



**URBAN  
ANTHROPOLOGY**

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**School of Social Sciences  
Indira Gandhi National Open University**

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## **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

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Cities are an extension of the rural. Anthropology conventionally has always dealt with simpler societies, however with time it extended its lenses to more inclusive areas considering the fact that its main agenda has always been to understand humans better. Hence the study of cities or the urban space is equally a critical and crucial subject of study for anthropologists. Keeping this in mind the bachelor's programme offers this course on Urban Anthropology which provides the learner with the nitty gritty of what the urban space entails. The first part of the course deals classically with the historical and theoretical perspectives with an explanation of how the rural and the urban are linked and how it plays as a continuum. The second part of the course covers fundamentals of how urban structures are created and managed, the diversities that enter due to the apparent movement from the rural to the urban which leads to the creation of the urban leading to processes like acculturation, adaptation, marginalisation etc. The third part of the course discusses the elementary social structures of society like family, marriage, kinship, caste, class, religion, ethnicities etc., and how they survive, influence and shape each other and build newer structures due to the connectedness that ensues. The fourth and last part of the course touches upon the contemporary concerns that are evident in a global urban world and the methodologies by which urban ethnography can be visited ethically to investigate these concerns.

### **Course Outcomes**

After completing the course, a learner is expected to:

- Define the basics of urban anthropology;
- Describe the subject's structure and processes;
- Examine the various evolving social structures; and
- Evaluate the global issues that crop up in urban development.

### **Course Presentation**

The course is divided into four blocks and a practical manual. Each block carries a theme which is reflected in the form of units. There are a total of 13 units in this course. Below we provide you with a brief explanation of what each unit covers in the thematic blocks.

#### **Block 1 Fundamentals of Urban Anthropology**

The first block contains three units and discusses the historical and theoretical development of urban anthropology. The first unit, *Foundation of Urban Anthropology* (Unit 1) takes into consideration in its description the meaning, aim, scope and expanding horizons of urban anthropology. It explains the influence of other social sciences on urban anthropology and talks about concepts such as the city, urban, urbanism, urbanisation, pre-industrial and post-industrial etc., which are vital to urban anthropology. The second unit, *Theoretical Perspectives* (Unit 2) discusses the contributions of the Chicago and the Manchester schools of thought. It highlights the concept of scale in urban anthropology along with important methods like network analysis and extended

case study. This unit finally looks into the anthropological approaches in urban anthropology. The third unit, *Folk-Urban Continuum* (Unit 3), describes the concept of Folk-Urban Continuum as proposed by Robert Redfield and takes it further with a discussion on how McKim Marriott employed and further refined it in the Indian context. In this unit concepts like semi-urban, peri-urban, towns and two-tier cities are delved into.

### **Block 2 Urban Anthropology: Structure and Processes**

The second block contains three units which deal with the structure and processes of urban spaces. The first unit (Unit 4) is called *Urban Processes* and describes the emergence and expansion of urban areas as well as the urban way of life. It discusses the organisation of urban areas in terms of urban settlement patterns and examines the different challenges and problems of urban life. The second unit (Unit 5) is named *Diversity and Differences in Urban Spaces*. It begins with a discussion on what diversity and differences one can see in a city. The unit explains this also in the context of neighborhood and ethnicity and how urban governance runs. Finally it narrows down to a discussion on the creation and presentation of Indian cities. The third and the last unit of the block (Unit 6) is called *Movement from Rural to Urban*. This unit defines the concept of migration and describes anthropological concepts linked to migration. The unit explores the role of kinship and network in migration as a process and ends with an examination of the inter-relationship between issues of citizenship, legality, identity and migration.

### **Block 3 Urban Social Structure**

This is the third block in the course and has four associated units. The first unit (Unit 7) is called *Family, Marriage and Kinship* and deals with how these concepts are studied within the domain of urban anthropology. The unit describes the changing and continuing patterns of kinship, family and marriage in urban areas. The factors affecting the changes and their continuity are delved into which are examined from the perspective of urban social structure in the Indian context. The second unit (Unit 8) is named *Caste and Class*. This unit takes into consideration various aspects of caste as visible in cities, from the way it operates to being a political force. The unit also views how class is understood in urban context and the dynamics of both class and caste in urban spaces are covered here. The third unit (Unit 9) is *Religion, Faith and Tolerance*. From explaining its history and growth in urban spaces to discussing conflict, hate and fear resulting from religious fanaticism, each aspect is covered in detail. The last unit (Unit 10) in the block is called *Multi-Ethnicity and Multiculturalism*. Along with defining the notions of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism in urban spaces this unit describes the characteristics of diversity and pluralism in urban spaces. The unit attempts to demonstrate an understanding of a cosmopolitan identity in a multi-ethnic and multicultural space and explains the difference between individual identity and group identity and also evaluates the integration of these identities within a multi-ethnic and multicultural space.

### **Block 4 Global Concerns in Urban Growth**

This is the last block of this course. This block contains three units. The first one (Unit 11) is called *Contemporary Urban Concerns*. As the name suggests, this unit discusses the need for anthropological focus in the urban areas. The

unit describes the various topics on which anthropological research has been conducted and examines critiques within urban anthropology which helped the sub-discipline to reflect and grow. It finally evaluates the continuity in urban anthropology with old concerns of research and new topics of investigation. The second unit (Unit 12) is *World Cities and the Production of Space*. This unit defines the concept of cities, world cities and urban spaces from an anthropological vantage point and looks into the characteristics and types of world spaces. It also discusses the impact of globalisation on urban and rural spaces and views the spatial understanding of capitalist production and consumption in urban spaces. The last and final unit (Unit 13) of this course is *Urban Ethnography*. This vital unit defines the basics of urban anthropological research and discusses research methodology and set of methods used for data collection in urban anthropology and also the ethical concerns regarding research studies based in the urban setups.

**Practical Manual:** This practical manual will assist the learner to build a research design on any urban concern and make her/him ready with the methods and techniques discussed in the manual to apply them in actual research scenarios. The learner will be able to check these techniques and practice them and create small projects now and later utilise these same methods and techniques in future research work. So the practical manual will help the learner to identify methods and techniques to conduct research, familiarise oneself with the exact way of doing research and learn how to analyse research results to create knowledge.

With this brief about the course, you are now ready to go through each lesson in a comprehensive manner. As you will be doing the major part of the studying on your own, the lessons have been created in such a way to assist you understand the course in an inclusive manner. It is advised that you go through the course sequentially so as to not lose the thread of clarity. As you would find a teacher in a classroom teaching a course in a thematic and chronological manner, similarly you too need to study your course from Unit 1 and end it with the last unit, in this case, Unit 13 followed by the Practical Manual. Units are further divided into sections and sub sections for your easy reading and better understanding. Each unit comes with learning outcomes which outline what is expected from you after the unit is read. Units also contain Check your Progress throughout so as to help you test yourself if you have learnt what you have read. This is a good way to go about the lesson and will help you prepare well for your Term End Examination later as you will learn to frame your answers in your own words rather than just copying and pasting from the sections. Each unit also contains a Summary towards the end which gives you a brief about what the lesson entailed. The units end with References which are cited works mentioned through the lesson and Answers to Check Your Progress, which assists you to know where the answers to your questions are placed. It is reiterated that though the sections where the answers can be sought are given, you should attempt to frame the answers in your own words which will bring clarity in your understanding of the units. In your internal Assignments, you will be given questions/activities where you can test your learning of your methods and techniques.

Good luck with your reading and it is hoped that this course will provide as a basic preliminary training in your journey towards learning and understanding urban anthropology comprehensively.



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**BLOCK 1**

**FUNDAMENTALS OF URBAN  
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**Unit 1**  
**Foundation of Urban Anthropology**

**Unit 2**  
**Theoretical Perspectives**

**Unit 3**  
**Folk-Urban Continuum**

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## UNIT 1 FOUNDATION OF URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit, the student will learn to:

- Describe the meaning, aim, scope and expanding horizons of urban anthropology;
- Explain influence of other social sciences on urban anthropology;
- Identify concepts such as city, urban, urbanism, urbanisation; and
- Classify typologies of the city such as pre-industrial and post-industrial.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Urban anthropology is one of the most important and fast growing fields in social and cultural anthropology. At present, cities are a critical area of study for anthropologists globally. It is a well-known fact that more than half of the world's population now lives in cities. This demographic trend is expected to grow at a much faster pace in the near future. As a consequence, complexities of human life will intensify multifold. The purpose of urban anthropology is to understand not only these complexities arising out of social, cultural, political and economic shifts that occur in the cities but also how these changes in return shape the city. This unit primarily discusses the origin, nature and development

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**Contributor:** Dr. Chakraverti Mahajan, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi

of urban anthropology as a major sub-discipline of anthropology. In the first section of this unit, we discuss the historical factors that influenced the growth of urban anthropology, its subject matter and its ever expanding horizons. In the second section we sketch the influence of other disciplines on urban anthropology. The third section gives an overview of the basic concepts such as city, urban, urbanism and urbanisation. The unit ends with a discussion on the analytical typologies of cities from pre-industrial to post-industrial.

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## 1.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: MEANING, AIM, SCOPE AND EXPANDING HORIZONS OF URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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Urban anthropology today has grown into a vast field of inquiry. It uses interdisciplinary approaches to study various themes of urban life. Urban anthropology considers ‘the urban’ and the changing nature of urban social life as the object of its study. In their remarkable book, *Introducing Urban Anthropology*, Jaffe and de Koning define urban anthropology as a branch of anthropology which ‘engages explicitly with the question of how social life is structured in by and experienced within urban contexts’ (2016:3). Today, urban anthropology describes the multifaceted social and cultural lives of city dwellers as they negotiate with heterogeneous, unequal and constantly changing urban space and place ‘in the context of global flows and connections’ (Jaffe and de Koning: 1). These new multifaceted definitions brings to our attention how urban life needs to be studied taking view of both local as well as global realities.

You will be surprised to know that the label *urban anthropology* became widespread only in the 1960s and 1970s, although anthropologists had started studying the cities since 1930s. In your introductory anthropology classes you must have learnt that until the middle of twentieth century, anthropology’s main emphasis was to carry out research on ‘exotic’ tribes’, who were most often colonial subjects. Predominantly this research was carried out by white men who carried out their fieldwork in remote locations. Also while you were discussing the relationship between sociology and social anthropology, you might have learnt about how the former was the study of complex societies whereas the latter studied simple societies. In fact, these two features of anthropology delayed emergence of urban anthropology to study the cities. First, this delay was due to socio-political reasons as the pioneers of anthropology worked as representatives of Euro-American nation-states which were mostly colonising forces (Eames and Goode, 1977). The second major factor which delayed such recognition was over concern with maintaining the uniqueness of anthropology and clear distinction between from sociology (Jaffe and de Koning, 2016). In the beginning, when anthropologists started exploring the city in the early part of twentieth century, their interests were limited to tribes moving to city. Discussing the varied trajectories of anthropology and sociology, Vinay Srivastava (2017, 211-12) notes:

*...the anthropologists’ interest lay in the migration of tribespersons to towns and cities in search of the survival strategies and the kind of adaptations they make to the new locations. In other words, urban sociologists studied the ‘urban man’, whereas their counterparts in anthropology looked at the ‘tribal*

*man in the city'. Urban studies were central to sociology, since it started as the systematic and scientific study of complex, modern, developed, and Western societies. It was also the study of the 'us' – the sociologist studied his or her own society. By comparison, anthropology, to begin with, was the study of simple, 'primitive', pre-literate, and non-Western societies; it was the study of the 'them'. Sociologists started with the study of cities because this was the starting point of their discipline; anthropologists reached the towns and cities travelling with the tribal people who migrated to these locations. As the tribes were changing so was the subject that studied them.*

Now that we know about the two factors that delayed anthropologists' foray into the study of the urban, let us learn about factors which were responsible for the growth of urban anthropology. There were two main factors that led to the rise of urban anthropology. First, was the growth of cities and the associated demographic and social changes and the second one was the shifts within the discipline of anthropology itself (Jaffe and de Koning, 2016). Let us discuss each one by one. Richard Sennett (1969), well known urbanist argues that although the study of cities is a recent phenomenon but 'cities are one of the oldest artifacts of civilised life' (p.3). Sennett argued that the reason for this is that up to the times of the Industrial Revolution, the city was taken by most social thinkers to be the image of society itself, and not some special, unique form of social life. This identification of society and city changed only during the Industrial Revolution which happened almost three centuries back in Western Europe. Cities changed in an unprecedented manner and became immensely larger than anything known in human history. Unlike earlier cities, their growth did not result through internal population change, but from without, as a result of agricultural changes that either encouraged or, in fewer cases forced men of the villages to move to towns. The Industrial Revolution gave rise to urban areas of a size unheard before, shaped new ways of looking at human labour, and threw people together in new forms of relationships (Fox, 1977).

With Industrialisation in Europe and other parts of the world, came a rapid demand for large number of human resources in the expanding European cities (including colonial cities). This gave rise to agglomeration of large populations at one place ultimately resulting in urbanisation. European colonisation and the decolonisation became other factors that influenced rural urban migration and the process of urbanisation in many parts of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result, a massive demographic shift was seen in all parts of the world due to large scale migration and urbanisation. The social, cultural, political and economic changes that accompanied this demographic shift drew attention of anthropologists as they started affecting the groups of people they were studying. Whereas the growth of industrial cities in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century was the key factor in the development of sociology as a discipline, urban anthropology has developed along multiple trajectories. While a number of important studies were based on fieldwork in North American and European cities, urban anthropology also developed in the colonised world, where researchers studied the process of urbanisation in relation to forces of modernity, development and decolonisation. Urban anthropologists also started taking keen interest on impacts of urbanisation in terms of social problems in the developed world. In the late twentieth century, the processes of urbanisation were being linked to globalisation and these massive economic, social and cultural changes caught anthropologists' attention as well.

In addition to these broader demographic and societal changes, shifts within the discipline of anthropology itself have become the second important factor informing the rise of urban anthropology. We all know about questions about the colonial links of anthropology conceivably stimulated by a demand for information of the natives to govern them (Asad, 1973). However, with the passage of time, anthropologists themselves began to critically reflect on their disciplinary past. A wave to decolonise anthropology from colonial and imperial power became mainstream in post war period (Gough, 1967). In the 1970s and 1980s a movement started in anthropology to decolonise the discipline from its focus on ‘the exotic’ (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Critical questions about anthropology’s preoccupation with ‘exotic’ difference and its tendency to privilege fieldwork in sites far away from the researcher’s home (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). They sought to expand the longstanding interest in people living in traditional economies by giving more attention to social life in modern urban economics. The tendency of doing fieldwork at isolated sites far from the home was also critiqued. This resulted in the demand to ‘bring anthropology home’.

In the above discussion, we have discussed two historical factors which delayed the growth of urban anthropology and the other two which helped in the acceleration of this sub-discipline. In many ways they shaped urban anthropology as a field of inquiry. Sandwiched between the struggles of these four factors, lie the history of urban anthropology. Let us learn very briefly about the historical footprints of urban anthropology.

### **1.1.1 Historical Antecedents I: Complex Societies and the Chicago School**

The history of urban anthropology is rooted in the study of what has been called as ‘rural urban transition’ of peasant cultures and their encounter with urban social life. Before they took interest in urban studies, anthropologists ventured into what is now known as study of complex societies (Eames and Goode, 1977; Fox, 1977; Hannerz, 1980). Robert Redfield, a Chicago based anthropologist, took keen interest in the study of complex societies in the 1920s and 1930s. Robert Redfield, in fact, developed the conceptual understanding of the study of complex societies. Many studies of peasant society and the city, carried out subsequently by other anthropologists, were extensions of issues he raised. Robert Redfield’s most important contribution was to analytically differentiate between folk (tribal) and peasant societies. Once he recognised that peasant society was a distinctive type of social system and that peasant village was not an autonomous unit, he began to develop concepts to deal with this type of complex social system. Consequently, he conceptualised folk society in contradiction to the city. Redfield’s formulation of Folk Urban continuum explained the relation between folk, peasant and urban societies. (For more see Unit 3) The concepts of Little Tradition and Great Tradition are one such example which he devised to understand complex societies. Along with his student, Milton Singer, he also wrote about the cultural role of cities, which is an exercise to understand typologies of cities in the larger socio-economic system.

There are several other works which hint towards the anthropologist's interests in cities before the formal recognition of urban anthropology. These works included archaeological anthropologists working on the origin of city, anthropologists work on pre-industrial cities, the early community studies in US and later other parts of the world including India and area study work by anthropologists in Latin America and Africa which were urban oriented (Eames and Goode, 1977) However, the most influential place where seeds of the discipline were sown was the Chicago school, the alma mater of Robert Redfield. The Sociology Department at Chicago University was established by 1892 and Albion W. Small was its founding Chair. From the 1910s to the 1930s, an influential group of urban scholars researching the city developed what came to be known as the Chicago School. (Hannerz, 1980: 19–58). An important body of urban research emerged from the Sociology Department, earlier known as the Department of Anthropology and Sociology (Jones and Rodgers, 2016). Robert Park laid the foundation of the human ecology model that guided much early Chicago School research. This model understood human behaviour in cities to be shaped by the urban environment and its competitive character. Like these founders, the next generation of Chicago sociologists, including Louis Wirth, Nels Anderson, Florian Znaniecki and St. Clair Drake, emphasised the importance of empirical data and especially fieldwork. They instructed their students to view the city as their laboratory, urging them to leave their desks and libraries in order to study urban people and places from up close. In addition to direct observation, they experimented with various methods; exploring the use of cognitive mapping and oral history as tools for urban research (for more see Unit 2).

### **1.1.2 Historical Antecedents II: Manchester School**

The Second World War and decolonising movements in African and Asian countries and the consequent political and economic changes presented an upsurge in urban studies in anthropology. In the mid twentieth century, many anthropologists conducted studies in urban areas of Europe, Africa and Latin America that led to the foundation of urban anthropology as a sub-discipline of anthropology in its literal sense. Emerging mining cities in African countries became an important subject among the urban anthropologists working in Africa. The Rhodes Livingstone Institute is known for studying life in mining towns of Africa. The Copper Belt Studies, as these were popularly known, studied the African Industrial Revolution and concept of modernity in these cities. Max Gluckman along with his colleagues and students namely, Albert Epstein, Clyde Mitchell and Hortense Powdermaker were closely associated with urban studies in Africa. In 1940, Gluckman drafted a 'Seven Year Research Plan' aimed at stimulating research in both rural and urban areas with particular reference to the rural areas affected by the migration of the labour force to the new mining towns (Prato and Pardo, 2013). Under Gluckman's leadership, this research addressed the effects of colonialism on tribal economies and their inclusion in the market, focusing on the different economic structures and the kind of social relations that were emerging in the new urban areas (ibid). Significantly, the population of the Copper Belt mining towns was made up mainly of immigrants from the surrounding rural villages, who were employed as cheap labour force. As these urban immigrants had entered a new web of relationships that were

believed to be typical of the 'urban system' (Gluckman, 1961), anthropological research in these towns was to be regarded as the study of processes of social transformation and of the situations in which such processes took place (Mitchell 1966). The works of Epstein on African politics (1958) and of Mitchell on urban social relations (1957) exemplify this approach (for more see Unit 2).

### **1.1.3 Urban Anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s**

We have already learnt that though for a long time anthropological studies were conducted in urban areas, but it was only in the 1960s when urban anthropology began to be established as a separate sub discipline of anthropology. Eames and Goode (1977) indicate three major themes in the 1960s and 1970s which remained popular during this time:

1. Studies of peasant migrants in the city: As a result of a massive urban migration throughout the world many people formerly studied by anthropologists moved to cities and anthropologists also moved with them. The resultant studies focused on the strategies employed by migrants to adapt to city life.
2. Problem-centric studies: This was to understand the problems of urbanising population in western and non-western cities. Anthropologists who followed this viewpoint were engaged in understanding the problems of city and city life such as urban poverty and rise of slums, inequality and violence.
3. The traditional analytical approach: The approach was more concerned with concepts and theory than with policy. It was interested in urban social structure and through ethnographic studies using city as a laboratory discussed theoretical questions of the discipline.

During these decades, Oscar Lewis's controversial 'culture of poverty' thesis generated intense debates on the meaning of culture, the need for historical contextualisation, and the structural factors that produce urban inequalities. Anthropologists also debated the meanings of city and urban, which were initially informed by Western biased knowledge. To avoid this ethnocentrism, urban anthropologists used ethnographic methods, historical analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons to explore the social mechanisms and cultural institutions that differentiate cities from folk and peasant communities as well as Western from non-Western cities. A more eclectic and regionally diversified urban anthropology emerged during the 1970s, as field research was increasingly carried out in Japan, India, South-East Asia and in various African and South and North American countries. Southall's edited volume, titled *Urban Anthropology* (1973), offered an initial insight into the variety of research that was being done at the time, bringing together methodological and ethnographic contributions and a seventy-page bibliography on the topic (Prato and Pardo 2013). Unlike earlier views, which depicted the city as the site of fragmentation, alienation, and impersonal relationships, urban ethnography has been powerful in showing the strong friendships, kinship relations, and ethnic solidarities that may structure interactions in urban centres. The American Anthropological Association took an interest in anthropological research in urban areas and in 1972 initiated the publication of the journal *Urban Anthropology*.

### 1.1.4 The Spatial Turn

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, anthropology saw large expansion in its scope. Urban anthropology found itself competing with other anthropologies such as applied, environmental, medical, educational, gender that were developing alongside more traditional sub fields of anthropology (Prato and Pardo 2013). Thus, urban anthropology in the 1980s was arguably the narrowest and theoretically least influential of all these sub-disciplines (Sanjek 1990). It took a spatial turn in the 1990s when it shifted its focus from social organisational paradigm to political economic paradigm. Space and place emerged as a new site of ethnographic studies in urban anthropology which is widely known as spatial turn. By now, the production of urban space and social construction of urban places became the central theme in urban anthropology. This turn was widely influenced by the post-modernist thinkers like Michel Foucault, Henry Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. In urban anthropology, Foucault's conceptualisation of power as regimes of truth that shaped the world around us and our understanding of it, has perhaps been the most influential (Jaffe and De Koning, 2016). Similarly, Henry Lefebvre, a philosopher, in his 'Idea of Right of City' (1991) argued that space is a social product and that it often works to reproduce the interest of the powerful. According to him, cities are crucial public spaces where different people mix and mingle though much of the production of the city is done by and for elites (Jaffe and De Koning, 2016). Through the spatial approach, many ethnographers tried to see the relation between architecture and culture. Paul Rainbow analysed how French colonialists in North Africa exploited architectural and urban planning principles to reflect their cultural superiority. James Holsten examined the state sponsored architecture and master planning of Brasilia as a new form of spatial domination for state intervention. In brief, urban anthropology in the 1990s flourished as a sub-discipline of anthropology. With the global changes and free flow of people, ideas and economy, anthropologists increasingly began to see consumption rather than production as the main characteristics of the late modern city. Authors such as James Ferguson, Setha Low, Chua Beng Huat and Arlene Davila began to study new urban lifestyles and leisure landscape as well as the commodification of urban culture (Jaffe and De Koning, 2016).

### 1.1.5 Expanding Horizons

Since its inception, urban anthropology has come a long way. It was only during the inter-war that anthropologists shifted their attention from tribal and rural countries to the study of more complex social system. With increase in the rural to urban migration in many parts of the world, it became more difficult to think of rural communities as isolated, insulated and distinct entities. With the increase in rural-urban interaction during 1950s and 1960s, cultural anthropologists began to assess the impacts that cities were having on traditional rural societies. From that point it was natural development to follow rural people into the cities to see how distinct systems interacted.

By focusing on how factors such as size, density, and heterogeneity affect customary ways of behaving, urban anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s examined such important topics as descriptive accounts of ethnic neighbourhoods, labour migration, urban kinship patterns, social network analysis, emerging

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systems of social stratification, squatter settlements, and informal economics. Urban anthropology also focused on social problems such as homelessness, race relations, poverty, social justice, unemployment, crime and public health. Some recent studies have also described modern urban sub-cultures of truck drivers, cocktail waitresses, street gangs, drug addicts, skid-row alcoholics, and sex-workers.

With the spatial turn, the focus shifted to the question of rights and justice in the city environments. Even though ideas such as space, mobility and planning were shared with many other disciplines, urban anthropology has been able to maintain its distinct significance because of its continuous evolving and innovative methods and approaches. It has continuously added new dimensions of urban life to its domain. Urban place making, mobilities, the politics of public spaces, leisure and lifestyles and global networks are some examples of the themes that have emerged as the new areas of exploration in urban anthropology in contemporary times. With the increasing conflicts across the world, study of violence and fear has also emerged as a new area of research in it. Setha Low (2019) recently, argued for ‘an engaged urban anthropology that draws upon a history of critical engagement with the city and a commitment to social justice and transformation through the intersection of ethnography and politically informed action’ (p.1).

**Check Your Progress**

1. What is urban anthropology? Discuss the factors which delayed the rise of urban anthropology.

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2. Discuss the factors responsible for the growth of urban anthropology in the twentieth century.

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3. Write a note on the history of urban anthropology.

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4. Discuss the role of Robert Redfield in the development of urban anthropology.

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5. What do you understand by spatial turn in urban anthropology?

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6. Discuss the expanding horizons of urban anthropology.

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## 1.2 INFLUENCE OF OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES ON URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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Urban anthropology is closely related to many other social sciences, such as sociology, geography and history. However, it is classical sociology which has influenced urban anthropology the most. ‘Early anthropological theorisations on the specificity of urban life, institutions and social relations reflected the classical sociological framework developed on the distinction between rural and industrial society of the nineteenth century’ (Prato and Pardo, 2013, 81). Writings of Ferdinand Tönnies and Emile Durkheim began to cover the effects of urban factors on seemingly unrelated aspects of social life, although they never theorised about the urban as such. While, German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies described the contrasting elements of urban and rural life from a cultural perspective, Durkheim introduced the concept of *anomie*. In his remarkable work on suicide, he argues that anomic suicide occurred among those who lived in modern cities. Tönnies’s concept of *Gemeinschaft* (community) characterised the small village and surrounding area where people united by close ties of family and neighborhood shared traditional values and worked together for the common good. In contrast to this “we-ness,” *Gesellschaft* (association or society) denoted the “me-ness” of the city of a future-oriented heterogeneous population, which led Tönnies to view the city negatively and as characterised by disunity, widespread individualism, and self-centeredness, even hostility. This typology of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* had a lasting influence on other urban anthropologists.

Émile Durkheim also had an enduring effect. His emphasis on contrasting social bonds offered another perspective on urban and rural distinctiveness. He suggested that urban social order rested on an organic solidarity in which individual differences, greater freedom, and choice thrive in a complex division of labour where the inhabitants are co-dependent. Rural life, on the other hand, is organised around mechanical solidarity, with social bonds constructed on likeness (common beliefs, customs, rituals, and symbols), where inhabitants are relatively self-sufficient and not reliant on other groups to meet all of life's needs. These twofold typologies were central for much of the twentieth century as most studies, based on a spatial emphasis on the central city, examined different variables in comparison to non-urban areas.

Urban anthropologists appear to have been influenced majorly by the early twentieth century sociologists' view of the city. Richard Sennett (1969) called them the classical urban sociologists and formulated a twofold division to make sense of their work. The first school was the German one and its members included Max Weber and George Simmel. They wrote in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Max Weber's, *The City*, appeared in 1905. For Weber the city is a set of social structures that encourages social individuality and innovation, and is thus the instrument of historical change. Unlike Durkheim, Weber did not focus on how cities could lead to a sense of isolation in humans but rather under what conditions cities could create positive influences on human lives. George Simmel's essay, *The Metropolis and Mental Life* appeared in 1903. Simmel, like Weber, believed that cities could be described as an 'ideal type', but he focused on the psychological elements in urban markets, families and law and not structural ones. For Simmel, social interactions in the city get reduced as compared to village and become instrumental in nature, therefore, lacking the emotional and personal involvement of small communities. People are enslaved to time, working under the clock. Everything in the city is quantifiable, value of social life is reduced and this generates what Simmel terms as blasé attitude – superficiality, grayness, indifference and alienation. For both Weber and Simmel, 'the city as a fragmenting, rather than unifying place; that is, a place of greater freedom and opportunities for the individual but also a place of isolation, conflict and bureaucratisation of all aspects of life' (Prato and Pardo, 2013)

The second school grew up at Chicago, where most of the members remained active until Second World War. The Chicago School of Urban Ecology as it is widely known, had a number of urban sociologists who worked under the leadership of Robert Park at the University of Chicago. Robert Park incidentally had also studied with Georg Simmel in Germany. The human ecology model understood human behaviour in cities to be shaped by the urban environment and its competitive character. Like these founders, the next generation of Chicago sociologists, including Louis Wirth, Nels Anderson, Florian Znaniecki and St. Clair Drake, emphasised the importance of empirical data and especially fieldwork. They instructed their students to view the city as their laboratory, urging them to leave their desks and libraries in order to study urban people and places from up close. In addition to direct observation, they experimented with various methods, exploring the use of cognitive mapping and oral history as tools for urban research (for more see unit 2). Apart from sociology, urban anthropology in the 1990s and 2000s rejuvenated itself by drawing heavily from spatial theories of geography and by focusing on built environment (Low, 2014).

Urban anthropology left behind its tag of studying small groups of culturally distinct people in city, linked macro and micro analyses of urban space of flows, that is, ‘circuits of labour, capital, goods and services moving ever more rapidly through space, time and the internet; and a space of places, that is, the physical locations of social reproduction and the home’ (Low, 2014:15).

Let us now learn some of the basic concepts in urban anthropology.

### Check Your Progress

7. Discuss cross-disciplinary influences on urban anthropology.

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8. Discuss the contributions of classical sociologists to urban anthropology.

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## 1.3 BASIC CONCEPTS OF URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

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### City

City means many things to many people. For some it may be infrastructure, tall buildings, shopping malls, market areas, wide roads and airports. For others it may be a hub of businesses, trade and commerce, education, employment opportunities, administration and governance. Yet others may think of it as an impersonal space where one is lonely amidst the crowd. The city may come across as a place of social inequalities to many others. These diverse ideas make city an important object of study and understanding. For urban anthropologists, the city is the core concept of urban anthropology. To make sense of the city conceptually, urban anthropologists and theorists have approached it from multiple perspectives.

The functionalist perspective contrasted the cities with villages by focusing on the political, economic, administrative, cultural and religious roles they play. Cities, according to this perspective, showcase the convergence and concentration of various activities. These activities impact the areas around cities in multiple ways. The second set of definitions focused on physical form and demographic characteristics based on dense populations and built environment of cities. Louis Wirth (1938) included size, density and heterogeneity as the main characteristics of a city. Constructivist paradigms, understand city to be a social construct: a city is a city because it is not a village, if people believe that, it is one. This attention to the social constructedness of cities also means

studying who has the power to define a city. Recently city is also theorised as an assemblage. From this perspective, cities are the intersection of multiple dynamic and unstable networks and flows of people, animals, money, things, ideas and technology, emphasising on the intermingling of the cities and cities as urbanisation of nature from a political economy perspective. Urban sensorium perspective concentrate on a range of embodied sensory experiences including urban sounds, images, tastes, smells and movements.

### Urban

The literal meaning of the word urban comes from a Latin word called *urbs* meaning *urbanus* i.e., 'city or town', and has been in use for last four centuries. A basic problem in the use of the word urban in anthropology is the lack of clear cut and generally accepted definition (Eames and Goode, 1977). Vincent Parrillo (2016) notes that varying criteria exist among the 195 countries in defining 'urban'. These criterion include *administrative function* (national or regional capital), *economic characteristics* (most residents in nonagricultural occupations), *functional nature* (a developed infrastructure), and *population size or density*. However, commonsensically, the term 'urban' fundamentally holds the same nuance for most people.

In the 1970s, expanding urban research generated some confusion on how precisely to define the concept of 'urban'. Urban, as per Eames and Goode (1977) is understood as a form of settlements as well as a set of specific functions. Thus, urban has two essential features: 1) Form and, 2) Function. While demographic characteristics, architectural forms and settlement zones indicate form, functional attributes include economic, political and recreational activity. Southall (1983) viewed the 'urban' as a highly spatial density of social interaction, rejecting a definition based on mere demographic or physical density. Gutkind (1983) provided yet another definition arguing it is not physical density that constitutes an urban setting; it is, instead, the kind of social relations, which are considerably dissimilar from those in rural settings. Gutkind also believed that class struggle was the core of urban life. Both Southall and Gutkind were influenced by Louis Wirth's essay, *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (1938) 'where he described the distinctive attributes of the city as a specific social institution, a view that led to the conceptualisation of an anthropology of the city, as opposed to anthropological research in the city' (Prato and Padro 2013, 87).

In recent decades, however, changing settlement patterns and the evolution of a global economy reduced the analytical value of this simplistic urban/rural dichotomy. Disparities in urban definitions and the blurring of urban and non-urban elements have led social scientists to new theoretical approaches for analysing the changing world and attempting to forecast its direction (Parrillo 2016). *Convergence theory* argues that technology will lead cities and communities everywhere to develop similar organisational forms. In contrast, *divergence theory* posits that increasingly dissimilar organisational forms will emerge because of differences in (1) cultural values and histories; (2) timing and pace of urbanisation; (3) form of government and planning approaches; and (4) the hierarchy of countries in the global economy. Another perspective, *postmodern theory*, rests on the premise that cities develop in ways that are no longer rational or manageable. Instead, global capitalism serves as the underlying

rationale for actions by increasingly fragmented urban power structures. The economic welfare of cities now results from causes existing beyond their boundaries. This interplay of global, national, regional, and local forces is an additional complicating factor in explaining what we mean by urban.

The concept of urban remains subject to varying interpretations, with or without a spatial premise; with a local, regional, national, or global perspective; and with a positive or a negative emphasis. Regardless of theoretical or conceptual approaches, the term nonetheless remains mostly suggestive of its Latin origins: particular qualities associated with people and patterns found in cities.

### Urbanism

With time, within cities numerous cultures grow, interact, and shape human interaction and social organisation. Urbanism is defined as those characteristics, social and cultural, that emerge as a result of staying in the city. In other words, urbanism is the patterns of behaviour, relationships, and modes of thinking that characterises city dwellers (for more detailed discussion see Unit 4).

### Urbanisation

Urbanisation is defined as the process by which a society becomes more urban. This can be either due to population shift from rural to urban areas or the spread of urban forms and functions to previously non-urban areas (Eames and Goode 1977). Urbanisation occurs due to increased economic activities which triggers migration from rural areas to urban areas generally. Urbanisation is generally measured in two ways: first, level of urbanisation i.e. ratio of urban to rural population; and, second, rate of population growth in urban areas. While the level of urbanisation indicates urban population share with respect to total population of a nation and rate of urbanisation indicates annual growth rate of urban population. Taking these two parameters together, one can say that cities have been growing and probably will grow further in the future (for more detailed discussion see Unit 4).

### Check Your Progress

9. What do understand by the term city? Discuss various perspectives to understand city.

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10. Define urban. Discuss the changing notions around the term.

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11. Define urbanisation and explain how is it measured?

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## **1.4 CITIES: PRE-INDUSTRIAL TO INDUSTRIAL**

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During the 1970s, urban anthropologists moved beyond from anthropology in the city (i.e., the city as just a site for research) to anthropology of the city (i.e., making the urban aspect fundamental to the study). They also argued that only the latter should be considered as urban anthropology. This was the time when a number of anthropologists used typological approach to map diverse urban forms. Gideon Sjoberg, the author of *The Pre-Industrial City* (1960) proposed a twofold approach to understand the cities. By suggesting industrialisation is the basis of transformation of cities, Sjoberg postulated that there were basically two types of cities, a) Pre-industrial and b) Industrial. Sojoberg located the pre-industrial city in what he called feudal society (Fox 1977). Feudal society distinguished itself from folk society by greater agricultural surpluses, particularly grain, arrived at through the use of plough of wheel, improved metallurgy, and large-scale irrigation works. Yet in contrast to industrial society, it was almost entirely dependent on animate (human and animal) sources of energy. The pre-industrial city exhibited rigid class barriers, segregation of population into ethnic quarters, guilds which monopolise trades and small literate elite which guards its knowledge and specialisation. The industrial cities represented an industrial system with inanimate sources of power, a rational and centralised economic and political organisation, recruitment to positions in terms of universal criteria, systems of mass education, mass communication and efficient transportation.

Urban culture is the way life which is understood well by the residents of that particular city but has certain kind of shock value for the new comers. This is mostly true in the context of industrial cities. (Srivastava 2016) recounts how he taught his students about the distinction between pre-industrial and post-industrial cities with the help of a fieldwork in rural and urban Bikaner in Rajasthan:

*Whilst we visited two villages, one multi-caste and the other of Muslims, I made all the students spend several hours in the town of Bikaner, and try to understand the articulation of the rural and the urban. The students learnt about the unbroken continuity between the town and the villages, which prepared them to question the concepts of 'culture shock' and 'cultural inadequacy'. When a rural dweller came to the town in connection with a work in the court, to sell his cart of wool, to see a film, to buy fancy clothes or clarified butter, he did not feel any deficiency of the dialect and cultural mannerism, and was able to deal with the urban world without being exploited or lost.*

12. Discuss Sjoberg’s conception of pre-industrial city.

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13. Distinguish between pre-industrial and industrial cities.

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## **1.5 SUMMARY**

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As the description above illustrates, urban anthropology can be seen as both, anthropology in the city and the anthropology of the city. Whereas anthropology in the city focuses on studying the everyday life in the city by advocating the need for distinct research methods for urban research, on the other hand a focus for studying the cities at large is done through anthropology of city. As we see in the historical development of the sub discipline, studies in urban set up is not a new phenomenon. But, urban anthropology started being recognised as a field of anthropology in the late twentieth century. As the fast-growing urban population across the world and cities has become the new centres of all cultural, political and economic activities, urban anthropology is sometime referred as ‘the’ anthropology. The conception of the cities has changed over the period of time. In the earlier times, cities were seen as those spaces with individualistic identities where anonymity and loneliness were the characteristics of urban life. But today cities are seen as sites of entertainment and leisure. The nature and size of cities have changed with time which essentially requires new definitions to appreciate everyday changing urban life in and of the cities.

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## **1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Refer to section 1.1
2. Refer to section 1.1
3. Refer to sections 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4
4. Refer to section 1.1.1
5. Refer to section 1.1.4
6. Refer 1.1 in general and focus on section 1.1.5
7. Refer to section 1.2
8. Refer to section 1.2
9. See 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of section 1.3
10. See 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph of section 1.3
11. See 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph of section 1.3
12. Refer to Section 1.4
13. Refer to section 1.4

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## UNIT 2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

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### Contents

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 The Chicago School
- 2.2 The Manchester School
- 2.3 Social Network Analysis
- 2.4 Extended Case Method
- 2.5 Concept of Scale in Urban Anthropological Studies
- 2.6 Emerging Approaches to the Study of Cities
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 References
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit, the student will learn to:

- Define contributions of the Chicago and the Manchester schools to urban anthropology
- Describe network analysis and extended case methods
- Identify the concept of scale in urban anthropology
- Examine anthropological approaches in urban anthropology

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the first unit, we deliberated on the growth and relevance of urban anthropology. We ascertained the role of various anthropologists in the development of urban anthropology as an important branch of anthropology. Apart from learning about its relationship with other social disciplines we also discussed the basic concepts such as city, urban, urbanism and urbanisation. We concluded the unit with a discussion about the shifting nature of cities from pre-industrial to industrial and post-industrial. This unit presents a brief introduction to some of the theoretical perspectives in urban anthropology which are crucial to understand its changing character. The unit is divided into five sections. The first section examines the contributions of the Chicago School to urban anthropology by focusing on Robert Park's ecological model. The second section draws attention to the role and contribution of scholars who lead the Manchester School and among other issues studied the process of urbanisation in Africa. The third and the fourth sections describe the method of social network analysis and extended case

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method respectively. In the concluding section we discuss the concept of scale in urban anthropological research and various approaches to study the urban.

Cities are sites of economic, political, social and cultural dynamics. The fast growing population and ensuing demographic shift from rural to urban, simple to complex societies in the cities, has posed many theoretical and methodological challenges. Several generations of scholars have tried to make sense of these changes. Every discipline has a group of scholars who have explicit theoretical or methodological bend for certain approaches. This grouping of theoretical frameworks and approaches into categories is known as a *school* or *school of thought*. For example, in anthropology, in general, there are many significant schools such as the evolutionary school, the historical particularism school and the culture and personality school to understand the foundational concepts of society and culture. Urban anthropology is in the same way associated with some specific schools. The Chicago and the Manchester school are the two foremost schools that have provided theoretical perspective to urban anthropology. In the next two sections we will discuss these two schools.

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## 2.1 THE CHICAGO SCHOOL

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The Chicago school refers to a specific group of sociologists and cultural anthropologists at the University of Chicago during the first half of the twentieth century. This school of thought is known by several names such as Chicago school of sociology, Chicago school of urban ecology and sometimes just Chicago school. Their approach to the study of city and social relations was heavily qualitative, rigorous in data analysis, and focused on the city as a social laboratory. The studies by the school became foundational to American sociological/anthropological methods and exemplify the finest traditions of balancing theory and empirical inquiry, especially through ethnography (Apter et al. 2009). Robert Park and William Thomas are two social scientists who are considered as the main proponents of Chicago school (Jaffe and de Koning, 2016).

Robert Park was influenced by German philosopher George Simmel and always emphasised on empirical, first hand studies. He theorised the city as being made up of adjacent ecological niches occupied by social groups in a succession of concentric rings surrounding the core. For him, class, occupation, worldview and life experiences are synchronous with an inhabitant's location within the human ecology. Social change was thought to happen with an inhabitant's position within this human ecology. Robert Park developed his ideas on the city by borrowing concepts (for example, "community", "struggle for existence", "equilibrium", "dominance", "succession") from theories of animal and plant ecology (Howe, 1990).

Robert Park (1952) opined that the manifestation of city life could be understood as interaction of two types of process. The first of these works is what he calls the biotic level. Here humans act much like animals. They live in a habitat ("community") and each group ("species") is dependent on others (as in a food chain). The condition of the habitat is determined by a raw, uncontrolled economic competition ("the struggle for existence"). As this proceeds each group finds its niche in the city. At some point a community accomplishes a state of equilibrium and then the biotic forces of economic struggle reconcile. Since

humans are also mobile, mindful and innovative, human society transcends animal and plant society, and so a second level of analysis is required. This is the societal or cultural level. Once equilibrium has been obtained and the biotic sub-structure is steady, Park argues (Howe, 1990: 39) that:

*Cooperation takes over and that such cooperation is founded on the generation of cultural values. Empirically what one sees at any point is the product of the fusion of these two sets of forces interacting. In any natural habitat one finds a dominant species, and the analogue of this in cities is the group with the greatest economic resources. Groups find their niches in the urban environment according to their economic strength. Space allocation is thus linked to economic processes.*

For example, how in Chicago and other metropolitan cities, Robert Park noted, there was a broadly similar pattern of spatial distribution between the business district, slums, rooming house areas, bright lights entertainment areas, industrial sites and suburbs. In this fashion dominance working together with economic competition carves up the city into zones. Once the pattern stabilises cultural cooperation takes place within and between zones. The system can be thrown into chaos by new groups entering the city reinitiating economic competition. This was a very noticeable feature of many north American cities as wave after wave of new immigrants entered the country like the Irish, Germans, Swedes, Jews, Italians, Blacks and many other ethnic groups and Park denoted this process with the term “succession” (Howe, 1990).

While Park’s theory of human ecology remained marginal to social anthropology it did help ethnography to become an important method to study cities. Robert Park inspired his colleagues and students to carry out detailed studies of various domains in the city of Chicago. Conceived to be a combination of the two sets of forces, biotic and societal, the areas with the city were inhabited by homogeneous groups having a common set of norms and values. Robert Park believed that it was difficult for any one study to make sense of the city as a whole and forces acting on it. To develop theoretical generalisations about the city, he advocated that it was crucial to study a variety of areas and complete a sufficient number of studies.

William Isaac Thomas, another pioneer of Chicago school, was an American sociologist known for his contribution to the studies of migration. His book, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, five volumes (1918-20) written in collaboration with Florian Znaniecki, who is known for using extensive life histories, is a classic work on migration studies. Thomas is perhaps best known for the Thomas theorem (if man defines situations as real, they are real in their consequences), while Park laid the foundation of the human ecology model that guided much of early Chicago school research. This model understood human behaviour in cities to be shaped by the urban environment and its competitive character (Jaffe and de Koning, 2016).

Ernest Burgess, Louis Wirth, Nels Anderson, Florian Znaniecki and St. Clair Drake are some important sociologists who were trained at Chicago school and emphasised upon empirical data and fieldwork in social science research. Ernest Burgess with Robert Park wrote a popular textbook *Introduction to Science of Sociology* (1921) which gave new direction to sociology. Much of Burgess’

collaborative research with Park focused on urban land use and the social aspects of the urban community. Louis Wirth, who was the next generation to Park, is best known for his essay *Urbanism as a way of life* (1937). His studies on the Jewish Ghettos of Chicago which he described in another book *The Ghettos* (1928) is a classic work.

**Some features of The Chicago School:**

- a) It was based at the University of Chicago.
- b) It was founded by Robert Park and William Thomas and was dominant in American sociology during the interwar period.
- c) Louis Wirth and Ernest Burgess were some of the prominent sociologists whose works contributed to further development of the Chicago school.
- d) It is famed for its methodological contributions to urban sociology, urban anthropology and social science in general.
- e) *Spatial analysis* and *ethnography* were the two major methods used by this school.
- f) Introduced the *urban ecology* concept to understand city life.
- g) It emphasised on empirical data and the fieldwork.
- g) Stressed on viewing the *city as their laboratories*.
- i) Used cognitive methods, oral history and life history.
- j) It produced three kinds of ethnographies which were based on community, places and the groups.

**Some classic ethnographic works produced by the Chicago school:**

*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1918-20)*

*The Hobo (1923)*

*The Ghetto (1928)*

*The Taxi Dance Hall (1932)*

*Black Metropolis (1945)*

*Street Corner Society (1943)*

**Check Your Progress**

1. Discuss the contributions of the Chicago School to the discipline of urban anthropology.

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2. Discuss Robert Park's ecological model to understand cities.

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## 2.2 THE MANCHESTER SCHOOL

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Apart from the contributions of the Chicago School in the first half of the twentieth century, possibly no other localised complex of urban anthropology can match the studies which came out of Central Africa (Hannerz 1980). This work was the product of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI), set up in 1937. The institute transformed into the Institute for Social Research of the new University of Zambia after the Zambian independence in 1964. The Institute was initially directed by the British anthropologist Godfrey Wilson. Wilson encouraged researchers to examine the social transformations that were occurring in Central Africa, including the process of urbanisation. One of the earliest studies carried out by Godfrey and his wife Monica Wilson was on 'detrribalisation' in urban Central Africa. There was a significant difference in African urbanism, and the RLI anthropologists did not cover the entire spectrum (Werbner, 2020). Two mining centres became the subject of most rigorous documentation: Broken Hill (later to be renamed Kabwe) and Luanshya. The former, based on zinc and lead mining, was older, regarded as a more stable community, and more diversified as it was also an important railroad junction. Luanshya was farther north in the Copperbelt, and had come into existence only in the 1920s but it had already experienced periods of boom and bustle as well as serious conflict between the mine management and African workers (Hannerz, 1983).

In 1941, the South-African-born anthropologist Max Gluckman joined the directorship of the Institute and drafted a 'Seven Year Research Plan' aimed at vitalising research in both rural and urban areas. The focus of this research was to study the rural areas affected by the migration of the labour force to the new mining towns (Werbner 2020). Such research focused on the mining areas of the Copperbelt and, under Gluckman's leadership, addressed the effects of colonialism on tribal economies and their inclusion in the market. The focus was on shifting economic structures and the nature of social relations that were emerging in the urban areas. The Copperbelt mining towns attracted immigrants from the surrounding rural villages, who were employed as cheap labor force. Gluckman (1961) was of the opinion that these urban immigrants had entered a new web of relationships that were believed to be typical of the 'urban system'.

Until the mid-twentieth century, the research produced by British anthropologists under Gluckman's direction at the RLI provided the main body of African urban ethnography. Following Gluckman's appointment in 1949 to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, this group of anthropologists became known as the 'Manchester School'. Gluckman inspired the first wave of ethnographers who viewed processes rather than a bound set of people as the proper object of their investigation. Victor Turner, Elizabeth Colson,

F. G. Bailey, Edmund Ronald Leach, Fredrik Barth are some well-known anthropologists who are associated with the Manchester school.

Soon after, in the 1950s, the Manchester group launched a ‘school in urban anthropology’. While the studies do not offer the wealth of descriptive detail concerning a variety of groups and settings which one finds in their Chicago counterparts, they are important also for their awareness of problems of method, conceptualisation, and analysis (Kempny, 2005). In particular, anthropological methods such as social network, the extended case study method, situational analysis and the social drama became defining characteristics of this school and are widely regarded as its major legacy (for a detailed discussion see Werbner, 2020).

Clyde Mitchell, a close associate of Gluckman, also played a major role in the development of the extended-case method as well as network analysis (Handleman, 2005). Mitchell’s work *The Kalela Dance: Aspects of Social Relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia* is an important book which analysed the performances of a dance troupe in the Copperbelt town of Luanshya. *The Kalela Dance* is not so much a study of dance, but as a study which takes the leisure condition as a stage for understanding casual social interaction in town. The book argued that tribalism was not about the tribe as such except in these dancing teams; tribalism does not form the basis for the organisation of corporate groups. Mitchell focused most of his analysis on issues of the people’s construction of their cultural and ethnic identities, their use of social categories, and their making of a modern subjectivity for themselves. He made it clear that in his view, ethnicity or tribalism was not one thing or even about one thing, but was actually open to recreation, play and fun too (Werbner, 2020).

The Manchester school was different from the Chicago school in the sense that it focused on Africa as its field which was a non-western, colonial set up whereas the Chicago school concentrated on western cities such as Chicago and other American cities.

**Check Your Progress**

- 3. Discuss the contributions of the Manchester school to urban anthropology.

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### 2.3 SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

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Anthropologists have always been interested in understanding relations between the individual and the society. The types of associations people have in their environs are known as their *social networks* in the society. Social networks are based on both the formal and informal relations an individual makes while negotiating the urban anonymity. Classical anthropologists have used this method in understanding the kinship structure, exchange patterns and social

mobilisations in traditional societies. However social network analysis became an important method in urban anthropological research in the mid twentieth century. Since the 1950s, anthropologists have employed the concept of social networks in the urban settings. They were of the opinion that social networks as a promising new area of theory and research can be used for better understanding the total fabric of modern urban life (Gold, 1982).

A group of anthropologists at the social anthropology department of the University of Manchester, including John Barnes, Clyde Mitchell and Elizabeth Bott conceived of society as a tapestry woven from the social networks of individuals. Rather than focusing on the whole society, they studied the networks of relations surrounding individuals. This concept was tested by Bott in her work with English families, by Barnes in his work with Norwegian fishermen, and by Mitchell in his work with rural migrants to towns of what was then Northern Rhodesia (Zambia today). Here, we will focus on J Clyde Mitchell specifically. Mitchell was particularly known for his concern for certain innovative aspects of modern life in urban Africa. He focused on the new urban dwellers of Zambia, finding their town ways in recently created new towns in urban Africa. He researched urban residents' awareness of choice-making in the face of urban complexity and uncertainties. How *individuals* often felt the need to maneuver, negotiate and even manipulate others, especially friends, acquaintances and often kin or conjugal partners in stress was a major concern of the Manchester School anthropologists (Werbner, 2020).

Social network analysis is an exciting and stimulating possible means of understanding human relationships in situations where the usual social structures are not observed and contacts appear scattered and diffused. City dwellers have multiple positions with regard to their networks in the city. It can be based on their friend circle, common occupation, similar interest and their institutional ties. Such networks can be found in common neighbourhoods as well as far in the city or in the suburbs. Urban anthropologists are interested in social network analysis to understand the social structure of urban life. It describes why an individual chooses to link herself/himself to a particular social network. Such social networks provide the city dwellers with the option to choose from the available networks which accomplish their desires most. The analysis of social networks gives a clue to what drives the whole urban community to function as a social system.

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## **2.4 THE EXTENDED CASE METHOD**

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The extended case study method is the hallmark of the Manchester school and is considered as the most important innovation in anthropological inquiry. Extended case study method brought new horizons in the way data is collected and interpreted in anthropology. It is capable of digging beneath the political binaries of the coloniser and the colonised, white and black, metropolis and periphery, capital and labour to discover multiple processes, interests, and identities (Hannerz, 1980).

The method was developed by anthropologists Max Gluckman and Jaap van Velsen in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It became a significant method in African studies during the mid-fifties. The researchers began to question the validity of taking notes and various other methods of collecting data from the

field rather than just jotting down the answers of their respondent. Instead of collecting data from informants about what natives ought to do, researchers began to fill their diaries with narratives of what natives actually were doing with accounts of real events, struggles, and dramas that took place over space and time (Burawoy, 1998). Richard Werbner (2020: 55-56) notes that while he was a first year student in 1959, Gluckman asked him Marx's *18th Brumaire*, 'in order to learn from it as the best example of the extended case method. How do sequences of events – *relations between events* not the events as such – and relationships matter and make it possible for a central, would-be heroic figure to play his part? It was a question of documenting and analysing a highly significant *social process*.' An extended case study was seen as advantageous because it documented micro-history in fine detail. The method unfolds certain changes people know, interpret, and to some extent direct over a significant period in their lives.

Extended case method applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on pre-existing theory (Burawoy, 1998). The method places less emphasis on identifying structural regularities and more on detailed analyses of social processes wherein individual strategies and choices reveal the context of everyday life. According to Max Gluckman, 'the most fruitful use of cases consists in taking a series of specific incidents affecting the same persons or groups, through a long period of time, and showing ... [the] change of social relations among these persons and groups, within the framework of their social system and culture' (1961: 10).

Extended case study method can be summarised in the following points:

- a) Extending the observer to the participant
- b) Extending observation over space and time
- c) Extending out from process to force
- d) Extending theory

**Check Your Progress**

4. Write a short note on the social network analysis method.

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5. What is the extended case study method? Explain with the help of a suitable example.

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## 2.5 CONCEPT OF SCALE IN URBAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES

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There have been long debates over what should be the subject matter of urban anthropology. Should we study the city as an object or focus on the relations between different actors in the city? What should be the approach to look at the cities? Urban anthropology has been pre dominated by the theoretical frameworks of the Chicago and the Manchester schools, political economic approach, cultural analysis and ordinary city approach, where the Chicago partisans tended to focus on the methods of doing urban anthropology in the western cities, and the Manchester school studied the processes of urbanisation and urban development peculiar of the African context. Similarly, political economy approach, cultural analysis and ordinary city approach also have their vantage points. Since these schools and theoretical frameworks appeared at different times and spaces, they have substantial variance in their scale of understanding and approach to the conceptualisation of the cities. The question of how and to what extent should the researcher study a city has been problematic and thus some argue for a geographic scale at which a city must be studied. Urban theories operationalise the city at different geographical scales. Scale is 'the geographical organiser and expression of collective social action' (Smith, 1995: 61). According to Howitt's (1998) scale has three facets: the geographical, the hierarchical and the dialectical. The geographic scale has an aerial facet that refers to size (census tract, province, continent), a hierarchical facet that refers to level (local, regional, national) and a dialectical facet that refers to relations (relations to other cities, to the social and political order and to the larger society). This classification describes size, level and relation as the three scales to conceptualise cities.

*The size perspective* focuses on the classification of cities on the basis of their size into world cities and small cities, megacities, metropolitan cities and cities of global north and global south. Every so often the researchers in urban anthropology have conceptualised the cities of the global north (USA and Europe) as the big, modern and influential cities; their focus is less on the small cities of the global south.

*The level perspective* advocates for studying cities at different levels such as neighbourhood, regional, nation-state and global level. The Chicago School studied the neighbourhood at micro level dealing with issues of migration, poverty and crime; issues of homelessness and interpersonal relations whereas the political economy approach studied the structural factors such as capital, power and urban social inequalities using a macro level understanding of cities and their complications. At present, the trend is to understand neoliberal cities and the urban places, mobilities and social spaces.

The third which is *relational perspective* emphasises on studying the social relations by observing the city as a whole and understanding its dynamics with the population diversity, cultural activities, consumption patterns economy, urban social change and the governance structure. The initial studies conducted

in anthropology focused on some particular segments of the city and its structure neglecting the totality of urban life. The relational approach identifies the city as a place where multiple social relations are formed. Thus, a city (or any locality) needs to be conceptualised not only as a set of social relations, but also as a group of actors who play an active role in practicing and reshaping those social relations.

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## 2.6 EMERGING APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF CITY

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Urban anthropologists have looked at the city in many different ways. From the earlier understandings of city as an anonymous place to city as an entertainment machine, the methods and approaches to the study of cities have changed over the period of time. These below are the approaches that have been popularly used in recent years in urban anthropological research.

### *The ordinary city approach*

According to the ordinary city approach, all cities are ordinary. In order to keep the urban theories relevant to the majority of cities and the urban population residing in all parts of the world, it is essential to emphasise on similar ways or methods to study all cities.

### *Cultural analysis approach*

This approach to the study of the city is the result of the process of globalisation and economic change. Each city has its own distinct and unique culture emerging from the local influences. Anthropologists use the cultural analysis approach to understand the role of specific culture of a city on the wide-reaching processes of globalisation.

### *City as an entertainment machine*

Cities are the new normal. With the economic, technological and social changes in the last few decades, the character of cities as a mere place for living has changed too. Today, they are the hub of various cultural activities. Apart from cinema, art and sports, the rising pubs, bars and cafe, amusement parks and other public places offer a great source of leisure and unique lifestyle. 'Urban public officials, business, and non-profit leaders are using culture, entertainment, and urban amenities to (or seek to) enhance their location -for present and future residents, tourists' conventioners and shoppers' (Clark, 2004). Consumption becoming the new form of self-expression, it is now an important topic of anthropological research.

### *The scenes approach (multidimensional approach)*

Scenes approach to the city is relatively a new method in urban anthropology. It inclined to understand the dynamic experiences produced in the city by analysing the emerging scenes from the visuals or the settings at a time and place. Scenes analysis encourages us to approach cities (or places in general) not simply in terms of the presence of, for example, churches, parks, bike paths, juice bars or cafes; people of different races, classes or nationalities; or music festivals, sports activities or social movements; but holistically, in terms of

the distinctive meanings created by the specific combination of all of these elements (Wu et al.,2019).Just like any art gallery or exhibition creates a scene at the place, all dwellings in the city have a certain kind of ambience that shape the urban experiences consequently. These experiences are created through the scenes that emerge at a sight. For example, a city can have multiple scenes i.e. transgressive, glamorous, self-expressive, traditional, and neighbourly or may have some kind of ethnic or local authenticity. These scenes are vital to the consumer perspective and of great importance as to how a consumer perceives any particular scene and whether he accepts or rejects that particular scene. Scenes theory is important in understanding the debate of scale approach to the city.

**Check Your Progress**

6. Discuss the concept of scale in urban anthropology.

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7. What are the emerging approaches to study the city?

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**2.7 SUMMARY**

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In this unit, we discussed the foremost approaches and methods of urban anthropology. At the outset we learnt about the Chicago school and the Manchester school which shaped the future of urban anthropology immeasurably. While the Chicago school stressed on studying the city as a laboratory to understand how American cities were undergoing transformation in the wake of industrialisation and rural-urban migration in the early twentieth century, the Manchester school, on the other hand, emerged as a consequence of anthropological studies done by the RLI and the social anthropology department of Manchester University which focused on African cities and the colonial impact on them. Max Gluckman’s role at the RLI and the Manchester school is enormous. He not only developed some noteworthy methods in urban anthropology but also trained many excellent ethnographers of his time. The Extended case method developed by the Manchester school of thought advocates for extending the observer to the participant. Extended case method provided reflexivity to ethnographic practices in anthropology and encouraged understanding the field situations through theories suitable to the case. The concept of scale in urban anthropology provided different perspectives to look at city and urban life. Through scale, the city can be seen from different perspectives of size, level and relations. It is in the theoretical light of this scale method, cities are

classified into various categories such as small and big cities, global and local cities, third world and ordinary cities, African and Asian cities, marginalised cities, feminist cities and cities of consumption. The social network analysis is crucial to the understanding of the threads of social relations which form the city life. With technological development, social network analysis has become a more significant method in understanding the flow of ideas, people and their movements in urban spaces. Thus, it would be no exaggeration to say that urban anthropology has developed as a sub-discipline of anthropology through its continuously evolving theoretical and methodological advancement through various schools.

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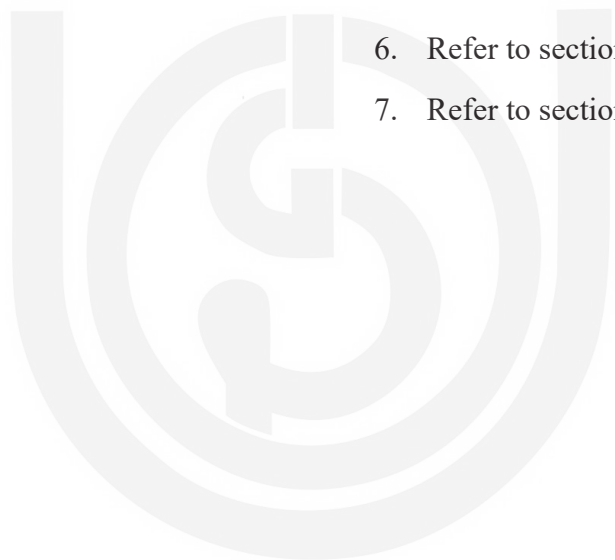
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## **2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Refer to section 2.2
2. Refer to section 2.2.
3. Refer to section 2.3.
4. Refer to section 2.4.
5. Refer to section 2.5.
6. Refer to section 2.6
7. Refer to section 2.7.



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## UNIT 3 FOLK URBAN CONTINUUM

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### Contents

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Continuities between Rural and Urban
- 3.2 Folk Urban Continuum: Robert Redfield and McKim Marriot
- 3.3 Semi-Urban and Peri-Urban
- 3.4 Towns and Two-Tier Cities
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 References
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this unit, the student will learn to:

- Describe the concept of Folk-Urban Continuum proposed by Robert Redfield
- Grasp how McKim Marriot employed and further refined it in the Indian context
- Identify concepts including semi-urban, peri-urban, towns and two-tier cities

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, we learnt how the Chicago and the Manchester schools contributed to the growth of urban anthropology. This unit is about folk-urban continuum, a concept developed by Robert Redfield (1897-1958), a prominent Chicago anthropologist. Robert Redfield contributed to urban anthropology by studying relationships between urban and other types of settlements. Human settlements around the world vary a great deal in their geography, size and structure. They can be broadly divided into two types, rural and urban. Rural areas are marked by agriculture as the chief activity. The urban areas are the seats of commerce, trade and administration. However, both the rural and urban do not exist in a vacuum or isolation. There is a movement of both people and practices from one place to the other. This flow of ideas, traits and patterns from rural to urban and urban to rural can be termed as a continuum.

Continuum also can be understood in terms of continuity. When we speak of the folk-urban continuum, we refer to the continuity between rural and urban areas. At one end of this continuous scale lies the village life. At the other end of this continuum is urban life. Both the urban and the rural are social formations, and they interact with each other. This ceaseless interaction between the rural

and urban is the study matter of the folk-urban continuum. The folk and urban continuum explain how the imprints of the urban life reach and get absorbed into the folk life. The vice versa is also true whereby certain cultural traits of the village life develop and become a part of the urban life. The folk-urban continuum also shows how, over time, villages transform into towns and then cities.

The concept of rural-urban continuum is about social, political, cultural and economic interactions between the villages and the towns or cities. Many cultural traits are diffused from cities to rural areas. For example, dress patterns diffuse from cities to rural areas. Besides these, new thoughts and ideologies are also diffused from the cities to the rural areas due to increased communication via radio, television, newspapers and social media.

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### **3.1 CONTINUITIES BETWEEN RURAL TO URBAN**

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Urbanisation has increased the continuity between rural and urban areas. The whole gamut of occupational diversification, the spread of literacy, education and mass communication have contributed to this increased continuity. Many modern agricultural technological innovations and institutional frameworks for rural development find their origin in the urban centres. The process of urbanisation has facilitated the large scale commercialisation of agriculture. Similarly, agricultural requirements for machinery have generated the growth of manufacturing units in urban areas. As evident, some of the rural demands are met through the urban centres and vice versa.

Folk society and urban society are conceived of as polarities at opposite ends of a continuum. The folk society and the urban society have a very abstract relationship to social reality. Both are synthetic compound of characteristics that are lifted out of fundamental social situations. However, the ideal folk or the ideal urban societies cannot be found. According to Robert Redfield, who was the first to discuss the concept of folk-urban continuum, the ideal type of folk and urban society is a type which is not a reduction of the particular characteristics of many societies; the features which these societies share in common and which together might make for a necessary and sufficient description of the type wherever it is found (Mintz, 1953).

According to Mintz (ibid), the folk society is marked by isolation compared to the urban society. There is a high degree of genetic and cultural homogeneity, slow culture change, pre-literacy; small numbers; minimal division of labour; simple technology (with every individual as a primary producer). The social organisation is based on blood and fictive kinship; behaviour is traditional and uncritical, and there is a tendency to view the inanimate and nonhuman world personally. Furthermore, there is a viewing of traditional objects which acts as sacred with the pervasive importance of magic and religion, thus resulting in ritual behaviour in all areas of life. Redfield defined urban society primarily as the absence or opposite of these characteristics present in folk society.

Redfield described three principal processes of change from folk to urban: secularisation, individualisation, and disorganisation. To what degree these processes are interrelated has not been made clear, although Redfield welcomed

the work of those who have sought to show in various cases that change of one kind may take place without a change of another. Sol Tax, for instance, has described a folk-like social situation for Guatemala, where individualisation and commercialism are well advanced. Spicer studied what he and Redfield regard as folk like society existing on the very margins of an urban centre, and features of both folk and urban types are present in curious juxtaposition (Mintz, 1953).

**Check Your Progress**

1. Discuss the continuities between rural and urban areas.

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**3.2 FOLK URBAN CONTINUUM: ROBERT REDFIELD AND MCKIM MARRIOT**

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The concept of folk-urban continuum is explained and understood through Robert Redfield’s landmark study, which he later published in the form of a book. The book was titled *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* and published in 1941. It was based upon a comparative study of the four communities: city society, town society, peasant society, and folk society. He had selected these four communities or societies from the Mexican province of Yucatan. The four communities located in the Mexican province with different habitations were Marida (city society), Diztas (town society), Chankom (a peasant village) and Tuski (village of folk society). In the Yucatan study, Redfield and his co-workers compared these four different communities in order to analyse and explain the cultural contrast between the Spanish and modern urban civilisation of the northwest area of the peninsula and the more indigenous southeast. The general conclusion of this work was that the same relative order of the four different communities on the map of Yucatan, from tribal village to city, also corresponds to decreasing isolation and homogeneity and increasing secularisation, individualism, and cultural disorganisation.

Redfield called this order a folk-urban continuum with a folk-type society and culture at one end and urban civilisation at the other. He also suggested the following general hypotheses:

- 1) that the primitive and peasant societies (as isolated, homogeneous local communities) tend to have the general character of a ‘folk’ type of society;
- 2) that as these come into contact with the urbanised society, they change in the direction of an ‘urban’ type; and
- 3) that the different changes are interdependent, as changes in some of the characteristics of a society tend to bring about, or at least go with other changes.

This folk-urban continuum; is a one dimensional, linear continuum connecting different points on a map. The four communities selected for study are four separate points treated as if they all exist simultaneously without essential interrelation; civilisation, meaning chiefly Spanish and modern western, is associated with one of the points, the capital city of Merida.

The Mayan civilisation, having been decapitated by the Spanish conquest, does not enter the picture. Redfield was quite aware that this model has historical implications, chiefly along the lines of the age-area principle. He writes, for example, that it could be used to reconstruct; a sort of generalised hypothetical account of the history of the culture of Yucatan as a whole. Similarly, it might be validly asserted that a comparative description of communities encountered as one goes from Paris southward through Marseilles, Algiers, the Sahara, and then Sudan would provide the vague outlines of the cultural history of Western Europe. However, he believes this would be a crude way to derive even the most tentative historical conclusions. While he used the available history of Yucatan, the whole study follows a comparison of present conditions in one community with present conditions in the others. The historical dimension is left to historians and archaeologists (Redfield, 1941: 340-42.)

Redfield observed a pronounced continuum between the cultures of these four communities. He put Merida on one end of the continuum and Taski on the other end. Based on the study of the cultural traits of these four societies, Redfield observed that Taski and Merida displayed a high degree of cultural variations. However, Merida and Diktas society, on the one hand, and Chankom and Taski on the other shared lot of similarities. However, some commonness or similarities were also between Diktas and Chankom, especially in shops and intermediaries. Since the city community shared a lot with the town community, the peasant community and the folk community also showed resemblance accordingly, Redfield described Merida and Diktas as urban communities and Chankom and Taski as folk communities. Based on this significant empirical study, Redfield concluded that no known society should be precisely the same as the societies on these two poles. However, different societies may share some cultural features of these two extreme poles (Hasnain, 2010: 182).

According to the folk-urban-continuum, the folk society comes in contact with urban society and inherits specific characteristics. In this way, a folk society has specific characteristics of folk and certain characteristics of urban society. Redfield explains that the folk society is between literate and illiterate, between developed and undeveloped societies. It was observed that folk society begins to lose some of its characteristics because of urban contact. Isolation, kinship system, group feeling, homogeneity slowly wane from the folk community.

Redfield wrote that 'the increase of contacts, heterogeneity and disorganisation of culture, are sufficient causes of secularisation and individualisation'. Thus Redfield says that the folk like community lost its isolation through contact with the city, it became more heterogeneous, a market economy developed, and an indication of disorganisation appeared. Increased contact with any dissimilar society results in a change. The evidence of disorganisation and secularisation, and impersonal behaviour was more evident in the relationship between different ethnic community elements. Any attempt to characterise society and compare it with others highlights that the folk-urban continuum deals with the

relative degree of presence or absence of polar characteristics (Miner 1952). Redfield stated that if a society loses its isolation or homogeneity, it becomes secularised, and its members work more for their interest rather than in the interest of others. However, the comparison of Yucatan with that of Guatemala led Redfield to conclude that ‘there is no single necessary cause for secularisation and individualisation’.

Sol Tax observed that Guatemala societies were ‘small... homogenous in beliefs and practices... with relationship impersonal... and with familial organisation weak, with life secularised and individuals were acting more from economic or other personal advantages than from any deep thought of social good’. Redfield regarded Tax’s observation as suggesting that the development of the money economy may be another sufficient cause of secularisation and individualisation. Robert Redfield’s continuum scheme defines an ideal type, and the folk society is the polar opposite of urban society. The ideal type is a mental construct, and no known society precisely corresponds to it. According to Miner (1952), criticisms of the folk-urban concept might be classed under three general headings:

1. the problem of lack of fit between the empirical evidence on particular societies and the nature of these societies, which one might expect from the ideal type construct,
2. the problem of definition of the characteristics of the ideal types, and
3. the limited theoretical insight provided by the continuum.

Oscar Lewis pointed out that the folk concept is an ideal and hence a matter of definition. It is upon the heuristic value that the type and its related continuum must be judged. In his book, *Life in a Mexican Village* (1951: 432-440), Lewis made the following six criticisms of the conceptual framework about its utility for studying culture change and cultural analysis (Miner, 1952).

- The folk-urban conceptualisation of social change focuses primarily on the city as a transformation agent to exclude or neglect other internal or external factors.
- Culture change may not be a matter of folk-urban progression. However, rather an increasing or decreasing heterogeneity of Spanish rural element, such as the plough, did not make Tepoztlan more urban but instead gave it a more varied rural culture.
- The typology involved in the folk-urban classification of societies tends to obscure the wide range in the ways of life, and in the value systems among so-called primitive peoples, the criteria used are concerned with the purely formal aspects of society. Focusing only on the formal aspects of urban society reduces all urban societies to a common denominator and treats them as if they all had the same culture. It should be clear that the concept “urban” is too much of a catchall to be useful for cultural analysis. Moreover, it is suggested here that the question posed by Redfield, namely, what happens to an isolated, homogeneous society when it comes into contact with an urbanised society, cannot possibly be answered because the question is too general and the terms used do not give us the necessary

data. We need to know what kind of urban society, under what conditions of contact, and a host of other specific historical data.

- The folk-urban classification has severe limitations in guiding field research because of the highly selective implications of the categories themselves and the relatively narrow focus of the problem. The emphasis upon essentially formal aspects of culture leads to neglect of psychological data and, as a rule, does not give insight into the people's character.
- Finally, underlying the folk-urban dichotomy as used by Redfield is a system of value judgments that contains the old Rousseauian notion of 'primitive' people as noble 'savages' and the corollary that civilisation has made man selfish. While folk societies are thought to be integrated, urban societies are thought to be responsible for disorganisation.

Sol Tax pointed out that world view can change folk society's independent characteristics without changing independent characteristics.

### **McKim Marriot**

Robert Redfield conceptualised his idea based on the distinctions put forward earlier by European sociologists, such as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tonnies) and mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim). Redfield (1955) formalised his ideas in the concept of the 'Little Community' with its four characteristics: smallness, distinctiveness, homogeneity, and self-sufficiency. Marriot, who was an American anthropologist, saw the interplay among the communities of rural and urban centres. In his essay on 'Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilisation' (1955), Marriot explicitly indicated the association between the caste system and the larger order of state and civilisation.

Marriot conducted his study in the village of Kishan Garhi, which is located in Uttar Pradesh. He talked about the Little Tradition and the Great Tradition and how cultural traits travelled from one society to another through universalisation and parochialisation. Marriot borrowed the concepts of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition from Redfield's idea of the Great Community and the Little Community, which the latter had discussed while conducting his studies in Mexican communities. According to Redfield, the Little Community was a smaller size, self-sufficient and relatively isolated village. Redfield held that every civilisation is composed of traditions. On the one end are the traditions of 'elite' and 'thinking class' while there are traditions of unlettered peasants. The former emanated from urban centres, and their temples, educational institutions and was described as the Great Tradition. The concept may be understood from another angle. Every society consists of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. The traditions, behavioural patterns, customs and rites, rituals and festivals of these communities may be the Great and the Little.

In Indian society, Hinduism is the Great tradition, and it represents the way of life and shapes social structure. The source of this great tradition may be traced back to its ancient thinkers and philosophers and the scholarly works and epics and treatises. The Little Tradition is represented by numerous rural and tribal segments of Indian society.

McKim Marriott, influenced by the studies conducted by Robert Redfield for their intensive study of India's villages, elaborated the original model of Redfield in the light of data generated from Indian villages. Marriott envisaged two concepts: Parochialisation and Universalisation, with the two poles having been defined as the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition. Marriott characterised the mode of interaction between the Little and the Great Traditions in the Indian village as 'parochialisation' and 'universalisation. Universalisation, according to Marriot, refers to the carrying forward of materials that are already present in the Little Tradition. In other words, it is the upward journey of little traditions to become a part of great traditions. Parochialisation, on the other hand, is the downward devolution of the Great Tradition elements and their integration with the Little Tradition elements. It is a process of localisation. Thus, there is a continuous dialogue between elements of the Little and the Great Tradition.

Marriott's analysis is very illuminating, but one may argue that there is something more to be considered in studying modern India than the Great and the Little traditions; there is also the 'new tradition'. Morris Opler (1955:153) has argued that:

*Marriott's conceptualisation leaves no room . . . for elements that are not aboriginal or local on the one hand or classical Indian on the other, but which come from without or which are invented by carriers of the culture. How the village will absorb and respond to these new ideas which sweep in from the West and the East or which are being generated in India today is perhaps even more important than how it copes with Sanskritic rites.*

Opler's criticism is valid, but Marriott's study, nevertheless, has great merit. Through him, we are being helped to a viewpoint, a set of concepts, and a way of working that will allow anthropologists to study a village in its generic historic processes of interaction with the civilisation of which it is a part (Sharma, 1969). However, studying the interplay of the Great and Little Traditions or the advent of the "new tradition" within a village does not help understand the Indian culture. It may be true that 'to study Jonesville is to study America', but it is not true that 'To study Kishan Garhi, or Bisipara, is to study India.' To do this, social scientists should not limit themselves to the village as an isolate (ibid).

### Check Your Progress

2. What is folk-urban continuum? Describe its features in detail.

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3. Discuss the contribution of Robert Redfield and McKim Marriot in the study of Indian villages.

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### 3.3 SEMI-URBAN AND PERI-URBAN

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There are settlements which differ from cities as well as villages in configuration and function. It is not easy to describe such settlements. Sometimes we refer to these settlements as semi-urban or peri-urban areas. We come across two broader categories explicating the semi-urban condition. First, descriptive categories primarily try to develop analytical frameworks under one of the following captions: the urban-rural divide, the fringe, sprawl, and semi-urban landscapes. The second group corresponds to development or strategic categories for sustainable development, including garden cities, new urbanism, landscape urbanism, urban agriculture, neo-rurality, and ecopolis.

Peri-urban areas often lie outside the city's legal jurisdiction and sometimes even outside the legal jurisdiction of any urban local body. They are thus not provided with many of the essential services taken for granted in the city. They must make do on their own which results in increased local inequities as large companies and public institutions as the upper-income group can install privatised essential services. However, there is a complete absence of these services for the poor and more minor businesses/workshops. Electricity, for example, is often the first service to be provided by the government in peri-urban areas, but these areas generally lack piped water supply and residents obtain it from local rivers, lakes and ponds or through tube wells. Regarding sanitation, private homeowners and institutions in the peri-urban area create their facilities to build septic tanks and surface drains that empty into local streams or *nullahs* (Shaw, 2005).

Allen and Dávila (2002) defined a peri-urban interface as a mosaic of agricultural and urban ecosystems, subject to rapid change with a large social mix and measurable distinctive features (Allen, 2003). According to Adell (1999), peri-urban zones are dynamic, spatially and structurally, and form distinctive agricultural and non-agricultural activity areas.

Bourne (1996) stated that there is no clear border between suburbia and exurbia that contains edge cities and semi-agricultural, semi-urban landscapes. These landscapes were seen under urbanisation pressures as "nurtured landscapes", literally fed by the cities they enclose as peri-urban areas. In densely populated areas with extensive networks of cities and towns, the semi-urban landscape is enclosed by the city fabric and thus "nurtured" by multiple sources. Wolman et al. (2005) proposed the extended urban areas based on housing density and commuting patterns. Peri-urban areas could be situated within the larger metropolitan region and yet not have any essential services other than electricity, making them no different from the villages. However, unlike these villages, they face a more significant environmental burden stemming from their transition. The Desakota concept deserves to be mentioned here. Traditional theories relate the rapid growth of cities in third world countries to the fast depopulation of the countryside in the Southeast. In Asia, the rural population, living within the hinterlands of large (rapidly industrialising) cities, is spontaneously transforming their rural lifestyles into urban ones without

leaving their rural environments. In this approach, cities are not expanding, but the neighbouring countryside transforms 'itself' into a specific semi-urban fabric (Meuss, 2008).

**Check Your Progress**

4. Write a note on peri-urban settlements.

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### **3.4 TOWNS AND TWO-TIER CITIES**

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In the developing world, towns are neither traditional in their form nor do they represent modern settlements. However, functionally they have similarities with both the city and the village. Towns have better links with their surrounding villages but have weaker inter-community ties and social life.

A town is a place where urbanity has not yet reached its full vigour. It may also sound relatively more minor in size by area and by the population residing within it. However, the concept is not fully clear simply by its demographic status or by its areal occupancy. There are unique small urban settlements within hills providing facilities or resorts.

Similarly, there are towns near or adjoining mining areas. These cannot fulfil the underlying concept involving functions of urban centre termed by urban geography as 'small town'. Population and areal occupancy may be components of town, but these do not carry the entire ecology of towns.

Up to Census 1951, the definition of a town included all habitations with more than 5000; every municipality/corporation/notified area of whatever size; and all civil lines not included within the municipal units. In 1961, this definition was changed. Furthermore, a town was defined as a settlement with a minimum population of 5,000 and a population density not less than 1,000 persons per square mile. Apart from this, 75 per cent of the working population should be engaged in non-agricultural activities. The town should have a few characteristics and civic amenities like transport and communication, banks, schools, markets, recreation centres, hospitals, electricity, and newspapers.

The above definition was in use till the 2001 census. All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board, or notified town area committee, a minimum population of 5,000, at least 75 percent of the male main working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km. The first category of urban units is called Statutory Towns. These towns are notified under the law by the concerned State/UT Government and have local bodies like municipal corporations, municipalities, municipal committees, irrespective of their demographic characteristics. The second category of towns is known as Census Town. These were identified based on Census 2001 data.

According to the government, cities with a population range of 50,000 to 100,000 are classified as tier 2 cities. This classification of Indian cities is a ranking system used by the Government of India. Cities are classified based on their population, as recommended by the Sixth Central Pay Finance. First-tier cities, national capitals or not, are usually larger than second-tiers. Second-tier cities are generally the capitals of states and other larger cities.

The relationship between small towns, the larger employment story and growth is significant. Small towns have remained an essential feature of the urban system. They might or might not account for a large share of the GDP, but they represent a large and growing market, and they also act as essential service centres to the rural population. In a context of limited rural to urban migration, job destruction in the agricultural sector and minimal job creation, places of adjustment where people cope with poverty, uncertainty through the mobilisation of their kinship networks and family resources. Economic activities range from: natural resource extraction; manufacturing; services and trade; real estate; and educational institutions. Moreover, the urbanisation of the peripheral settlements of large cities is not necessarily dependent on the city.

### **Check Your Progress**

5. Discuss the idea of town and two-tier cities.

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## **3.5 SUMMARY**

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Human settlements and way of living are affected by geography and the resources at their disposal. Based on population density, development, amenities, employment opportunities, education, human settlement is divided into two categories, i.e. Urban and Rural. Urban refers to a human settlement where the rate of urbanisation and industrialisation is high. On the other hand, a rural settlement is one where the rate of urbanisation is relatively slow. However, these two types of human settlements are in constant and continuous interaction with each other. There exists both upward and downward flow of cultural traits between the urban and rural. Robert Redfield and McKim Marriott have proposed concepts to explain how a continuum exists between these societies and how traits are 'universalised' and 'parochialised'. Apart from the urban and rural, newer forms of settlements have emerged. These are the semi-urban, peri-urban and suburban settlements.

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### **3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Refer to section 3.2
2. Refer to section 3.3.
3. Refer to section 3.3.
4. Refer to section 3.4.
5. Refer to section 3.5.

