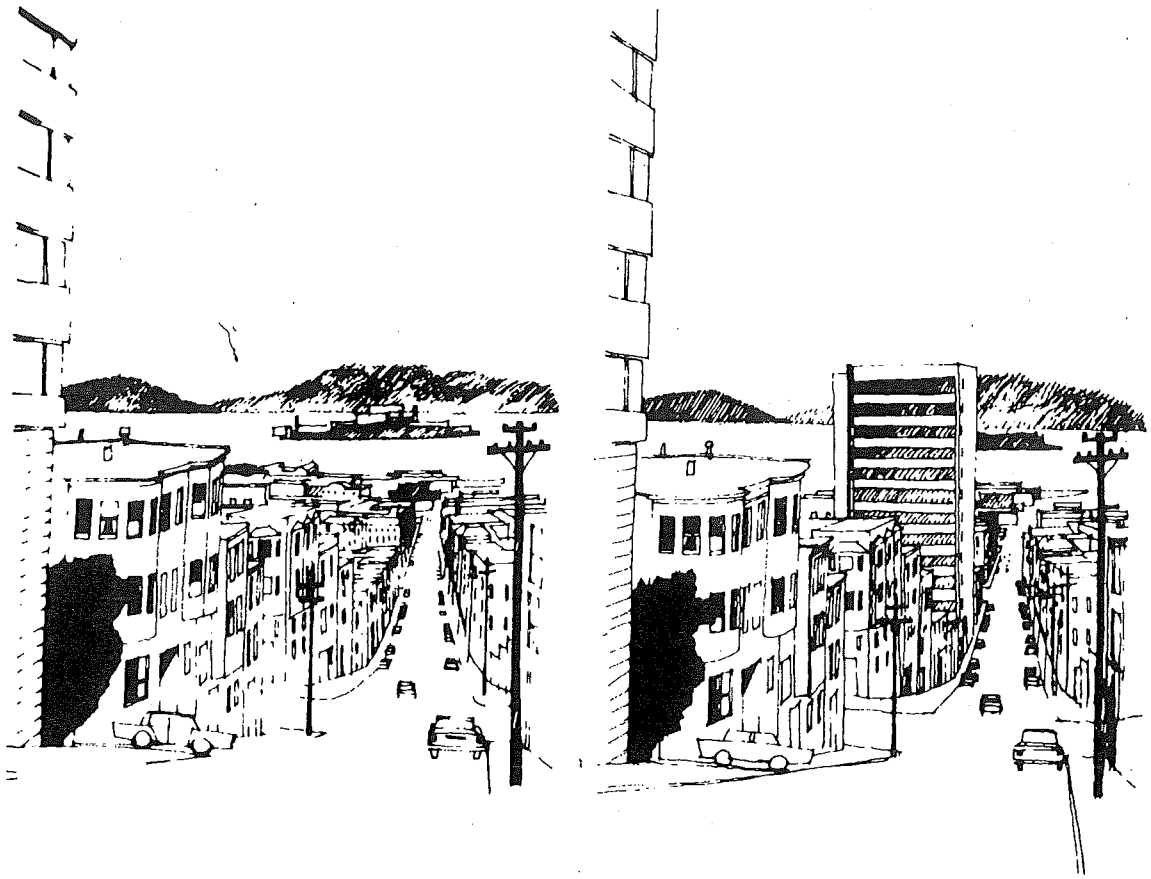


Fig. 2.10 ONCE IT LEAVES THE DRAWING BOARD. . . . What pleases planners and urban designers may not suit various interest groups, both public and private. Drawing a plan is only the first step in the long, highly-political process of getting a plan implemented. These drawings, from *San Francisco's 1971 Urban Design Plan*, reveal the planners' preferences for long vistas of the bay, unobstructed by tall buildings. (Reprinted by permission of the San Francisco City Planning Department)

interdisciplinary field of mass communications. This question summarized the field's concerns for many decades. Usually, researchers focused on one of the five Ws: *who* (communicators), *what* (message content), *which channel* (medium of communication), *whom to* (audience analysis), and *what effect* (impact).

Since World War II, computers and other electronic media have changed how people work, where they live, how they socialize, and perhaps how they think (McLuhan, 1964; Smith, 1980; Meyrowitz, 1985; Zuboff, 1988; Castells, 1996). In the past decade or so, most scholars agree that these new communications/information technologies have had revolutionary consequences, creating a global village, a global economy, and a global culture. Moviemaker Francis Ford Coppola summed up the changes this way: "The communications revolution makes the Industrial Revolution look like a small-time tryout out of town" (in Ganz and | Khatib,[2006] 2009).

New ways to communicate often have unforeseeable consequences. Take, for instance, the Internet, which has promoted (1) cyberbullying, (2) YouTube and similar online sites, and (3) so-called virtual reality. (1) Suburban New York teenage fighters in

February 2007 were captured on video and posted on the Internet. These teens, from Deer Park, got quick, worldwide recognition from many viewers, including local police. Since that time, at least one suicide due to cyberbullying has been recorded in the United States. (2) YouTube and similar sites may have global as well as local political consequences. As the director of a press group in Southeast Asia put it, "governments worldwide are grappling with the influence and perceived dangers of a medium that is compelling, accessible, hip and wildly popular" (Alampay, 2007). (3) Millions of Internet users now use new identities or "second lives" to communicate across the globe. Some, including those with physical issues (e.g., being confined to a wheelchair), choose to walk again in their "second life." Others, using Internet software plus an Internet-connected, global phone service spend hours online socializing rather than hanging out in clubs and other places with "real" people.

Let us not forget that "old" media can also have important impacts. For example, in 2007, the *Washington Post* ran front-page stories by their investigative reporters on the shabby conditions that greeted returning soldiers from Iraq at Washington, D.C.'s Walter Reed Army Medical Center; this series led to the "forced resignation" of several high U.S. government officials.

Computers and information technology may have profound political impacts too. One theorist even predicts the end of the nation-state because it is based on territoriality while computer-based technologies know no such geographical boundaries (Smith in Brand, 1987:239; see Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion). Others point to possible democratizing trends when, for instance, anyone with a cell phone/camera can upload a video to millions of viewers, thus bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as TV news staffs. Others are less optimistic, seeing cell phone cameras and other easy-to-use-and-carry-around electronics as promoting ever more "bubble gum for the eyes," Frank Lloyd Wright's famous putdown of TV.

How does high technology, fueling an **information economy** (Porat, 1977), affect cities and suburbs? Most scholars agree that the new "high technology is deeply modifying our cities and regions" (Castells, 1985:19). But to whose benefit and whose loss? Most probably, divisions between rich and poor cities, between cities and suburbs, and between inner-city neighborhoods will deepen as a result of this information technology–economy gap (Castells, 1985:32). In short, at all levels—from local to international—the information-poor will probably get poorer and the information-rich richer. Why? For interconnected reasons, including the following: (1) The information economy tends to polarize the workforce into the highly-paid and well-educated versus the poorly-paid and less-educated and (2) the information economy encourages the "electronic home" and "electronic office," which in turn stimulate sprawl outside inner cities (Castells, 1985:32).

The United States, Canada, most of Western Europe, Japan, and some other countries have entered the stage of **postindustrialism** or **informationalism**—where more people manage things, serve things, think about things, and communicate about things than produce things. According to many (but not all) scholars, information processing has become the core activity of production, distribution, consumption, and management (Castells, 1989:17).

Particularly relevant to the example of slums are studies dealing with access to information in postindustrial society. Some scholars fear that the information highway is market-driven and that it "narrow casts" (instead of broadcasts) to affluent segments of the population while ignoring the poor, and thus increasing the gap between the information-rich and information-poor.

Some activists are trying to change the direction of the information highway. For one, Nicholas Negroponte (former head of MIT's innovative Media Lab) vows to bring cheap computers to the poor millions around the globe (in Israely, 2007).

From a different angle, political sociologist Claus Mueller (1973) contends that lower-class people in advanced technological societies like the United States lack both the linguistic ability and the conceptual frameworks that would allow them to gain access to necessary information to participate effectively in politics. He argues that the mass media reinforce consumerism and leisure, thus integrating the poor into the political system. Others (e.g., Phillips, 1975; Romano, 1985) maintain that local news reportage routinely ignores issues that concern the city's poor and ethnic groups; such issues become defined as non-news and

don't even get debated. This suggests that even so-called objective news reports are biased in a subtle way: toward a particular view of the social world—a cosmopolitan, middle- and upper-class, educated view that reflects the news reporters' own outlook on reality. Similarly, Michael Weiss (2000:21) suggests that editorial staffs at elite U.S. newspapers, such as the *Washington Post*, are likely to live in upscale areas and, thus, may be out of touch with the communities they cover.

With newer technologies, situations can change quickly. Take one example: blogs. Whatever a person's background, opinion, or geographical home, she or he can, for an increasingly affordable sum, spread a personal point of view worldwide in a nanosecond. Millions all over the world are doing it too; numbers are unreliable, but as many as 12 million or more may be blogging.

Normally, bloggers make no claim of being objective. Au contraire. Indeed, contemporary blogs (and vlogs) resemble opinionated newspapers published in the United States before the Civil War; those newspapers made no claim to "objectivity." Nor did they avoid giving offense. (This strategy is not followed by most U.S. commercial media today because it can hurt business: Offended advertisers, subscribers, viewers, or listeners can cancel their ads or subscriptions, flip the dial, or mount campaigns to put the program or enterprise out of commission.)

At the city level, technologies can serve people who live in slums as well as those in wealthier digs. St. Cloud, Florida, for one, is using wi-fi to provide every citizen within a 15-mile radius with free network access. Other places throughout the world—from the tiny village of Cenévières in southwest France to the town of Siem Reap in Cambodia—provide either fast, reasonably priced Internet service or wi-fi access.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Deforested jungles, ozone depletion, garbage pile-ups, hazardous waste, oil spills, nuclear accidents, and industrial smog all helped to raise global consciousness of the borderless biosphere. One response is university-based programs dedicated to the interdisciplinary field of environmental studies. Typically, these programs cover a variety of topics, from risk analysis, conflicts between job loss and environmental destruction, and occupational health to solid waste disposal.

Environmental studies may also include the study of mass migrations and international conflict that can result from environmental degradation. Indeed, according to some, the environment is *the* national security issue of the early twenty-first century.

Environmentally speaking, some questions are long-standing. These include the following: What should be done with effluents in affluent industrial cities? What can and should be done to decrease pollutants resulting from fossil-fuel vehicles and the generation of electricity (e.g., acid rain, principally caused by sulfur and nitrogen compounds, which can be carried in the air for hundreds of miles)? How can lawmakers better deal with disasters such as Hurricane Katrina's destruction in New Orleans and beyond?

The interrelationship of socioeconomic and environmental crises, such as global warming (the existence of which is denied by some writers and politicians, mainly from the United States), has recently captured the imagination of scholars. These scholars tend to envision the world from the radical end of the political spectrum (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of ideologies). For example, in *Natural Causes*, economist–sociologist James O'Connor (1997) analyzes a wide range of environmental issues, including the Gulf War and environmental justice. He argues, provocatively, that environmental issues should be seen as social and political issues and that the global reach of present-day capitalism bears much of the responsibility for environmental degradation. Similarly, Wendell Berry ([2001] 2006), essayist and Kentucky farmer, identifies "free-market" thinking and corporations as key agents of pollution, species extinction, and loss of farmland and wilderness.

Environmental studies scholars have been asking various questions connected to slums and poverty. For example, *where* do private corporations and public governments dump toxic wastes? (Answer, according to Lee [1987]: often in poor neighborhoods of rich countries heavily populated by people of color, such as East Los Angeles, and poor countries, including West Africa's extremely poor Benin.) *Why* do poor African American urbanites have much shorter

Fig. 2.11 WALL OF GARBAGE. At The Recyclery in Silicon Valley's Milpitas, California (Chapter 8) , there is a 100-foot-long, 20-foot-high "wall of garbage" representing all the junk dumped in Milpitas's county, Santa Clara, every 3 minutes, equivalent to less than 1 second for all U.S. trash. (Tim Teninty)

life expectancies than whites? (Answer, according to Weissman and Epstein [1989]: numerous factors related to poverty, such as high infant mortality rates, and some related to race, such as racial inequalities in medical care.) And *who* pays the highest price for ecological disruption? (Answer, according to sociologist–engineer–chemist Allan Schnaiberg [1980]: the urban poor. Typically, Schnaiberg argues, publicly-funded projects, such as suburban freeways, "have subsidized the material progress of affluent suburbanites at the expense of working and poverty-class urban dwellers, whose tax burdens grow and whose social services decline" [1980:337]).

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Often poets, songwriters, and artists speak to the soul, clarifying the human condition in ways that statistics or theoretical models cannot! Those familiar with the poor southern sharecroppers in Walker Evans's photos in James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* ([1939] 1960) and Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson's *And Their Children After Them* (1989) or the Kinte clan in Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976) can feel poverty's ache. Likewise, we feel like we know the Cuban immigrants to New York City yearning for success in Oscar Hijuelos's *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989). And the Bangladeshi community in London's *Brick Lane* ([2003] 2008), Monica Ali's controversial novel which tells the stories of heroine Nazeen and the struggles of Islamic immigrants in pre- and post-9/11 England. All these works provide a firsthand encounter with particular people and their lives, an acquaintance with people that can touch the emotions as well as the intellect.

Poverty and slum conditions have been a theme in the arts since the Industrial Revolution, which gave us both the word "slum" and the condition called "slums." To take but one example, novelist Charles Dickens draws a portrait of Coketown, a new industrial town that could be one of many English cities in the mid-nineteenth century:

> It was a town of red brick or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves.... It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long.... It contained several large streets... inhabited by people equally like each other, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.
>
> *([1854] 1967:17)*

No statistical table can capture the monotonous rhythm of life, the squalor and dirt, and the pervasive gloom of working conditions in nineteenth-century England as well as Dickens's word portrait.

More recently, the urban despair of poor children has been captured in their own words and images. Listen to one 12-year-old, Shemika Skipworth, speaking about what she knows firsthand—coping with a parent's drug habit:

> You smoked up your check and you can't go home.
> You go to the mail pick up your check
> Go and smoke it up on the project step
> Now you're on the streets nowhere to go
> You smoked up your check and you can't go home.
>
> *(in Williams, 1989)*

The image of poverty and slums has also been poignantly captured by the movie camera. Yet, most Hollywood movies focus on the social disorder presumed to accompany slum life. The now classic *West Side Story* (1961) is a case in point. But on close inspection, the film also shows what sociologist Gerald D. Suttles calls *The Social Order of the Slum* (1968): a well-defined moral order rooted in personalistic relations and provincialism. To be sure, the rules of the gangs (the Jets and Sharks) are not those middle-class block groups. But they are widely understood by people in the neighborhood, and they serve to regulate daily life.

Other forms of popular culture and folk culture—from graffiti and street murals to best-sellers and rap music—are important sources for understanding people's responses to poverty and slum life. Consider, for instance, one American musical tradition: the blues. The blues speak of melancholy, what early American settlers from England called the "blue devils." Immigrants coming from the villages and small towns of the British Isles to the hills and hollows of the American wilderness apparently suffered from the blue devils of homesickness, and they sang about it; pioneers were often lost in the vast, raw spaces of the New World. Later, in the nineteenth century, white and black migrants from the rural countryside to the city started singing the blues. Some sang "The House of the Rising Sun Blues," the story of the poverty that forced poor country girls, perhaps as early as the 1840s, into a life of prostitution in New Orleans. Freed slaves during the Reconstruction era sang of their kinship with the boll weevil, which "was lookin' for a home, just a'lookin' for a home." And around 1900, when some African Americans left southern sharecropping and headed north, they "found the blues waiting... at every station down the line. [They had] the *Alabama Blues, The Atlanta Blues, The New Orleans Hop Scop Blues, The Fort Worth Blues and the Dallas Heart Disease, The St. Louis Blues... The Michigan Water Blues, The Wabash Blues, The State Street Blues* (in Chicago), *The Harlem Blues*" (Lomax, 1960:576). And in the textile mill towns, workers sang the "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues" or "Cotton Mill Colic": "I'm a-gonna starve, ev'rybody will/You can't make a livin' at a cotton mill" (Lomax, 1960:287).

By the 1920s, blues singers like Big Bill Broonzy began recording their songs for the whole world to

hear. As folk song historian Alan Lomax comments:

> If all the verses of the recorded blues were laid end to end, it would make a lonesome moan that could be heard on the moon. These songs speak plainly, pithily, and powerfully about the emotional disturbances of urban society in the west. The jobless, dispossessed, unwanted predatory Negro male was the first character in our civilization to experience and express these feelings. Now we are all aware of them, and the big sad wind of the blues sings through the heart-strings from Memphis to Moscow.
>
> *(1960:576)*

More recently, African American rap artists have been singing about desperation, not melancholy. In some songs, for example, the house down the street is a prison where no one tries to save kids from their abusive parents. Neighborhoods are often described as killing fields where some residents treat an Uzi submachine gun as their best friend.

MAKING SOME CONNECTIONS

After this brief look at how various disciplines and fields of knowledge might view one urban condition through their own special lenses (and blinders), we might ask whether any common foci appear. And you might wonder, quite sensibly, whether any connections, however desirable, can be made.

Some common themes and factors do emerge from this potpourri of information about slums. For one thing, the impact of economic forces in shaping people's lives is a theme that cuts across many disciplines and fields. Economic logic underpins Burgess's model of urban growth and Alonso's model of residential bid rent. Economic forces are also emphasized in Lewis's anthropological studies of the culture of poverty, Warner's historical look at Philadelphia, Coles's social psychiatric research on children, and Mueller's analysis of communication in mass society. Other factors important to urban life that cross-cut disciplines and fields include the importance of power relations, social organization, information flows, environment, and technology in influencing individual lives.

This brief look at perspectives on slums also shows that intellectual disciplines may have unique outlooks, but scholars don't stop at disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, some scholars seem impossible to classify! For instance, Spanish-born, French-trained, U.S.-published, much-traveled scholar Manuel Castells defies national or departmental pigeonholing. Trained as a sociologist in Paris, Castells did research in the 1960s on industrial location, a concern more typical of geography and economics. By 1979, he was professor of city and regional planning at the University of California at Berkeley. Since then, he has taught at universities worldwide. Space and social structure remain key to his theory and research, which ranges widely over issues of political movements, urbanization, economic change, and comparative urban life.

Another theme emerges: People living in a certain situation—say, in Appalachian poverty or Philadelphia's slum—may understand their subjective experience differently from the way "objective" social scientists do. As I've implied by starting this book with a list of personal biases, I believe that the notion of an objective, value-free social science is a mythical ideal, not a practical possibility. Worse, in my view, it often serves as a cover, turning a professional, upper-middle-class view of what's real into the official definition of reality. This can be especially dangerous when urbanists advise policymakers. Projecting what they think is objectively good for other people (especially people who don't share the same dreams, material possessions, or values), urbanists have often imposed their values on others in the name of objectivity.

Unfortunately, no synthesis of views is on the horizon; the lack of an agreed-upon conceptual framework and the absence of meaningful consensus among urbanists prevent it. Still, we can begin the project of weaving some threads together to better understand the urban world.

As we begin that difficult, long-term project, let us recall Gertrude Stein. Her life as a writer exemplifies the quest to see beyond a mere litany of facts. On her deathbed, Stein turned to her assembled friends and asked, "What is the answer?" After a moment of stunned silence, she asked, "What, then, is the question?" Then she died (in Ozick[1945], 1996).

Chapter 3 suggests some worthwhile questions to ask. It also looks at even more reasons why urban observers disagree on answers.

KEY TERMS

Bid rent curve Description of how much a residential or retail client will bid (pay) for land or rent at varying distances from the CBD of a city. Associated with William Alonso (1933–1999)who criss-crossed disciplinary lines—from sociology and regional planning to population studies—but who is primarily remembered for this contribution to urban economics.

Burgess model Model or hypothesis constructed by sociologist Ernest W. Burgess concerning the spatial-social structure of the U.S. industrial city and its expansion over time. The hypothesis explains that a city's population is organized in a series of five concentric rings or zones, starting from the CBD.

Cognitive maps Personal, mental maps that usually bear little resemblance to official tourist maps of a city or neighborhood. Images of a city—outstanding features, landmarks, important places, and so on-differ among individuals and social groups.

Discipline A division of intellectual labor associated with higher education. As specialization increased and knowledge about the physical and social world expanded in the nineteenth century, social science split up into disciplines: economics, political science, sociology, and so forth.

Filtering The process by which housing passes or trickles down from higher-income to lower-income residents as it ages and becomes less desirable. Thus, a mansion built in 1860 for a very rich family may have filtered down to house a moderate-income family by 1920. By 1980, the same house might have filtered down still further to house four very-low-income families. Opposite: *gentrification*.

Industrial cities Cities such as Chicago and Detroit in the U.S, whose population growth and spatial pattern were influenced mainly by manufacturing and centralizing technologies. Contrasts: *Preindustrial cities* such as Paris and Tokyo; *postindustrial regions* such as Orange County, California.

Information economy A type of economy built on telecommunication highways that distribute information (which becomes a commodity, like shoes or cars) to be bought and sold. Similar terms: *information society, postindustrial society*.

Informationalism A type of social organization, evolved from industrialism, that depends on information processing as its core activity. This term is associated with sociologist-planner Manuel Castells, who argues that cities and regions of the world are being transformed by a combination of technological and economic processes.

Interdisciplinary Having a degree of integration among several disciplines. The concepts, methodology, procedures, terminology, or data may be more or less connected among two or more disciplines in an interdisciplinary study. To some, interdisciplinary connotes the attempt to bridge disciplines and apply research tools and/or perspectives from more than one discipline; to others, it is synonymous with multidisciplinary studies.

Latent function A function or purpose hidden from view and often unintended. For example, a city public-works department exists officially to build roads. Its latent function may be to provide patronage opportunities such as jobs for political supporters and ethnic voting groups.

Manifest function The officially stated, visible reason for existence. For example, building roads is one manifest function of a city's public-works department.

Megaslums Gargantuan areas, typically on the periphery of cities in poor countries. They are characterized by squalid poverty, huge populations, and "informal" housing.

Multidisciplinary Involving more than one academic discipline. In practice, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary efforts are not always distinguishable.

Paradigm A model or patterned way of seeing the world. In the scientific disciplines, the dominant paradigm defines the problems and methods of a research field; it makes legitimate what counts as facts, what assumptions are valid, and what procedures are deemed scientific. Today there are competing paradigms in social science disciplines.

Postindustrialism As distinguished from preindustrialism and industrialism, a society and an economy characterized by high technology, which permits most people to work at jobs in the information

and service sectors rather than in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Typology A classification scheme composed of two or more ideal types, used to organize data and guide research--for example, four types of slum dwellers, distinguished by length of residence and reasons for being there.

Urban studies A multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary field of study whose central focus is the city and its surrounding area. Its intellectual boundaries are not well defined, and programs of urban studies vary in content from one academic institution to another.

PROJECTS

1. **What you see depends on how you look at it.** Select four individuals of differing occupations and neighborhoods (e.g., a zone II food server, a zone III shopowner, a downtown business executive, a suburban athletic coach) and ask each one to draw a simple sketch of the city you're in (or near), noting its most important places and outstanding features. Do these cognitive maps differ? If so, how?

2. **Disciplinary perspectives.** Select one issue, such as urban transportation, crime, violence, or unemployment, and examine how basic texts in at least three different disciplines or fields approach it, noting what factors they stress in their analysis. Do themes emerge?

3. **I hear the country singing.** Using the same issue selected for project 2, investigate how songwriters have approached it. For example, compare the messages in songs recorded by rap groups and pop singers. In what ways, if any, do these approaches vary from those of the three intellectual disciplines and/or professional fields?

4. **Property prices.** Why is residential and office property so expensive in London, Tokyo, New York City, and Hong Kong? Why is land so much less per square foot in Bogota, Lagos, and Phnom Penh? First, find out what property per square foot (or square meter) costs in those cities and at least 10 other cities on three continents. Then, analyze possible reasons why these differences in cost occur. Also investigate the cost of a covered parking space in various cities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER LEARNING

For a new version of the children's literature classic, *The Little Prince*, hear and see the opera of the same name. Based on the book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the opera's music was composed by Rachel Portman.

Two books about Paris illustrate the saying "What you see depends on how you look at it": Mort Rosenblum, *The Secret Life of the Seine* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994), and François Maspero, *Roissy Express: A Journey Through the Paris Suburbs* (New York: Verso, 1994). Rosenblum's romantic view of Paris comes from his life aboard a 54-foot boat. Maspero's steely-eyed perspective comes from his ride aboard the 37-mile train from Charles de Gaulle Airport to the other side of Paris, where he sees mostly dreary housing and drab, disjointed spaces when he visits each of the 38 stops.

Cognitive maps have attracted researchers from fields as diverse as psychology, geography, and urban planning for over a half-century. In *Wayfinding Behavior: Cognitive Mapping and Other Spatial Processes* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), editor Reginald G. Golledge chooses contributors who present various perspectives, including cognitive, perceptual, neural, and animal.

For contemporary and very dissonant views on slums worldwide, see Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (2006) and Robert Neuwirth, *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World* (2005). Davis paints a bleak picture of slum dwellers' future prospects. Investigative reporter Neuwirth is much more hopeful, seeing today's megaslums as gritty but vital communities, building urban communities of the future.

To better understand a social science discipline's particular perspective, look at introductory texts. Compare their key concepts, often noted in the table of contents and the index, with key concepts of other disciplines or hybrids.

The most up-to-date work in a discipline can be found online or in journals. And new journals appear regularly, reflecting the ever-increasing division of labor in scholarly thought. See, for example, a journal launched in 2008, *Journal of Global Mass Communication*, dedicated to "finding innovative ways to examine and understand mass communication in a

global context." The journal's multinational editorial board reflects its stance.

For a closer look at the bid rent curve, see *Location and Land Use* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964) by the late William Alonso. Alonso expanded a concept originated by German landowner Johann Heinrich von Thünen (1780–1850) concerning agricultural land use and urban areas.

For an example of how various perspectives can be fused to obtain a richer view, see Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Blackwell, 1995). She draws on insights from sociology, political economy, and the analysis of visual form.

The field of mass communications and information technology has changed a great deal in past decades. For an interesting look at the history of the Internet, see Patrice Flichy, *L'Internet imaginaire* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007). Media historian Flichy's study, first published in 2001 in French, explores the collective vision that underlies the Internet.

For a look at an alternative approach to a discipline, see Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Folbre's study of child care calls into question the assumption in neoclassical economics of the so-called rational actor. Folbre wonders what a mother's self-interest is: Can she separate her self-interest from that of her own child?

British sociologists Mike Savage and Alan Warde give a history and critique of urban sociology (and the "new" urban sociology) in *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1993). They believe that "there is no solid definition of the urban" and that the label "urban sociology" is "mostly a flag of convenience." Yet, they try to "identify the common elements" explaining the persistence of their subdiscipline, urban sociology.

For a hands-on experience of how disciplines and fields work, computer software can be helpful. The most famous is a computer game designed by Will Wright, *SimCity* (now in its fourth edition with an expansion pack called *Rush Hour,* Lafayette, Calif.: Maxis Software; available from Amazon.com); it allows a player to build a city and make it work. Simulated city players fashion their own cities or play one of many disaster scenarios.

Until recently, economics was considered the "geekiest of geek subjects," according to Elise Soukup in "Sexiest Trade Alive" (*Newsweek,* Jan. 2, 2006:21). However, in 2006, economics was the hottest undergrad degree at New York University and Harvard in the United States. Perhaps one book, best-seller *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (New York: William Morrow, 2005) by economist Steven D. Levitt and journalist Stephen J. Dubner, together with a 2005 MTV documentary film about Kenya's economy (with economist Jeffrey Sachs and actress Angelina Jolie), sparked the trend. Cornell economics and management professor Robert H. Frank's *The Economic Naturalist: In Search of Explanations for Everyday Enigmas* (New York: Basic Books, 2007) may have added some wit and whimsy to the recent trend.

For those wishing a more mathematical approach to urban economics, see, for example, the homepage of economist Thayer Watkins (http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/alonso.htm), which features a mathematical equation expressing the bid rent curve.

Reflecting a profound change in the discipline of anthropology, urban places like Fargo, North Dakota—not the Trobriand Islands—are becoming common research sites for anthropologists. One award-winning study, Faye D. Ginsburg, *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), is based on field interviews in Fargo with middle-class women.

One work on town planning that covers its history in Europe from Hippodamus to Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann is *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London: E & FN Spon [1997] 1999) by Thomas Hall, an art history professor. Among the various cities discussed in some detail are Paris, Copenhagen, Barcelona, and Rome. The book is copiously illustrated.

Too numerous to mention are the works of literary and visual art that expand our vision of the urban world. Here are a few on just one topic: the blues. In *Looking Up at Down: The Emergence of Blues Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), William B. Barlow traces the blues from its rural roots to its urbanization in Chicago, Memphis, and other regional centers. In *The History of the Blues: The Roots,*

the Music, the People (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo [1995] 2003), Francis Davis (music critic for the *Atlantic* magazine) moves from the blues's roots in work songs, field hollers, spirituals, reels, and ballads from England and Scotland to various contemporary uses, including advertising diet soda.

For poetic commentaries on folk music and personal evocations of the communities that produced the blues, see Alan Lomax, *The Folk Songs of North America in the English Language* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960) and *The Land Where the Blues Began* (New York: Pantheon, 1993). Lomax himself collected many of these songs as he traveled throughout the United States. Lomax's *Blues in the Mississippi Night* (1990, compact disc) features blues musicians reminiscing about life and music in the Deep South.

A series of eight videotapes produced by the Conference on Literature and the Urban Experience at Rutgers University shows artists, novelists, playwrights, and social scientists giving poetry readings or talking about a variety of topics, ranging from "The Language of the Streets" (James Baldwin) and "The Reinvention of Childhood" (Jonathan Kozol) to "City Limits: Village Values—Concepts of the Neighborhood in Black Fiction" (Toni Morrison).

For an excellent discussion of attitudes toward urban and rural life expressed in U.S. painting, see Sidra Stich's *Made in U.S.A.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). One section on cities, suburbs, and highways—the "New American Landscape"—argues that in the 1950s and 1960s U.S. painters called attention to "the congestion and exhilaration of the urban milieu, the comfort and conformity of suburbia, and the fascination and monotony of the highway." Such artists as Robert Bechtle and Robert Arneson "openly exposed the most banal and alienating aspects of the contemporary setting" (45).

Movies alert us to a special kind of alienation: the rage and violence of oppressive urban lives. One powerful film, Matty Rich's *Straight Out of Brooklyn* (1991), is a dynamic and tragic description of life in an African American ghetto. *River's Edge* (1987), based on a real-life event in the San Francisco Bay Area, vividly portrays the alienation of teenagers in a white working-class suburb. *Fight Club* (1999) highlights alienation from another angle: male aggression. Based on a novel by Chuck Palahniuk, the movie is disturbing and violent, featuring antisocial behavior.

David Brodsky offers "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Freeway" in *L.A. Freeway* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); this study explores the ways in which the southern California freeway defines the way people think about the metropolitan area.

Geographer Mark Monmonier reminds us that maps may reflect unconscious bias. He notes that "a single map is but one of an indefinitely large number of maps that might be produced for the same situation or from the same data" in *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Robert D. Kaplan infers that maps often lie. In "The Coming Anarchy" (*Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, 44–76), Kaplan says that perhaps 15 percent of the population of the Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan—often called the Paris of West Africa—live in shantytowns named "Chicago," "Washington," and so on; few such slums appear on maps. To Kaplan, this suggests that political maps are "products of tired conventional wisdom" and "in the Ivory Coast's case, of an elite that will ultimately be forced to relinquish power" (48). (Indeed, Kaplan's prediction about Ivory Coast has come to pass.)

In *Atlas of Cyberspace* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), information cartographers Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin show that controversies over maps cross national borders. In this venture into virtual geography, the authors explore maps of cyberspaces—"cybermaps"—and graphic representations of new information landscapes created by "cyberexplorers" from many disciplines throughout the world.

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