

EXPLORING THE CITY  
*Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology*



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the  
CITY



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ULF HANNERZ

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# Acknowledgments

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The acknowledgments which begin a book, but are usually the last part of it to be written, are evidence of a part of a personal network, and of phases of a life career. They may document a passage through many milieux, a series of significant experiences, and a variety of dialogues, ongoing or discontinued.

Toward the end of the introductory chapter, I sketch some of the personal factors which have gone into making *Exploring the City* the kind of book it is, and I mention there three field experiences, in Washington, D.C., in Kafanchan, Nigeria, and in the Cayman Islands. It seems fitting to make note first of what I learned in these places about what is urban and what is not, and to thank friends, acquaintances, and informants there collectively for what they did to push my understanding along. Those who were most helpful I have in some cases been able to single out, or will in the future, in other publications. But some, due to the ethics of field work and publishing, will remain anonymous. It is very likely, of course, that many of them would find it difficult to see the links between the concrete things we were through together and some of the more abstract notions of the following pages. All the same, the connections are there.

Turning to academia, it is rather more often possible to discern the direct influence of particular network partners on what has gone into this book, although reference must in some cases inevitably be made to other collectivities. The most diverse and far-flung one of these consists of those colleagues and students who have responded to my views on urban anthropology in a number of seminars and conferences in the United States, Canada, England, and Scandinavia, and allowed me to share theirs. What made up more of a real group, although by now it may well be almost equally scattered, were the participants in an urban anthropology seminar in the Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh, where I was a visiting member of the faculty in 1971–72. Although by then I had not

yet given serious thought to writing a book on the subject, this seminar helped me begin arranging my ideas. Leonard Plotnicov and Keith Brown, with whom I gave the seminar, were equally interested in discussing what they saw as characteristic of urban life and urban anthropology, in or out of the seminar room, and did much to make that year memorable. I expect that they will recognize in this book a number of issues first brought up in our conversations in Pittsburgh—whether by one of them or by me, I must confess, I cannot always quite remember.

Another academic excursion came at a later stage in the development of this book. During the spring of 1976, I was a Simon Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester. Since this gave me the rather rare opportunity to spend a longer period reading, thinking, and writing without major distractions and in a stimulating milieu, I am very grateful to my then colleagues in Manchester for taking me in. John Comaroff, Chris Fuller, and Keith Hart were especially helpful as conversation partners. Because the role of the Manchester department has been so prominent in the development of anthropological urban studies, however, the advantages of that period also varied from something as concrete as specialized library holdings to a rather less tangible but still real sense of a proper ambience for my concerns.

Yet it has naturally been in my home department, at the University of Stockholm, that I have had the greatest opportunity to try out various ideas over the years during which this book has been in (not always lineal) progress, and that the book has also taken shape in other ways. Seminars on Urban Anthropology, Personal Information in Social Relations, Career Analysis, and Cultural Analysis between 1970 and 1978 have been especially useful in this regard, and the participants in these constitute another rather tightly-knit group which I must thank collectively. Stefan Molund, Kristina Bohman, and Tomas Gerholm have also at one time or another been through various chapter drafts and have often helped me clarify my assumptions and straighten out my argument through their criticisms, also bringing illuminating ethnography and other references to my attention. A group of colleagues, present or former graduate students of the department, again including the three just named, also have my gratitude for having been among the best guides an urban anthropologist could have, when I have visited them in the field, in cities in three continents. And four conscientious assistants in the department, Kerstin Lagergren, Ulla Forsberg Fröman, Gunnel Nordström, and Lena Haddad, have given their

careful attention to typing parts and versions of the manuscript in a way for which I am very thankful.

Apart from the Pittsburgh, Manchester, and Stockholm network clusters, a few other persons should be recognized for the interest which they have taken in this book. Through conversations or correspondence, I have been pleased to have the views of Gerald D. Berreman with regard to chapter 1, A. L. Epstein and J. Clyde Mitchell with regard to chapters 4 and 5, Jeremy Boissevain and Alvin W. Wolfe with regard to chapter 5, and Erving Goffman with regard to chapter 6. An anonymous reader who looked over the completed manuscript on behalf of Columbia University Press made several helpful suggestions, only some of which I have in the end been able to follow. And John D. Moore of Columbia University Press has been a most friendly editor, even as the completion of the manuscript was repeatedly delayed.

As it will now come before the reader, *Exploring the City* is a somewhat different book from that which I first expected to write, when I began the project of organizing my view of urban anthropology. This is partly because I realized, after a while, that the time would seem to move ever farther ahead of me, like a mirage, when I could expect to finish a volume of the very wide scope originally intended. And it would hardly fit between two covers anyway. Even as it is, *Exploring the City* is not a very small book. It may be that I will find other opportunities to deal with issues and materials that must now be left out. But another reason why the book has perhaps expanded a little here, contracted a little there, and struck out in some directions which I had not first thought of, has of course been the ongoing influence of friends and colleagues. It will not, I hope, be the end product of my dialogues with them, as I wish to have many of them in my network when I move on to other aspects of the anthropological study of cities.

Whatever merit this book may have, then, I think I should share with those who have helped and encouraged my undertaking. Unlike a handful of recent authors, however, I think it would be unfair of me to suggest that those who have offered such support should also be prepared to take a part of the blame for its various faults. The convention that this burden should be carried by the author alone is one which I accept. After all, if this were a book that my friends and colleagues would wholeheartedly want to be associated with, would they not have written it themselves?

In other ways as well, writing tends in the end to be a lonely undertaking. The solitude required I have found for the most part during periods

away from the entanglements of urban life, in a secluded summer house with a garden full of weeds and aged fruit trees, with visiting cats and a resident hedgehog, in southern Sweden. This, perversely, is where this book on urban anthropology was begun, and this is where I now reach its completion. Even for a committed urbanite, it may finally be acknowledged, the country may have its uses.

*Utvälinge, April 1980*

ULF HANNERZ

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## CHAPTER ONE

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# *The Education of an Urban Anthropologist*

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Only a little more than a decade ago, there was hardly an urban anthropology. A concern with urbanism as a part of civilization, and an interest in defining its properties cross-culturally, had already taken a handful of scholars to Timbuktu and other faraway places. But as late as in the early 1960s one student of comparative urbanism could remark that anthropologists were “a notoriously agoraphobic lot, anti-urban by definition” (Benet 1963a:212). Only in that decade did the tendency of anthropologists to go to cities (or simply to remain in them) become really pronounced. There were several reasons for this. In the exotic societies to which anthropologists habitually gave most of their attention—and which they were now learning to describe as “the Third World”—people increasingly left the villages for new and mushrooming urban centers, and the students of their lives could hardly disregard the fact. In the United States, many anthropologists were more directly touched by developments at home. In the 1950s, the American self-image had been one of an affluent, homogenized mass society; intellectuals complained of an excess of mediocre conformism. In the 1960s, ethnicity and poverty were rediscovered, and more often than not they were defined as “urban problems.” In Europe at the same time, international labor migration, and to a lesser extent an influx of refugees from political upheavals, were changing the character of many cities. There was a search for new understandings, and anthropologists felt they could play a part in it. They had specialized in “other cultures” but had looked for them far away. Now they found them across the tracks.<sup>1</sup>

From the presence of anthropologists in cities to the emergence of an urban anthropology, however, there was yet another step. The collective identification of the new academic specialty and the regular use of the label

of urban anthropology have been even more a thing of the 1970s than of the decade preceding it. The first book bearing the title *Urban Anthropology* appeared in 1968. Since 1973, authors and editors have (somewhat unimaginatively) used it for another five volumes.<sup>2</sup> The journal *Urban Anthropology* began publication in 1972. Obviously, by now urban anthropologists are forming a community. They apply for their own specialist slots in anthropology departments, they meet in their own conferences, and they write in no small part for each other when they do not write textbooks to teach students about cities.

To these developments reactions have been rather mixed. Urban anthropology as it now stands can claim certain accomplishments. It also confronts several unresolved issues, and there is no general agreement about its prospects. One practitioner suggests that "urban anthropology can become the creative new core of modern comparative social anthropology" (Gutkind 1968:77); another considers the delimitation of such a field "a spurious and retrograde one in that it tends to make an excuse for maintaining a subject matter within a discipline which cannot and should not handle it" (Leeds 1972:4). To some, the theoretical and methodological resources of the anthropological tradition seem insufficient for urban research; for others, the problem is precisely that the new urbanologists are not paying sufficient heed to the ideas developed by anthropologists in other social contexts. Those with some awareness of what goes on in the sister discipline of sociology may have noticed that the bases for an urban specialty, theoretical or substantive, have been in some doubt there. Others may have made their way independently, and perhaps more slowly, toward similar uncertainty. What is a concern for relevance to some may be mere opportunism to others—an "undignified scramble to find substitute savages in slums" in the words of Robin Fox (1973:20).

It might thus seem that urban anthropology has no past, and reason to worry about its future. Yet this book is largely retrospective, an attempt to trace some of the steps to the present. What reasons could there be for such an undertaking?

For a large part, I submit, they can be found in the manner the anthropologists entered the city. It was not so much their own reflections over the nature and state of their discipline that led them there, but rather external events that insisted on attention. In a headlong rush into a field defined by racial strife, malfunctioning institutions, and the growth of

shantytowns, they often took little time to ponder over what is urban in urban anthropology, and what is anthropological about it. There was only the simplest and least self-conscious transfer possible of basic anthropology into the new context. The specialties of anthropology which were taken for granted were a sensitivity to cultural diversity, the closeness to ongoing everyday life which comes with participant observation as a dominant research method, and a readiness to define problems broadly, "holistically," rather than narrowly. Such characteristics of method and perspective tended to bring the anthropologist, not least in the United States, to the ethnic enclave, the ghetto, which had cultural and organizational characteristics with which he could—in his own curious way—feel comfortable. But what was often most important in drawing him there, of course, is that this sort of community is also frequently faced with social problems. Particularly American urban anthropology has thus become, in Tylor's phrase, "a reformer's science." It has applied itself to questions of health and welfare, law and justice, schools and jobs, the physical environment and its changes.

This is certainly no cause for regret. The concern with good works will certainly remain a part of urban anthropology, which we are apt to feel can be quite useful in such areas. It would also be inexcusable for an anthropologist with roots in a much more homogeneous society to suggest that American urban anthropologists should stop paying attention to the ethnic quarters of their cities. Obviously ethnicity remains a live force in American society. What has thus resulted, however, is rather a commonsense anthropology, the quality of which tends to be measured more by its practical relevance and results than by its sheer intellectual worth. Although theoretical contributions may result from such work, they are likely to be unanticipated by-products.

It is another fact of the same realities of research that the field of urban anthropology has been quite widely defined. More often than not it is taken to include all the studies where the city is the locus rather than the focus.<sup>3</sup> Ethnicity and poverty, for example, may occur *in* the city, but they are not by definition phenomena typical of the city. The euphemistic use of "urban problems" in political rhetoric is no trustworthy guide here. Investigations of urban family life, or the activities of youth gangs, or occupational cultures, need not be much concerned with any intrinsically urban characteristics either. This generous inclusiveness of all sorts of interests, ideas,

and findings, together with a relative unconcern for what might be their common denominator, also contribute to the picture of an urban anthropology which seems to lack a coherent, unifying structure of ideas.

In this book we will try to sort out some of the elements of such a structure. Probably inevitably, this also leads us to aim first of all for an urban anthropology more strictly conceived, where the focus is on urbanism itself—whatever this statement will turn out to mean. To a great extent we will disregard what appears to be merely the routine practice of anthropology within city limits. But this need not mean that we have to start again from scratch. We can get a better overview of the territory to be explored if we use the opportunities which come our way to observe it from the shoulders of giants—or sometimes even of little people like ourselves. In other words, we will try to pull together some components of a usable past for the urban anthropology we have in mind. Urban anthropology needs its own history of ideas, a collective consciousness of the growth of understandings concerning the essentials of the city and city life. Some of these understandings may already be of a venerable age. Others are the products of a very recent past, even merging with the present. They have made their appearance in varied contexts, and it may often be helpful (or at least intellectually pleasing) to view them first in these. Others, of course, have recurred in slightly different guises in many times and places. Much of the work of tracing their interconnections and combining them into a pattern remains to be done.

To describe what follows as a partial history of urban anthropological thought, however, would only be in some ways correct, and in other ways misleading. Above all it would imply too great an autonomy for the field. Much of what may be the usable past for the urban anthropology of today originated on the other side of academic boundaries, congenial as the ideas in question may now seem to an anthropological perspective. They must be appropriated for example from history, sociology, and geography. There is also the question of the relationship of the urban branch discipline to anthropology as a whole.

One can perhaps see urban anthropologists either as urbanologists with a particular set of tools, or as anthropologists studying a particular kind of social arrangement. The two ways of looking at their work are not totally unrelated but suggest different emphases. I believe much recent urban anthropology lends itself mostly to the former view; its question has been "What is the contribution of anthropology to urban studies?" The comple-

mentary question is, "What is the contribution of urban studies to anthropology?" Both questions deserve to be asked, time and time again to see if new answers may be developing. But if to the first question there have hitherto been mostly standard answers concerning the characteristics of anthropology, the latter may be more theoretically provocative and can perhaps ensure that the communication between general comparative anthropology and its branch in the city becomes more of a two-way flow.

In order to live up to its claim of being "the science of humanity," anthropology must be reconstructed to include an awareness of urban life. It cannot draw only on research in small, uncomplicated communities, mostly in non-western parts of the world. The special contribution of the urban part to the anthropological whole consists of understandings of a range of social and cultural phenomena less often or never found elsewhere, to be seen against the background of human variation in general.

From this point of view, it must be added, the flocking of urban anthropologists to the ethnic enclaves of our cities may seem to be an evasion. These may be as similar to the traditional anthropological research site as one can find in the city, "urban villages" in Gans's (1962a) terms. In the ideal case, a large proportion of the social relationships of the population is contained within the enclave. The urban villager's compatriots form a pool from which not only his neighbors but also his friends and kinsmen are drawn, and he interacts with them in these capacities mostly within the village territory. The smaller the population is, the more likely is it that it will form a dense web of relationships in which one can start out from one person, trace a few links and return on a circuitous path to the same person—and one can do this by a number of different paths. As Gans puts it, everyone might not know everyone else, but they know something about everyone else. Furthermore, there may be considerable continuity over time in these relationships, as villagers see one another day after day and do not frequently experience such changes in their lives as must disrupt their ties to one another. Children who grew up together may well be, as adults, one another's friends, neighbors, and perhaps affinal relatives.

All ethnic quarters are not like this. To contribute maximally to the ethnographic panorama which is one of the greatest resources of anthropology, however, anthropologists of the city perhaps ought to give much of their attention to the very opposite of the urban village. We tend to think of the city rather as a place where people do not know one another too well (at least not initially), where mutual acquaintances are discovered rather than

assumed, and where quick passages may be made through the social structure. Against this it may be held that such phenomena are really no more typical of the city than is the urban village. This may be true in one way but is quite beside the point in another. There is a sense in which we are likely to agree that they are "more urban" than the urban village—they are more likely to be found in the city than elsewhere. If true to our anthropological heritage we are more concerned with form variations than with averages, it is in this sense they are important as manifestations of urbanism.

Throughout this book, our inquiries will thus be directed toward identifying particular insights that the study of city life can offer to anthropology. At the same time it must be understood that our very way of selecting and conceptualizing phenomena may in itself be a contribution of anthropology to urban studies. Urban anthropological thought is fundamentally anthropological thought. Both what may be original about it and what will be borrowed from other sources (and thereafter possibly transformed) are determined by the confrontation of the anthropological mind with urban realities. This may turn out to be a somewhat paradoxical experiment in the adaptability of anthropological analysis. After decades of work in constructing a conceptual apparatus for the understanding of distant traditional societies, constantly fearing the moral and intellectual captivity of ethnocentrism, we now face the test of the apparatus in our own cities. Its effects, I would hope, would include the development of ideas which could prove valuable in other arenas of anthropology as well, although the nature of urban life may show their usefulness in particularly dramatic ways.

I would expect the perspective sketched here to satisfy those anthropologists who are critical of the notion of an urban anthropology because they feel that its differentiation, with a label of its own, would mark its secession from the mother discipline. They are concerned that the establishment of a separate identity would lead to a rejection of anthropological method and theory as unsuitable to urban studies. This is obviously not my conception of urban anthropology. As a branch of anthropology, urban anthropology is no more separate than studies of, say, peasant or nomad societies. Nobody suggests that the anthropological study of peasants has divorced itself from anthropology proper; nobody denies that anthropology has benefited from the growth of peasant studies which not so long ago also constituted a new emerging interest. Yet at the same time it is recognized that the study of peasant societies involves a cluster of concepts and ideas

for which it is practical to have a common designation. Neither more nor less is what I think should be claimed for urban anthropology. It is a recognizable specialization, but at the same time an integral part of anthropology.

On the other hand, a concern with the intellectual contribution of urban studies to anthropology could seem like mere academicism, a retreat from relevance. One may respond to this objection first of all that there is room for more than one urban anthropology. At least at this early stage, certainly, we should be prepared to let a thousand flowers grow, and hope that they will find ways of flourishing in the concrete environment. But furthermore, one may reply that the anthropologist whose field is in Boston or Berlin ought to have as much or as little of a license—whichever way one wants it—to cultivate his curiosity for its own sake as he who goes to live among the Bongo Bongo. To think otherwise would seem to smack of ethnocentrism, however well-intentioned. True, if Boston or Berlin happened to be part of one's own home society, one may be better able to play the active part of an anthropologist-advocate than one can do where one is "only visiting." Yet there seems to be little difference in principle between rejecting that role while staying home and avoiding it by going to Bongo Bongo.

Naturally we may also hope that a more critical attention to theory and conceptualization in the meeting grounds of anthropology and urbanism could lead to a more powerful, more exactly calibrated practical application of anthropology to urban affairs. And, in addition, we should not fall into the trap of seeing only narrowly academic work, and equally narrowly defined involvement in piecemeal social engineering, as the only alternatives facing anthropologists. The relevance of anthropology lies also in its potential, not always realized, of making people reflect on the variability of the human condition and on their own particular situation.

I might elaborate a little on this power of anthropology. In 1935, an English satirist, Charles Duff, published an *Anthropological Report on a London Suburb*, a parody of what an anthropologist of that time might have to say were he to turn his attention to his own society.<sup>4</sup> To follow Professor Vladimir Chernichewski, that fictive "eminent scientist" in whose name Duff wrote:

the science of anthropology is not only concerned with the naked savage, but with the man or woman in plus fours or evening dress. To the true man of science it matters little whether he is dealing with suburb or jungle, modern

jazz dancing or savage sex orgy, forest magic or the anthropomorphic deism of a suburban green-grocer, the cures and charms of the Bantu medicine-man or the work of a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. The difference between ourselves and savages is often more apparent than real; plus fours may conceal a brute, and a coat of paint may cover a tender heart. (Duff 1935:12)

Up to a point the urban anthropologist of today may concur in the relativism of Professor Chernichewski. But Chernichewski uses his licence to make the suburbanite and the savage seem equally ludicrous, and draws ridicule himself by appearing unable to reach a close understanding of either. The tactic we may prefer is one where anthropology, because of the awareness it fosters of any life style as one of an almost infinite number of alternatives, can contribute to an exoticization of the familiar; its newly acquired strangeness may then make possible fresh and incisive thought. Not only should the grassroots perspective of anthropology toward the interrelationships of social life lend itself well to what C. Wright Mills (1961:5) called the sociological imagination, enabling its possessor "to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals." There is also a peculiarly anthropological imagination, entailing a sharpening of his understanding by implicit or explicit comparisons with life under other social and cultural arrangements. It rests on the possibility of understanding oneself by understanding others. This is also a contribution of anthropology to urban studies: urban anthropology as an instrument by which city dwellers can think in new ways about what goes on around them.

It may be useful if I elaborate a little further here on my understandings of the nature of anthropology, as they will continue to color what follows. Perhaps the most characteristic product of anthropological work is ethnography; predominantly qualitative, richly contextualized accounts of human thought and action. Slightly schematically, one may think of such ethnography on the one hand as something intimately connected with the way the anthropological field worker approaches reality, on the other hand as the source from which anthropological theory is extracted and refined, then used to guide the further production of ethnography. This complex of intellectual industry may not seem very efficient. Some observers could feel that too much of the ethnography becomes only dross. One would surely have to see this, however, against the background of the anthropologist's natural concern with discovery. Because it is his tradition to explore unknown social and cultural terrain he wants to maximize sensitivity to the

unexpected—new facts, new connections between facts. It is easy to understand the emphasis on participant observation and “holism” as at least partly motivated by the exploratory character of the enterprise. That use of the anthropological imagination by which even familiar scenes can be made strange and thus available for new discoveries also fits in here.

But at this particular point we may concern ourselves less with anthropological field procedure and more with anthropological thought, with the conceptual structure which is also a part of the anthropological stance toward reality. The perspective I develop here is that of a *social* anthropologist, and it suggests to me one way of drawing the contrast between myself and a kind of archetypical sociologist. This is possibly useful since urban anthropologists seem often to develop a chronic anxiety about not being sufficiently different from urban sociologists—especially from early urban sociologists. Beals (1951:4), many years ago, quoted a sociologist to the effect that if anthropologists continued as they had begun in the study of modern culture, they would in time reinvent sociology, only at least fifty years behind the rest of the field. More recently, Shack (1972:6) has lamented that much urban anthropology seems to be only “the sociology of the 1940s revisited.” Instead, he proposes, urban anthropology should draw on the anthropological tradition of comparative analysis of institutional behavior—as examples he suggests that the principle of complementary opposition or the analysis of developmental cycles in domestic groups may well be of value in urban studies.

I have no objections to these examples, and the extension of general anthropological concepts into the urban field is certainly well in line with my conception of urban anthropology as an integral part of a general comparative view of human society. But this must not degenerate into scholasticism, a neglect of the ways in which urban life has its own peculiar characteristics, the understanding of which can itself help to develop ideas for general anthropology. For such reasons, one may find even “comparative analysis of institutional behavior” too constraining a definition of anthropology, for one of the areas in which the anthropology of complex societies has made important contributions is indeed that of non-institutionalized behavior—entrepreneurship, network manipulation, and so forth.

What difference there is between urban anthropology and sociology, I believe, is better understood in another way. The distinction I have in mind is made most forcefully by Leach (1967) in his comments on a social survey in rural Ceylon. The premise of the sociologist with his statistical

orientation, Leach suggests, is that the field of observation consists of "units of population," "individuals." The social anthropologist instead thinks of his data as made up of "systems of relationship." The anthropological image of society, that is, is more specifically one of episodes of interaction and of more durable interdependencies between people. Individuals, as social anthropologists deal with them, are engaged in contacts with others; they are entities constructed from the roles through which they participate in these varied situations. Sociologists more often try to cope with the paradox of abstracting people from the real diversity of their ongoing linkages, decontextualizing them, yet defining them in some way as social animals. This difference of tendency is what is fundamental. The greater ease with which numbers can be used in dealing with individual as compared to relational data is secondary, conspicuous as it may be as a symptom.

Our emphasis here is thus on a relational perspective—on social situations, on people's shares in these, and on the way a complex social life can be assembled from them. This is admittedly not quite sufficient in dividing urban anthropology strictly from all that passes for urban sociology, or indeed anthropology from sociology. Anthropologists at times find reason to count individuals, and one will find sociologists who think as much in relational terms as any anthropologist. In the urban field the latter is exemplified by classics as well as by a number of scholars with a sociological professional affiliation who have recently become the cool ethnographers of strip joints, after-hours clubs, and massage parlors.<sup>5</sup> Even so, we may discern that as they have evolved, anthropology and sociology have different centers of gravity, not only in choice of subject matter but also analytically. Anthropology as it moves into the city need not become utterly indistinguishable from sociology, and on a moment's reflection we may perhaps realize that the "urban sociology" which as anthropologists we find most congenial is really according to this criterion "urban anthropology." A little arrogantly, we may even sometimes feel that its analysis could have been taken further had this been realized. On the other hand, a rather vague definition of the boundary between sociology and anthropology need not be particularly disturbing. The territorial imperative ought not to be intellectually respectable, and the mutual visiting between anthropology and sociology has often been rewarding when it has occurred. To no small extent the fuzzy dividing line we have is an accident of history. In this book we will not be very respectful toward it.

Those who are not so emphatically *social* anthropologists may be surprised that I have chosen the relational point of view, rather than the concept of culture, as the distinguishing mark of anthropology. In American academia in particular, one often comes across the rather whimsical notion that "sociologists study society, while anthropologists study culture." One might think they could hardly study either without to some extent studying both. Yet certainly the idea contains some truth. There are some anthropologists who deal in cognitions without developing much of a conception of social structure, and sociologists sometimes pay very little attention to such things as ideas, knowledge, beliefs, or values in their depictions of society. In urban anthropology as well, I believe the idea of culture will be much more central than it has customarily been in urban sociology. My reason for giving first place to the relational conception of society may have some resemblance to Fortes' (1953:21) well-known statement that social structure can be seen as "the entire culture of a given people handled in a special frame of theory," but it has a more direct connection to our understanding of urbanism. The latter is considerably more likely to be defined in social than in cultural terms; we tend to generalize about urbanism first of all as a characteristic kind of system of social relationships, and only secondarily and derivatively as a set of ideas held by urbanites. Urban culture, consequently, may be most readily conceptualized when the description of social structure is already well under way.

It seems quite possible, at the same time, that urban studies could help give anthropologists a much more sophisticated conception of cultural processes and organization than they often have. Culture, it has been said, is a matter of traffic in meanings. The image is a felicitous one for our purposes, for it is immediately apparent that urban traffic patterns have some peculiarities, and that some vehicles may be better suited for them than others. The urban social system may foster certain kinds of ideas, or give rise to particular problems of organizing culture. There may be ideas about managing contacts with strangers, if there is an abundance of them in the environment. Or if, as is fairly likely in a complex social system, some individuals at least can be said to be involved in several cultures, the ways of handling this diversity may be a problem for analysis. We will touch on such questions, but hardly more, in this volume.

Such, then, is in the most general terms possible my conception of the anthropological view of society, the background of my treatment of assorted ways of describing and analyzing urban life in the chapters to come. I

might have gone on here to state something similarly synoptically about what I assume to be the realities of urbanism, the other part of the equation in the encounter of the anthropologist with the city. But I will let these understandings unfold gradually in what follows. Instead I will add just a few notes of a more personal kind, which may throw light on the kind of book I have written.

Although I believe it would be useful for urban anthropologists to draw together more tightly for a while, working over some apparatus of concepts of varying scope to see how far these could be helpful in organizing the field intellectually, it may be obvious from what has been said that in my personal choice of such ordering ideas, I am not very loyal to any one anthropological tradition. I have said that I write as a *social* anthropologist; this may be understood as the chosen identity of someone favorably inclined toward the British strand in anthropological thinking. Indeed, I do find the latter's efforts toward a systematic, comprehensive analysis of social relations admirable. But many of its central ideas have a longer history, and over the years they have also spread to other corners of the world, where they have been reshaped. These earlier and later developments, it will probably be seen, have been of as great an interest to me as those of the established center.

Furthermore, the view of urban anthropology presented here is influenced by a couple of other predilections of my own. I want to give some fairly close attention to the shaping and handling of meaning in interactions, thus aiming for a cultural analysis which is flexible enough to match the so far more well-developed social analysis of complex structures. For this purpose I was drawn rather early toward symbolic interactionism, a tendency in American social thought, although mostly just outside its academic anthropology. While my interest in it has not been particularly systematic, it certainly plays a part in the pages which follow. By now, however, I see a rather strong affinity between it and the symbolic anthropology which has more recently become a major component of anthropology in the United States.

My interest in social history will only be in evidence in a more scattered fashion. I do believe, however, that urban anthropologists will do well to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with historical scholarship, especially as they start engaging in more systematic comparative studies of urbanism. I hope to have more to say on this in later work.

Possibly this personal synthesis, incompletely worked out as it may yet

be, has something to do with my own academic experience. I have had the opportunity to do some participant observation among both American and British anthropologists, and since urban anthropology has developed with far greater breadth in the United States than elsewhere, I find myself conducting a sort of dialogue particularly with these developments. But I spend most of my time in an academic milieu without a settled national tradition of its own in the kind of anthropology with which I am concerned. It may be that this has left me with slightly greater freedom to pursue ideas in somewhat idiosyncratic directions, across boundaries of universes of thought which elsewhere might be more clearly demarcated.

But commitments and experiences other than those arising within the circle of professional peers may also have had their effects on what I take urban anthropology to be about. Although I propose that a certain knowledge of ideas about the city, of the works where these ideas have been prominent, and of the people behind these works, are all part of the education of an urban anthropologist, it must also draw considerably on the intertwining of urban themes with his own biography. Like a great many other anthropologists, I have spent virtually all my life in urban areas. (Perhaps we glimpse here a further reason why the discipline has turned increasingly to studies in cities—many of us do not know very much about the practicalities of farming, keeping domestic animals, and other aspects of living closer to nature, and are in this respect ill prepared for learning about rural ways of life.) I also like cities, using other habitats mostly briefly for contrast. Going off for a holiday, I am more likely to seek out distant streets than the mountains or the beach. I have been an ordinary inhabitant for fairly lengthy periods of Swedish, American, and English cities, and more briefly I have been able to do some anthropological sightseeing in urban communities in Africa, Asia, Australia, Oceania, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as elsewhere in Europe. This has provided opportunities for reflecting over what is different and what remains in some way the same between towns and cities in varied places. Furthermore, three experiences of anthropological field work have also influenced my thinking about urban life—one more indirectly, two very directly.

In the late 1960s, I spent two years in Washington, D.C., doing what I would now consider (in line with what has been said above) anthropology in the city, but for the greater part not urban anthropology in the strict sense. In other words, the focus of my interest was not on the specifically

urban character of the life styles I became involved with, although I gradually became more aware of such a line of inquiry, and more concerned with it. This was a study centered on a black low-income neighborhood, conducted almost wholly through participant observation in order to make my researcher role minimally ambiguous in a rather tense atmosphere. The book which resulted (Hannerz 1969) dealt with the interplay of ethnic boundedness and limited economic opportunity in the shaping of a range of collective adaptations; a complex culture anchored both in the past and in the present. Among the specific themes were the dynamics of ghetto sex roles, shared knowledge which served as a source for a common identity among ghetto inhabitants, and the relationship between their thoughts and deeds and American mainstream culture. Less conspicuously, however, I was dealing also for instance with the uncertainties both I and they faced in handling street life. More than before, I realized that one could sometimes be forced to think of the unknown people in the urban setting as problems. I also became conscious of the difficulties of choosing and delimiting a unit for observation in urban study. My neighborhood could be seen as in certain ways like an urban village, but for some people it was not as equally significant an arena of their lives as it was for others. If certain individuals hardly ever moved far away from it, others mostly came home to sleep, and sometimes not even that all too regularly. There could be close ties of kinship and friendship with people in the rural South, and a general lack of personal acquaintances outside the black community. Since Washington had such a large black population, however, the ghetto as a whole sufficed for arrangements of social relationships which were neither compact nor static. As a further example of the way problems of urbanism mingled with those of poverty and ethnicity, I could note that I occasionally wondered about the differences between black ghetto life in Washington and other cities, like Newark or Detroit. To what extent did the nature of the entire community affect the ethnic community nested within it? If you have seen one ghetto, have you really seen them all?

My second field experience, in 1970 (and reported in Hannerz 1974a), was a rather brief study of local politics in the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean, and its relationship to urban anthropology is hardly obvious. I was indeed based in the capital—named George Town, like so many other places in what were once parts of the British Empire—but it was little more than the main village in a very small territory. Actually, the relevance of the experience to my understanding of urbanism is that it offered

a considerable contrast. Caymanian society is the closest I have come as a practicing ethnographer to a small-scale social structure, and this was not least evident in its politics. The formal machinery of government was based on ideas imported from a mass society, with highly differentiated roles and impersonal procedures. The Caymanians' acquaintance with each other, on the other hand, was sometimes too close for comfort, and more or less their entire personalities tended to become involved in interactions. This was also the way they preferred to do their politicking, and so its clash with the niceties of government had some dramatic moments. For me it was food for thought about the part played by personal information in the variable constructions of social relationships.

My most recent field work has been in Nigeria, in the mid-1970s, and in this case the objectives of research have been urban anthropological in the strict sense. Having behind me a study of life in an enclave of a large city, I now wanted to experiment conceptually and methodologically with the study of an entire urban community. The field site chosen was Kafanchan, a town which has grown up at an important railroad junction during the past fifty years and which now exhibits great occupational and ethnic diversity.<sup>6</sup> The mosaic is a popular metaphor when we try to summarize the character of such a community, and it is certainly in some ways an appropriate one. But if some of the groups which constitute the community are relatively well-bounded, hard-edged in a mosaic-like fashion, others overlap or blend into one another. Furthermore, the history of Kafanchan has in some ways reflected the volatile past of Nigeria as a whole, and this is one of the reasons why the diachronic dimension of its social structure is of great importance. The mosaic turns into a kaleidoscope, where the multitude of parts again and again take on new configurations.

I have made a beginning in Kafanchan toward grasping the totality of the clusters of relationships ordered along ethnic, occupational, religious, recreational, and other lines. It is a goal the pursuit of which takes one into churches, law courts, market places, palm wine bars, tenement yards, and a variety of other settings. Ideally—and the study has certainly not yet reached there—one would want a picture of the urban social structure from top to bottom, from the most to the least inclusive sets of linkages, even if the latter can be no more than sampled. In the process, also, one gains an appreciation of the way these varied components of community life are ordered into physical co-existence in a restricted space. Undoubtedly this spatial and visual organization must impress itself on the minds of

urban ethnographers in many settings. Kafanchan has also sharpened my awareness, however, of the fact that to understand an urban community as a whole, one must see it in its wider context. The town would not have come into existence if it were not for the construction of a Nigerian railroad system. Its site might still have been a piece of savanna land, partially used by subsistence cultivators in a nearby hamlet and occasionally traversed by cattle herders. Now that things turned out differently, Kafanchan has become the hub of a small region, served (or perhaps sometimes rather ruled or exploited) by the bureaucrats, traders, doctors, nurses, teachers, religious leaders, and artisans of the town. Peasants go there to sell their produce, but also sometimes for the pleasures of watching the urban scene. Leaving out all these connections between town and country, one would get a very odd picture of a place like Kafanchan.

These impressions from three fields, then, may adumbrate many of the questions raised in this book, as they have been a major part of my own course work in urban anthropology. In the pages to follow, however, Washington, George Town, and Kafanchan are not conspicuously present. The materials for an urban anthropology that I will emphasize are such as have received rather wide recognition for their importance in urban research, although putting them together in this way, and interpreting them as we do, may be unusual. The chapters do not all cut out similar slices of urban thought. First, in the next chapter, we concentrate on Chicago, and the remarkable pioneering work in urban ethnography carried out there particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. This is one instance where we disregard the boundary between sociology and anthropology, since what we are dealing with is "the Chicago School of sociology." But in the end, we find the contrasting styles of conceptualization which mark the boundary of some significance after all. From here, we move in chapter 3 to a more wide-ranging search for ideas of what urbanism may be about. This could be regarded as the central chapter of the book, and at the same time the one of most diverse contents. All kinds of cities appear in it, and several disciplines. In chapter 4, there is a more distinct focus resembling that on the Chicago School. We deal here again with a particular form of urbanism, that of the Central African mining towns, as studied during the late colonial era by the anthropologists of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (also identifiable as members of "the Manchester School of anthropology"). There is a close connection also between this group and the topic of

chapter 5, network analysis, since it has played a prominent part in developing that mode of conceptualizing social relations. But we draw here on a more varied collection of contributors to network thinking, not all within academic anthropology. Network analysis, of course, is not confined to urban research, but it seems useful to deal with it here since it may be of particular utility in understanding aspects of life in the city. The lead part in chapter 6 is played by Erving Goffman, a brilliant and somewhat controversial thinker who is again positioned so as to straddle sociology and anthropology. With his work as a point of departure, we consider the problem of defining the person—both the construction and the presentation of self—under urban circumstances. This is also a return to where we started, as Goffman is a Chicagoan of a later generation. In the last chapter, we will try to pull together the threads hanging loose from its predecessors, delineating what we have made urban anthropology out to be.

A small army of guides will thus be enlisted to help us explore the city. There are yet others who could have taken us on additional tours, but I have also seen reasons to leave out some of the more obvious candidates. The *Yankee City* studies of Lloyd Warner and his associates surely constitute an important body of research with an acknowledged anthropological inspiration. Yet their impact has been greater in the field of social stratification than in that of urbanism, and it is perhaps no cause of great surprise that urban anthropologists today pay little attention to them. Besides, enough may already have been said—"there have been so many criticisms of Warner that it might well be time to call for a moratorium on them" (Bell and Newby 1971:110). A similar case can probably be made for excluding the Lynds on Middletown, and (closer to us in time) the "culture of poverty" debate, so central to what was understood as urban anthropology in the United States in the late 1960s. I was involved in it myself through my Washington study; it seems sufficiently exemplified by the volumes authored by Lewis (1966) and Valentine (1968) and edited by Leacock (1971). A complex of research which I would have been more tempted to deal with is that of Latin American urbanism, carried out not least by anthropologists from the United States and Britain. For one thing, it could have been a useful counterpart to what is said about African towns and cities in chapter 4. The earlier work, however, mostly on squatter settlements, seems less rich in analytical ideas about urbanism, while the theoretically important second wave with its concern for wider regional and

international connections is so much a thing of the present that it would be difficult here to handle its continuing development. We are, to repeat, mostly concerned with retrieving a usable past.

So let us begin with Chicago, as it was in its adolescence.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# *Chicago Ethnographers*

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The growth of Chicago in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from practically nothing to a great metropolis, was spectacular. From the eastern states and from much of Europe people flocked to get some share, large or small, of the wealth created by the meat-packing industry, the steel works, the wheat exchange, and industry and commerce of other varieties. Now and then a newcomer would be successful beyond imagination. Others found themselves in that hopeless poverty which was so often the reverse side of a rapidly industrializing society under laissez-faire conditions. Some of the recent arrivals succeeded only by turning to crime, but surely this was no certain road to a comfortable life for everyone who tried it. In the young working class, unions and political groups were organizing toward collective action; on May 1, 1886, what was probably the world's first May Day demonstration marched up Michigan Avenue in favor of the eight-hour work day. A few days later, a workers' protest meeting in Haymarket Square ended in chaos, as the police moved in to break it up and a bomb exploded, provoking indiscriminate shooting with the death of a number of policemen and protesters as a result. The "Haymarket Affair" for a long time remained a symbol of the threats of foreign ideologies such as anarchism and socialism to American society.

This volatile Chicago was also a point of entry to the West, so some newcomers moved on again. But toward the end of the nineteenth century this option was no longer as attractive as before. In conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair of 1893—an event of pride to those Chicagoans who saw their city as a success story—that meeting of historians was held where the young Frederick Jackson Turner noted the end of the frontier era, at the same time as he speculated on its significance for American culture. In the decades which followed, the further expansion of American society would be even more concentrated in its cities, with Chicago continuing to take a prominent place.

Like many other changing cities, Chicago has covered up much of the tracks of its earlier history. Hull House, the early settlement house out of which a small band of idealists led by Jane Addams operated, trying to ameliorate conditions in the surrounding slums, still stands, but now somewhat isolated as a small museum on the outskirts of a new academic complex. A few hundred yards away, Haymarket Square has been cut into two by a thruway system, and of a monument erected to commemorate the part of the policemen in "defending the city" on that disastrous May evening, only the base remains, hardly noticeable if one is not looking for it. Several versions of the statue which used to be on top have been blown up over the years, one of them by Weathermen in 1969.

But if the city no longer looks quite the same, Chicago's youth has been documented forcefully in many other ways. There were the novelists. Theodore Dreiser, in *Sister Carrie*, showed a city which seemed to make growth itself, and the corruption of young newcomers, its main business; Upton Sinclair traced the dismal career of the Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis Rudkus from slaughterhouse worker to jail inmate to steelworker to tramp to robber to political crook in *The Jungle*. There are Jane Addams' recollections of *Twenty Years at the Hull House*. There is the chapter devoted to Chicago politics in Lincoln Steffens' *The Shame of the Cities*, in which perhaps surprisingly he found that the city, in 1903 at least, was not really among the most corrupt.

Not least, however, one local institution which is still alive and well has played an important role in shaping our understanding not only of early twentieth-century Chicago but of urbanism in general. From World War I and on into the 1930s, sociologists at the University of Chicago turned out a series of studies based on investigations in their own city which have been generally recognized as the beginning of modern urban studies, and as the most important body of social research on any single city in the contemporary world. Although it has been reviewed before, we may remind ourselves of it once more in order to incorporate it explicitly into the heritage of urban anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

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#### THE BEGINNINGS: THOMAS and PARK

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Young institutions, unless they are too respectfully intent on imitating their venerable predecessors, stand a chance of doing some innovating. The University of Chicago opened its doors in 1892 and soon had the first

sociology department in an American university. This was a period when recruits to the new discipline generally came in from other more established fields, and perhaps for such reasons American sociology at the time could be divided into two major tendencies: a speculative social philosophy, theorizing on a grand scale about the bases of human society and social progress, and a social survey movement, conceptually weak but intensely concerned with getting together the data about undesirable features of the growing industrial society. (A half century or so later the latter would have a parallel in the first wave of research in Third World cities; see Mitchell 1966b:39–40.) Both tendencies were concerned with improving the human condition, but between them there was a great gap. Because of what he did to close it, the most important appointment in the first twenty years of the department, at least as far as lasting intellectual influence is concerned, was probably that of William Isaac Thomas.

Thomas insisted on systematic empirical investigation and took part in gradually removing the study of social organization from the biologicistic inclinations which had characterized it earlier. He emphasized the need to understand the participants' view, the "definition of the situation" as he termed it, and as a methodological counterpart to this theoretical innovation, he pioneered in the use of "personal documents"—diaries, letters, and autobiographies as well as accounts of life experience collected by psychiatrists, social workers, or social scientists. In an autobiographical statement of his own, Thomas has suggested that he first stumbled onto this method accidentally:

I trace the origin of my interest in the document to a long letter picked up on a rainy day in the alley behind my house, a letter from a girl who was taking a training course in a hospital, to her father concerning family relationships and discords. It occurred to me at the time that one would learn a great deal if one had a great many letters of this kind. (Baker 1973:250)

He was able to demonstrate many of his ideas in his great study of European immigrant groups, which took him on wide-ranging travels in search of new materials. In the end it narrowed down to the Poles, in a collaboration with the young Polish social philosopher Florian Znaniecki, who thereby launched his own American career. The five volumes of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* were published between 1918 and 1920, a landmark in American sociology.

At about the same time, Thomas left the University of Chicago, under

the threat of a personal scandal. (A detective found him in a hotel room with someone else's wife and was in little doubt about how to define the situation; Thomas defended himself against the charges, but in a rather provocative manner. The moral climate at the university was apparently much the same as when Thorstein Veblen left it under similar circumstances a decade or so earlier.) He left behind him a complex of important ideas, including, apart from those already mentioned—and a little ironically perhaps, under the circumstances—a concept of social disorganization, “the decrease of the influence of existing social rules of behavior upon individual members of the group,” which emphasized social process rather than individual characteristics. This idea would have a central place in Chicago urban studies. Yet for all his own contributions, the most important part Thomas played in the growth of urban sociology probably consisted in bringing to the university Robert Ezra Park.

When he arrived to take up a post in Chicago, Park already had fifty years of varied life behind him. He had grown up in a Minnesota town, in a neighborhood where Scandinavian immigrants dominated, gone to the University of Michigan, and soon afterwards joined the *Minneapolis Journal*. His many years as a journalist did much to develop his point of view toward urban life, for as his city editor realized that he would stay longer on a story than anybody else, Park became an investigative reporter. It was a period when the popular press went in for reform, muckraking had begun, although not yet under that label. Park only wanted to carry on this work more systematically. He reported on opium dens and gambling houses, discussed the causes of alcoholism on the basis of case materials, and tracked down the source of a diphtheria epidemic by drawing a spot map of its spread. With a beginning in these experiences, he later wrote in an oft-quoted passage, he had probably “covered more ground, tramping about in cities in different parts of the world, than any other living man.”

But in the long run the progress of journalism left Park dissatisfied, and he moved on to become a student of philosophy at Harvard. After a year there, he continued his academic work in Germany where he acquired a thorough knowledge of European intellectual currents, attended lectures of Georg Simmel and others, and took his doctorate at Heidelberg with a slim dissertation on collective behavior. This could seem to be a long way from the life of the journalist, but in a way it was all an outgrowth of his earlier experiences. Public opinion, he wrote in his dissertation, was too easily manipulated by catch words; “modern journalism, which is supposed to in-

struct and direct public opinion by reporting and discussing events, usually turns out to be simply a mechanism for controlling collective attention."

Returning to America, Park soon wanted out of the academic world again, and turned once more to reform. He became a press agent of the Congo Reform Association, an organization of Baptist missionaries who wanted to draw attention to King Leopold's misrule in the Congo, and he contributed articles to *Everybody's*, a leading muckraking publication. He was planning to go and study the situation on the spot when he was drawn instead to become involved with American race relations. Booker T. Washington, the most influential Negro leader at the time, invited Park to his institute at Tuskegee, and there he remained as Washington's assistant for many years. He got to know the South intimately, and he also accompanied Washington on a study tour of Europe to compare the situation of southern Negroes with that of European peasants and workers. At Tuskegee Washington and Park also held an international conference on the race problem, and it was at this conference, in 1911, that Thomas first encountered Park. A couple of years later he was able to bring him to the University of Chicago. To begin with, it was supposed to be a short-term appointment only; as it turned out, Park remained for twenty years.

### A VISION of URBANISM

Throughout these Chicago years there was a steady flow of analytical comment on contemporary life from Park's pen. Given his experience of American race relations and the continuous impact of immigration on American society, it is not surprising that minority problems constituted one of his major substantive areas of concern; the other was urbanism, and the two were not always easily separated. He expressed himself mostly through articles and prefaces to the books of his students. In this way he kept adding continuously to a structure of ideas, but the outline of the structure was apparently quite clear in his mind by the time this period began. In the first and most famous of his urban papers, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment," published in 1915 not long after his arrival in Chicago, one could see a vision of urbanism which was at once the product of long experience and the statement of a research program for years to follow.

Park was capable of thinking about urbanism both on a grand scale and in minute detail. His familiarity with writers such as Simmel and Spengler

told him that the city was a force in world history, capable of shaping and releasing human nature in new ways. At the same time he was the man who had spent a decade of his life on the newsbeat, observing what was going on in the streets and behind the façades. In his first paper on urban research both these sides of his interests were visible. On the one hand, he noted the varying characteristics of urban neighborhoods; how some were isolated little worlds to themselves, homes of immigrant populations with few ties to the surrounding society, while others were anonymous agglomerations of individuals on the move, and others again, such as the vice areas, were better characterized by how they were used then by who lived there. These different neighborhoods all needed to be described and understood. But at the same time the big change which urbanism brought was that of an increasing division of labor which served to break down or modify the older type of social organization based on such factors as kinship, caste, and ties of locality. The division of labor created a new kind of rational, specialized man—or rather many kinds, for each occupation could set its own stamp on people. The practical implication for research was that a variety of ways of making a living ought to be investigated:

the shopgirl, the policeman, the peddler, the cabman, the nightwatchman, the clairvoyant, the vaudeville performer, the quack doctor, the bartender, the ward boss, the strikebreaker, the labor agitator, the school teacher, the reporter, the stockbroker, the pawnbroker; all of these are characteristic products of the conditions of city life; each, with its special experience, insight, and point of view determines for each vocational group and for the city as a whole its individuality. (Park 1952:24–25)

A number of institutions also deserved study. What happened in the city to the family, the church, the courts of justice? What new organizational forms arose under urbanism? There was, again, the newspaper and its part in molding public opinion. What kind of person was the newspaperman? A detective? A historian? A gossip? There was the stock market: what were the psychology and the sociology of its fluctuations? There was political organization: what was the nature of social relationships in machine politics and in reform politics? Partly, these were questions in the field of collective behavior, and so Park could return to some of his past academic preoccupations.

There was a constant concern with “the moral order.”<sup>2</sup> In any society, Park felt, the individual is engaged in a struggle to preserve his self-respect and his point of view, but he can succeed in this only by earning the recog-

dition of others. This is what turns the individual into a person. But in the city this moral order of relationships is fraught with special difficulties. Money rather than civility becomes the medium of exchange. People hardly know one another: "Under these circumstances the individual's status is determined to a considerable degree by conventional signs—by fashion and 'front'—and the art of life is largely reduced to skating on thin surfaces and a scrupulous study of style and manners" (Park 1952:47).

This idea of the superficiality of urban social relations would be a recurrent theme in Chicago urban studies. Yet Park was fully aware that close and stable ties also existed in the city, and that the urban conditions had an influence on the way in which these would sort themselves out. In the city there were enough people to sustain a variety of styles of life, and enough freedom for many groups not to have to be excessively bothered with the disapproval of others.

. . . social contagion tends to stimulate in divergent types the common temperamental differences, and to suppress characters which unites them with the normal types about them. Association with others of their own ilk provides also not merely a stimulus, but a moral support for the traits they have in common which they would not find in a less select society. In the great city the poor, the vicious, and the delinquent, crushed together in an unhealthful and contagious intimacy, breed in and in, soul and body . . . We must then accept these "moral regions" and the more or less eccentric and exceptional people who inhabit them, in a sense, at least, as part of the natural, if not normal, life of a city. (Park 1952:50-51)

There is at least a part of theory of urban cultural process here, some of which we are perhaps willing to accept, and some of which we will most likely find unsatisfactory. The vocabulary is by now no longer ours, and we may feel ill at ease with it. The emphasis on the interactional basis of cultural growth, which one might see as the core of the statement, appears sound, and we will return to it. Park also carefully noted that it was a general analytical point, not one concerning only the criminal or abnormal. The city makes it possible for different people to keep different company; and a company of like characteristics can provide the moral underpinnings for behavior which others might frown upon. In the small community each one of these people might have been the only person of a kind, and the pressures of conformity would have hindered expressions of what would then be mere idiosyncrasy. Park dealt less effectively, however, with just what it was that people brought to interact over. Here he tended to fall

back on an individual psychology, treating personal inclinations to one kind of behavior or other as more or less given. Thus the city was seen more as a permissive than as an actively shaping influence—it tended to “spread out and lay bare to the public view all the human characters and traits which are ordinarily obscured and suppressed.” By now we would probably want to push our inquiry rather further into the social-structural determinants of behavior in the city.

To describe the separate “moral regions” or “social worlds” became one of the major tasks of the Chicago sociologists. But the fact of the coexistence of these worlds in the city could also lead to further questions about the relationships between them. In a passage which could by itself seem enough to stimulate much research, Park gave a glimpse of one way in which they could interact:

The processes of segregation establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate. This makes it possible for individuals to pass quickly and easily from one moral milieu to another, and encourages the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, but otherwise widely separated, worlds. (Park 1952:47)

This facet of cultural organization in the city, however, was to a much greater extent left unattended by his followers in the years to come. One might perhaps see the writings on the “marginal man,” launched in 1923 by Park himself, as taking up this thread, although many of them lost themselves in a quagmire of inadequate conceptualization. But here as elsewhere in their work on the moral order, Park and the other Chicagoans tended to leave behind them unfinished business rather than failure in developing an understanding of urban life.

#### As with PLANTS: The SPATIAL ORDER of the CITY

There was rather more systematic effort in illuminating what was seen as the other major dimension in urban life—indeed in all human life—that of the raw struggle for existence. Already in his first major paper on the city Park had noted the extremely varying characteristics of the neighborhoods; he could also witness that these characteristics did not remain stable over time. In the words of one of his students (Zorbaugh 1929:235), an observer of the Chicago scene in the early twentieth century could see how

fashionable residential streets have become the heart of the rooming house district; rooming houses have become tenements, tenements have been reclaimed for studios and shops. Group has succeeded group, the world of fashion has become the world of furnished rooms, and into this world have come the slatternly residents of the slum. The Irish Kilgubbin has become the Swedish Smoky Hollow; the Swedish Smoky Hollow, a Little Sicily; and now Little Sicily becomes a Negro quarter.

Park reflected on these changing patterns in a series of papers in which he developed his "human ecology." This was an analytical perspective where the peculiarly human phenomena of consensus and communication were of negligible importance, and where the inspiration from social Darwinism was obvious. There was a stratum of human life in which people tended to behave like other living things, a "subsocal" or "biotic" stratum where competition was the basic form of coexistence. While such tendencies might or might not be checked by higher-order factors, such as moral constraints, they had a great impact in shaping the modern city. Park found the analogy with plant ecology particularly fitting and elaborated on the utility for urban studies of such concepts as dominance, symbiosis, and succession. Most important, however, was competition, and he saw it as a competition for space. Thus the strongest inhabitants of the urban environment would occupy the most advantageous locations, and others would adjust to their demands. Over time, the former might expand so that others would have to relocate. The principle of symbiosis, according to which different inhabitants could benefit mutually from coexistence in an environment, was a modifying factor in the general scheme.

Park's own writings on human ecology were mostly statements of general principles coupled with apt illustrations. It fell to younger associates of his, particularly Roderick McKenzie and Ernest Burgess, to elaborate on the concepts and show practical applications. The latter especially did so within the Chicago context. As human ecology was conceived as a sociology of space and since competition was the major force of regulation, it was understood that the various human activities would be distributed according to land values. From this Burgess derived his famous ideal-type diagram of the city as a series of concentric circles (figure 1). Inside the first circle was the central business district—in Chicago "the Loop"—with the highest land values. The second circle contained a "zone in transition," which was being invaded from the center by business and light industry. This made it unattractive to most inhabitants who therefore escaped to the residential areas of the more peripheral zones. But the zone in transition

still contained artists' colonies, immigrant neighborhoods, and rooming-house areas. They would only move on as they could afford to reject their deteriorated environment or as the affluent center forced them further out by its growth. Economic processes thus created "natural areas," as the Chicago sociologists put it—neighborhoods which had not been consciously designed but just grew.

This view of the city has come in for much criticism, partly due to the tendency of Burgess and others to equivocate on the question whether their interpretations were supposed to hold true for Chicago only, or for any industrial city, or for any city of whatever kind.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it would have been prudent to make only more limited claims. The scheme appeared for example to presuppose a far-reaching division of labor with very differentiated land uses and a separation between residence and work; it ignored the fact that travel in the city would be much more inconvenient under some circumstances than others (depending not least on transport technology), so that suburban living could be a nuisance to people who still had some choice; it excluded consideration of the natural features of the urban site; and not least, the assumption need not always hold true that land was indeed on the market, and held no values of other kinds.

Of course, the model did apply quite well to Chicago, even if Burgess' circles had to extend into Lake Michigan on one side and north-south differences had to be played down. This was a new city where no sentiments attached to particular areas had become strong enough to upset economic processes, and it was a flat place. And whatever limitations the frame of thinking had, it was important in orienting the Chicago sociologists. In the case of the studies to which we will give particular attention below, it gave them an anchorage in particular territories, mostly within the zone in transition. But as we shall see, in these instances locating the phenomena in space was generally only the prolegomenon to ethnographic work where the ecological concepts as they stood were overtaken by cultural and other factors of human consciousness. In other studies, the spatial dimension remained more central, as they focused on the large scale study of the distributions of particular social phenomena in the city. We have seen that Park, as a journalist, had already experimented with spot maps of things he was investigating. At the University of Chicago the idea was taken up as a major research tool, and Burgess in particular devoted classes in "social pathology" regularly to such mapmaking. The outcome of the accumulating knowledge of this sort was a series of correlative studies using