CHAPTER 1

THE CITY AS A MOSAIC OF SOCIAL WORLDS

RESIDENTIAL DIFFERENTIATION

The urban community is neither an undifferentiated mass nor a haphazard collection of buildings and people. In the residential differentiation of the city the urban fabric comes to resemble a ‘mosaic of social worlds’.¹ Similar populations cluster together and come to characterize their areas. As Park put it:

In the course of time every sector and quarter of the city takes on something of the character and qualities of its inhabitants. Each separate part of the city is inevitably stained with the peculiar sentiments of its population. The effect of this is to convert what was at first a mere geographical expression into a neighbourhood, that is to say, a locality with sentiments, traditions, and a history of its own.²

The residential differentiation of the urban population takes place in terms of many attributes and in many ways. Almost any criterion which can be used for differentiating between individuals and groups may become the basis for their physical separation. The process of separation may be accomplished through force, through a variety of sanctions, through a voluntary aggregation designed as a defence against unfamiliar ideas or customs or as an escape from persecution and discrimination, and through a selection of market forces.³ In much early town planning residential differentiation and segregation appear as prime characteristics. In town plans by Dürer and Fürtenbach different crafts or guilds are allocated different blocks and a rough zonation in terms of wealth is envisaged.⁴ In many towns of medieval Europe, and more recently in those of much of Asia and North Africa, the urban fabric is physically divided into wards and quarters. Descriptions of the characteristics of life in the various quarters form a favourite literary enterprise.⁵ The place of quarters in the ecological structure of Arab cities is described by Baer:

Old districts, and even more so, the old city, are divided into quarters. In the old city they are fairly secluded from one another. The number of entrances to the

⁵ E.g. The Arabian Nights. See also L. Mumford, The City in History (New York, 1961).
The urban mosaic

quarter is small, and each has a gate which may be shut, and sometimes is, even in these days. The quarter was an independent unit until recently (and in some cities still is), with its own mukhtar . . . religious functionary, night-watchman, etc. . . . In the not so distant past there used to be disputes and sometimes actual fights between groups of youths belonging to different parts of the city. In many cities there used to be much segregation of religious sects by quarter, and in some parts this remains the case . . . Perhaps even more commonly, members of a single linguistic or national group live together in a quarter.¹

A similar theme is reported for cities south of the Sahara: ‘In some parts of the West African territories . . . members of tribes other than the dominant one live customarily in separate parts of the town . . . within a distinct administrative unit with its own chief and elders.’² In Japan, Yazaki remarks that the divisions of the ancient castle town ‘were planned by the ruler and each section of the city was occupied exclusively by members of a particular status group. Not only was the style of residences altered in the different status areas but the mode of administration differed also . . . ’³ In India the traditional social differentiation in terms of caste was mirrored in an equally rigid pattern of residential differentiation, with the outcasts being segregated beyond the city limits. The patterns of residential differentiation and segregation in the modern city may be less obvious than is generally the case in the pre-industrial community, but the absences of walls and other physical signs of demarcation by no means implies any lessening of differentiation – let alone its disappearance.⁴

Residential differentiation and the resulting segregation of populations serve many purposes. Physical isolation symbolizes social isolation and decreases the chances of undesirable and potentially embarrassing contact. Furthermore, segregation may provide a means of group support in the face of a hostile environment and it may even lead to administrative efficiency.⁵ For whatever reason, residential differentiation characterizes both the pre-industrial and the industrial city, both the laissez-faire and the planned, both the capitalist and the socialist. The physical isolation of differing populations seems an inevitable concomitant of ‘urbanism as a way of life’.⁶

Sociological interest in the patterns of residential differentiation and segregation in the modern city has focused on those reflecting socio-economic status and ethnic variables. Although there are considerable problems at

⁴ In times of inter-group stress physical barriers may appear even in the modern city. Northern Ireland and the United States were both replete with examples during 1969.
⁵ The policy of some housing administrations of concentrating their ‘problem tenants’ in particular streets may be rationalized in terms of the savings in travel time which it occasions for various social welfare agencies.
⁶ Wirth sees spatial differentiation as being the inevitable result of the size, density and heterogeneity of the urban community.
The city as a mosaic of social worlds

both the conceptual and operational levels in developing a valid measure of residential differentiation which can be used for comparative purposes,¹ a growing body of empirical reports is at hand. Much of the work is based on the index of dissimilarity, a measure of the net displacement necessary if one population is to reproduce the percentage distribution pattern of another.² Applied to data on residential distributions the index of dissimilarity shows the net percentage of one population who would have to relocate in order to reproduce the residential pattern of the other. A modification of the index of dissimilarity yields a measure of segregation defined as the degree of residential dissimilarity between the named group and the remainder of the population.³ In the case of complete identity of distribution patterns the index of dissimilarity will be zero; in the case of complete dissimilarity – where no members of the one population live in any areas inhabited by the other – the index will be 100.

The existence of gross ethnic differences appears to be associated with relatively extreme residential differentiation. Residential dissimilarity correlates highly with social distance: the less desirable a given group is as intimate role-partners for another the greater will be their residential dissimilarity.⁴ Ethnic groups separated from each other by social differences are less likely to live in similar areas than are those who differ merely say in language. Thus, in the United States, Negroes exhibit consistently higher indexes of residential dissimilarity when compared with the distribution of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants than do members of various European migrant groups. On a block-by-block basis Taeuber and Taeuber report that Negroes have indexes of residential dissimilarity of between 60 and 98 when compared with Whites in 207 U.S. cities.⁵ The mean value of the index is nearly 88. In order to reproduce the block-by-block distribution pattern of White Americans at least 88 per cent of the Negroes living in the 207 cities would have to relocate. Amongst other ethnic minorities the degree of physical separation from members of the host society varies according to such factors as their similarity in terms of language, religion and occupation. In Australian cities, British-born migrants show the least degree of separation from the Australian-born, followed by other Northern European groups, then Central European migrants, Italians and Greeks and, finally, East

³ Timms, 'Quantitative techniques'.
⁵ Taeuber and Taeuber, Negroes in Cities.
The urban mosaic

Europeans. A similar ordering of the groups is apparent in terms of inter-marriage and in that of subjective social distances estimated by the native population. In Brisbane 60 per cent of the Italian migrants, 68 per cent of those from Greece, and over 75 per cent of those from Latvia, Yugoslavia, Malta, Hungary, and the Ukraine would have to move to other collectors’ districts to reproduce the pattern of the Australian-born population.

The residential differentiation of socio-economic status groups within the city follows a similar pattern to that in terms of ethnicity. Again, the greater the social distance between two groups the greater is likely to be their residential dissimilarity. In Brisbane some 50 per cent of the unskilled manual workers would have to relocate in order to reproduce the census collector’s district distribution pattern exhibited by professional workers. The professional workers are themselves somewhat segregated from the rest of the population: 45 per cent of them would have to move to new areas if their distribution pattern were to fit that of the rest of the population. Within ethnic districts socio-economic status operates as a secondary form of differentiation: thus within the ethnic community the residential dissimilarity between socio-economic status groups repeats that found in the wider population. Little evidence is forthcoming about trends in the residential dissimilarity of socio-economic status groups although some limited data on Brisbane suggest that the degree of separation between the groups may be increasing. If this is indeed the case it is likely that the explanation lies in the increased mobility of the population and in changes in the structure of the building industry. With increased mobility households have a greater opportunity to indulge their residential desires – high amongst which are several considerations closely relating to segregation. According to Keller: ‘Thus the paradox: the more mobility exists and thus the more chances for equalizing statuses the less egalitarian people are as regards their houses, their addresses, and their neighbourhoods.’ The construction of mass housing projects serves but to accentuate the trend.

The residential differentiation of the urban community in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status is compounded by several other factors. Different age groups occur in different areas and well-marked cyclic effects

2 Timms, 'Quantitative techniques'.
5 In a study of South Brisbane, Moore reports a general increase in residential dissimilarity between occupation categories over the period 1954–61. Moreover, the greatest displacement was exhibited by the highest status categories. E. G. Moore, 'Residential Mobility in an Urban Context', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Queensland, 1966.
The city as a mosaic of social worlds

may be noted. Different parts of the city are marked by higher or lower proportions of the unmarried, the separated and divorced, and the widowed. There is a systematic patterning of criminality, mental illness, and various other forms of aberrant behaviour. Voting patterns, membership in associations and a host of other participatory phenomena vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The effect of residential differentiation is to divide the urban fabric into a series of more or less distinct sub-communities. Each area is associated with a particular combination of population characteristics. In turn these characteristics become part of the local environment. ‘Each area with its particular characteristics leaves its cultural stamp upon the people who reside there, and affects them in numerous and diverse ways.’¹ The city becomes a mosaic rather than an unitary phenomenon.

The major portion of the present study is concerned with the factors and processes which underlie the differential distribution of various population groups over the city, but first it is necessary to explore in more detail the relationship between population and area at the local, neighbourhood level.

NATURAL AREAS

Much of the conceptual framework of urban sociology is derived from the pioneering work of the classical human ecologists.² Based on their analyses of Chicago and of other rapidly growing mid-Western cities the ecologists produced a body of theory and concepts which is unparalleled in its integration and has provided the foundation of most later efforts in urban analysis. Central to the concern of the Chicago ecologists is the concept of the natural area. Writing in 1964, Burgess defines the natural area as ‘a territorial unit whose distinctive characteristics – physical, economic, and cultural – are the result of the unplanned operation of ecological and social processes’.³ Nearly forty years earlier an extended definition of the concept was provided by Zorbaugh:

The structure of the individual city ... is built about [a] framework of transportation, business organization and industry, park and boulevard systems, and topographical features. All of these break the city up into numerous smaller areas, which we may call natural areas, in that they are the unplanned, natural products of the city’s growth. Railroad and industrial belts, parks and boulevard systems, rivers

The urban mosaic

and rises of land acting as barriers to movements of population tend to fix the boundaries of these natural areas . . . In the competition for position the population is segregated over the natural areas of the city. Land values, characterizing the various natural areas, tend to sift and sort the population. At the same time segregation re-emphasizes trends in values. Cultural factors also play a part in this segregation, creating repulsions and attractions. From the mobile competing stream of the city’s population each natural area of the city tends to collect the particular individuals pre-destined to it. These individuals, in turn, give to the area its peculiar character. And as a result of this segregation, the natural areas of the city tend to become distinct cultural areas as well – a ‘black belt’ or a Harlem, a Little Italy, a Chinatown, a ‘stem’ of the ‘hobo’, a roaming-house world, a ‘Tower-town’, or a ‘Greenwich Village’, a ‘Gold Coast’, and the like – each with its characteristic complex of institutions, customs, beliefs, standards of life, traditions, attitudes, sentiments, and interests. The physical individuality of the natural areas of the city is re-emphasized by the cultural individuality of the populations segregated over them. Natural areas and natural cultural groups tend to coincide. A natural area is a geographical area characterized both by a physical individuality and by the cultural characteristics of the people who live in it.1

The concept of the natural area provided the analytical base for many of the empirical studies which were produced by the University of Chicago Department of Sociology in the heyday of classical human ecology during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Studies of particular types of natural area, such as the ghetto and the ‘Gold Coast and the Slum’, are complemented by studies of individuals and groups who are believed to be the characteristic residents of certain specified types of natural area, for example the hobo and the gang, and by analyses of the distribution of various forms of deviant behaviour considered against the natural area framework, such as suicide, juvenile delinquency, and psychiatric disorders.2 Burgess reports that the results produced by the Chicago ecologists were so impressive that at a meeting of the Chicago City Council a resolution was passed that future census data for the city should be made available on the basis of the community areas which the Chicago School had mapped out.3 Community Fact Books have appeared for Chicago after each U.S. Census since 1930. According to Park:

Now, the fact of primary importance here is that social statistics – births and deaths, marriage and divorce, suicide and crime – assume a new significance when they are collected and distributed in such a way as to characterize . . . natural


3 Reported in Burgess and Bogue, Contributions to Urban Sociology.
The city as a mosaic of social worlds

areas . . . It is assumed, in short, partly as a result of selection and segregation, and partly in view of the contagious character of cultural patterns, that people living in natural areas of the same general type and subject to the same social conditions will display, on the whole, the same characteristics . . . The natural areas of the city . . . constitute . . . a ‘frame of reference’ a conceptual order within which statistical facts gain a new and more general significance.¹

Ambiguities in the natural area concept

The concept of the natural area has been put to many uses – yet the definition of the concept contains several ambiguities and not a little confusion. Even amongst the early Chicago ecologists there is evidence of a more than trivial disagreement concerning the referents of the natural area. Thus, while Zorbaugh appears to view it as primarily a physical phenomenon, McKenzie defines the natural area in terms of the characteristics of its population, stressing such features as race, language, income and occupation.² Wirth adopts a similar perspective.³ Burgess recognizes three aspects of the natural area: an ecological dimension, in which he includes both physical and economic characteristics, a cultural dimension, which reflects the values of the population concerned, and a political dimension. None but the first aspect, however, is apparently necessary to the existence of natural areas, the others are accessory factors which come into play if the natural area becomes, in Park’s terms, a ‘neighbourhood’, that is a locally-based social system. To Park natural areas are communities or ecological collectivities, while neighbourhoods are societies.⁴

The introduction of the concept of the neighbourhood does little to clarify the situation. Although ‘neighbourhood’ has been one of the most frequently used terms, not only in urban sociology, but also in planning circles, this use has been at the cost of great confusion.⁵ To a large extent the concept shares with that of the natural area a basic ambiguity concerning its physical and/or social referents. According to Gould, ‘Neighbourhood denotes one or more of the following: a) a small inhabited area; b) the inhabitants of such an area; c) the relations which exist between the inhabitants: the fact or quality of their nearness to each other; d) friendly relations between the inhabitants.’⁶ The major disagreement is generated by the question of whether the neighbourhood forms an interacting group or whether it forms no more than a statistical aggregate, a collectivity of actors. Glass provides definitions

¹ Park, Human Communities, pp. 197–8.
² R. D. McKenzie, Neighbourhood (Chicago, 1923).
⁴ Park, Human Communities.
The urban mosaic

of the neighbourhood under both headings: under the first she defines it as 'a territorial group, the members of which meet on a common ground within their own area for primary social activities and for spontaneous and organized social contact'; under the second heading the neighbourhood is described as 'a distinct territorial group, distinct by virtue of the specific physical characteristics of the area and the specific social characteristics of its inhabitants'. The latter definition is almost identical with the Burgess conception of the natural area, with the exception of Burgess's emphasis on the role of 'natural' as opposed to 'planned' factors in the evolution of the ecological community.

According to Morris and Mogeys: 'One of the most striking features of Western urban society has been the decreasing correspondence between social and physical groupings.' The functional specialization of land use, the development of secondary institutions caring for many household needs which were once informally met, greater social and physical mobility, changes in both leisure and work activities, and, more generally, changes in value orientations have all lessened the association between physical neighbourhood and social neighbourhood. The divorce between location and social behaviour should not, however, be exaggerated. For many sections of the population, notably the very young and the very old and those who have responsibility for them, the limits of time, money, and energy, are still sufficiently pronounced to effectively confine much of their social participation to the immediate neighbourhood. They may not be involved with all their neighbours, but much of their interaction is with neighbours. Writing about life in an area marked by 'physical drabness, economic stringency, and bodily contiguity' Wilson remarks that 'People courted, mated, married, quarrelled, and amused themselves in a confined area from which escape was difficult - financially, geographically, and emotionally'. Even if overt contacts are few and far between, the neighbourhood may still exert considerable social influence on the individual. Thus, commenting on the importance given to material possession as an index of social rank amongst the inhabitants of Greenleigh, Young and Wilmott remark

Those are the rules of the game and they are, under strong pressure from the neighbours, almost universally observed. Indeed, one of the most striking things about Greenleigh is the great influence the neighbours have, all the greater because they are anonymous. Though people stay in their houses, they do in a sense belong to a strong and compelling group. They do not know their judge personally but her influence is continually felt.

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The city as a mosaic of social worlds

Amongst the young, the neighbourhood play-group is an important element in initial socialization¹ and may form the basis of later school groupings where school enrolments are organized on a territorial basis. Amongst the aged, neighbours act as intermediaries: providers of gossip and of help if it is needed. Townshend suggests that it is in fulfilling this role that neighbours contribute to a sense of local solidarity and identity.² The local community may no longer be a primary group in the sense outlined by Cooley,³ but it is nonetheless important as a source of social contacts for a large proportion of its residents, as the site of much of the individual's early extra-familial interaction and socialization, and, most generally, as the provider of a set of reference yardsticks for the evaluation of much of his behaviour.⁴ The neighbourhood may not be coterminous with the group structure of society, but it provides the framework for a great deal of social behaviour.

The neighbourhood and behaviour

Apart from ethnographic studies of the way of life in certain specified areas of the city,⁵ three major sources of material are available for an analysis of the relationship between residence and behaviour: studies of the association between propinquity and friendship, studies concerned with explicating the socio-cultural factors involved in deviant behaviour, and studies concerned with the relationship between area of residence and educational experience. We shall look at some examples of each in turn.

Propinquity and friendship

The most comprehensive analysis of the relationship between residential location and patterns of informal social relations is the study by Festinger, Schachter and Back, set in a housing estate developed for married veteran students attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁶ The study is concerned with the patterns of friendship and communication at the intra-neighbourhood level. The population of the estate was highly homogeneous in terms of age, family characteristics, and socio-economic background and its inhabitants had few or no previous contacts in the community.

¹ See J. S. Plant, 'The personality and an urban area', in Hatt and Reiss, Cities and Society, pp. 647–65.
⁵ E.g. the work of the Institute for Community Studies.
The urban mosaic

In such a situation Festinger et al. hypothesize that ‘friendships are likely to develop on the basis of the brief and passive contacts made going to and from home or walking about the neighbourhood’. These passive contacts, in turn, are likely to be mediated through proximity and through those locational effects which require people to use the same paths in their movement about the estate. The influence of proximity is measured through physical distance; that of locational effects through ‘functional distance’, an index of ‘the number of passive contacts that position and design encourage’.

In both cases the data obtained are in striking agreement with the hypothesis. Comparing actual friendship choices with possible choices, there is a marked inverse relationship between friendship nomination and distance. Within each of the courts into which the estate is divided the highest ratio of actual to possible friendships is reported for immediate neighbours, those respectively two and three distance units away have successively smaller ratios, while no choices at all are made to those who live four units away. There is a similar effect in the case of choices given outside the nominator’s court. ‘The greater the physical separation between any two points in these communities, the fewer the friendships.’ The effects of functional distance are revealed in the tendency for the residents of end houses to receive significantly fewer friendship nominations than those living in any other position. On the basis of their findings, the authors posit that ‘The closer together a number of people live, and the greater the extent to which functional proximity factors cause contacts among these people, the greater the probability of friendships forming and the greater the probability of group formation.’

The groups formed on the basis of the two proximity factors not only provide the framework for informal communication within the estate, but also serve as the providers of consensual opinions and attitudes. Thus each court is reported as developing its own group standards and to possess its own machinery for sanctioning conformity. Individuals who deviate from the group norm tend to be isolated within their court. The ecological structure of the estate provides the framework for its socio-cultural structure.

Festinger et al. point out that the locale of their study is unusual in the homogeneity of its population and suggest that ecological factors may be much less important in determining friendship and group formation in less ‘artificial’ communities. An analysis of a new middle-class housing

1 Ibid. p. 34.
2 Ibid. p. 35.
3 Ibid. p. 44.
5 Similar findings are reported by Caplow and Forman for a student housing project at the University of Minnesota. Caplow and Forman show that while length of residence is associated with number of acquaintances it has little association with number of friends. Friendship choices are overwhelmingly local. See T. Caplow and R. Forman, ‘Neighbourhood interaction in a homogeneous community’, Am. Social. Rev. 15 (1950), 357–67.