

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF A SCIENTIFIC LABEL: URBAN SOCIOLOGY (CHICAGO, 1925)

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# THE SOCIOLOGY OF A SCIENTIFIC LABEL: URBAN SOCIOLOGY (CHICAGO, 1925)

Christian TOPALOV

**ABSTRACT** – This paper is a sociological study of an episode in the history of a scientific labeling. In the 1920s, a group of sociologists from the University of Chicago tried to give substance to the label “urban sociology,” which until then had hardly been used. Robert E. Park and his close associates took the 1925 annual meeting of the American Sociological Society as an opportunity to launch the phrase. Vast archival material can be used to precisely describe the configuration of the actors who were mobilized to promote the new specialty and the content they gave to it. This label did not immediately meet with success. For more than a quarter of a century it remained seldom used and its own promoters did not particularly fight for it. It was only in the early 1950s that an “urban sociology” that was more confident in its foundations and legitimacy began to flourish first in the United States, and then in the rest of the Western world.

**KEYWORDS** – Urban sociology, history of sociology, scientific labeling, University of Chicago, Robert E. Park

Giving a name to a scientific specialization can have powerful effects. Whether this performative utterance concerns a new science being brought into existence or a field that one wishes to make more autonomous within an established discipline, such an initiative is always an interesting vantage point from the perspective of the history of science. If successful, the new name will be surrounded by concepts and knowledge, scholarly communities claiming association

with it, institutions ensuring its longevity, and written accounts tracing its history.

This article displays the results of a study on one such operation undertaken in the 1920s by a group of sociologists at the University of Chicago. They tried at that time to give some consistency to a label that had, up until that point, been very uncommon: “urban sociology.” As urban sociology is a specialization that is treated in university courses and textbooks today, one may find it relevant to consider the origins of this term and of the discipline that it names.

I will not, however, use such an argument to plead the interest of this case, which to my mind derives from two other reasons. Firstly, this was a scientific initiative of a certain scope that can be rather conveniently observed: Robert E. Park and his close collaborators launched the term “urban sociology” on the occasion of the December 1925 annual meeting of the American Sociological Society, a professional academic organization that, since 1905, had been gathering sociologists from North American universities and some of their partners. As documentation of this episode is abundant and easily accessible—Park’s archives in particular—one can describe with precision the configuration of the players who were rallied to promote the new specialization, as well as the content then assigned to it. Another source of the episode’s interest is that the label launched that year did not meet with all the success that was counted on: for more than a quarter century, it was rarely taken up by others and was barely supported by its own promoters. It was not until the early 1950s that an “urban sociology” more secure in its founding principles and its legitimacy flourished, first in the United States, and then in the rest of the Western world.

My objective, then, is to conduct a sociological study of an episode in the history of a scientific label. Being convinced that scientific knowledge derives from concrete interactions between scholars and between scholars and their social world, I believe it useful to observe, at the very place where it was formed, the networks of ideas and people, words, and institutions that constitute the social materiality of scientific thought. It is only at the cost of forgetting these foundational moments that a discipline can take on the appearance of a development of concepts and propositions that follow an intrinsic logic, in the way of influences and traditions.

In the case that is being studied here, one can observe Park and those close to him defining the content of the new specialization in two parallel interactions or conversations: on one side, with an academic world within which a new regime of scientificity was being built for the social sciences, and on the other, with a reform-oriented world that alone could provide this new “urban sociology” with the practical relevance its social recognition and expansion depended on. Park therefore developed his thought and his convictions under the constraint of necessary alliances, both intellectual and institutional. These alliances needed simultaneously to take into account the configuration of forces within North American sociology, the strategy that was being defined in the foundations of the Rockefeller empire, and a new relationship to be established between university faculty and the reform galaxy linked to the urban ruling classes. Hence the interest in making a joint study of Park’s alliances and of the scientific content that he offered his partners.

I would like to note that this approach is very close to that through which Jean-Michel Chapoulie profoundly renewed the generally accepted vision of the Chicago sociologists in France, by applying a consistent interactionist method to them. His maxim was to consider them “as a concrete group—or, more precisely, as a series of concrete groups” (2001, 17)—and to take an interest in their “activities,” as though the topic were doctors, workers, technical school teachers, or jazz musicians. “Among these activities, a central but not exclusive place was given to those who produced texts in the social sciences” (2001, 17). This is why “attention must be given to the set of social arrangements, even if relatively contingent, in which the collective actions that produced the examined works were inscribed” (2001, 16). Here we are light years from the ordinary methods of writing the “history of ideas” or “sociological thought.”<sup>1</sup>

The analysis will be developed in three stages. First, I will describe Park’s initiative as it played out during 1925. What conditions made it possible, and what was the content of the proposition? I will thus return to the scientific text that is often considered the foundation of the new discipline: “The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of

1. Other authors have sought to resituate the activities of the Chicago sociologists in a broader context, as reform activity (Kuklick 1980; Deegan and Burger 1981) or urban reporting (Lindner 1990). Each time, sociological works gained a new intelligibility.

Human Behavior in the Urban Environment,” which will be examined here as a conversational act. Next, I will outline a sociography of the alliances established by Park, which will make it possible to better understand the possible components of an “urban sociology” in 1925. Finally, I will observe to what degree and in what senses university sociologists took up the new term over the course of the following decades.

### A Scientific Initiative

During the December 1924 annual meeting of the American Sociological Society (ASS) held in Chicago, Park was elected president, an honorary post that came with the privilege of organizing the following year’s meeting. On January 17 of the following year, he wrote to Roderick D. McKenzie, a former student of his who was teaching sociology at Washington State University: “My plan is to make the City the central theme for all the papers at that meeting.” By then, he wished to publish a collection of texts: “Furthermore, in view of the impending program on the City, I am eager to publish the articles that Burgess and I have collected on the City. I am planning a volume under the general title, ‘The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment.’ You will remember that paper. I would like to include in that book your paper on ‘Human Ecology’ and there may be one or two other papers that would fit in with our plans of publication.”

The texts to which Park was alluding were an article that he had published in 1915 in the *American Journal of Sociology* and an article by McKenzie that he had carefully revised and recently published in the same journal<sup>2</sup> under the title “The Ecological Approach to the Study of Human Community” (McKenzie, 1924). He continued: “I think of the book as being a sort of introduction to our studies in the city and if your paper is in it, it will serve to announce to the world that there is a new school of thought on Urban Sociology.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Park to McKenzie, June 14, 1924; McKenzie to Park, June 25, 1924 (Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Department of Special Collections [hereinafter: JRL], Park Papers Addenda Box 2, Folder 2).

3. Park to McKenzie, January 17, 1925, JRL.

In the end, the collective work (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925), conceived as a manifesto, contained ten chapters, of which six were written by Park, two by Ernest W. Burgess, and one by McKenzie, with one chapter of bibliography by Louis Wirth. The head of the school was sixty-one years old at the time, his two collaborators were thirty-nine and forty, and young Wirth was twenty-eight. The book, funded by Park and Burgess, was published by the University of Chicago Press, just in time to be available to participants at the December 1925 ASS meeting.<sup>4</sup>

### *Decisive Conditions: Rockefeller Funding*

Park's action was inseparable from the existence of a resource to which he had not had access in 1915, the absence of which caused an initial lack of interest in the text that he would ten years later seek to revive. In 1923, the Local Community Research Committee (LCRC) was established at the University of Chicago, funded by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, a small philanthropic foundation within the Rockefeller empire (Bulmer 1980). This plan resulted from a joint initiative of the heads of the departments of political science, sociology and anthropology, and political economy, and of the directors of the foundation, both parties expressing a common goal: the radical reorganization of research in the social sciences at the university.

Beardsley Ruml (1894–1960), recently named director of the memorial, set out the argument thus: “The great practical need for greater knowledge concerning the forces that affect the behavior of individuals and societies is definitely realised by the ablest leaders of social welfare organisations...,” but “the requirements of classroom instruction limit markedly the possibilities of contact with social phenomena. As a result, production from the universities is largely deductive and speculative, on the basis of second-hand observations, documentary evidence and anecdotal material. It is small wonder that the social engineer finds this social science abstract and remote, of

4. Local Community Research Committee Minutes, 1923–1928, Meeting of the Executive Committee, February 8, 1926, 111, JRL, Social Science Research Committee, Box 1, Folder 1. The first edition was released in December 1925.

little help to him in the solution of his problem.”<sup>5</sup> The argument was not so much that the universities should be more sensitive to the needs of social agencies, but that, by being more practical and less bookish, they would be more scientific. It was therefore a dual reform that was being promoted: a reform both of social action and of university research.

Thus the Rockefeller funding was decisive for the professors who benefited from it: because it allowed them to rely on a hive of young, remunerated research assistants, of course, but also because their research program was being planned at the outposts of a reform presented as essential in order to redefine the relationship between university and society (Bulmer 1982).

The LCRC was directed by an executive committee of representatives of the departments concerned, a situation that for several years granted a great degree of independence to the university professors. Starting in December 1923, Burgess presented to the ASS the guidelines of an urban growth study project, in the context of which he displayed his concentric zone model and announced a series of inquiries undertaken by students (Burgess 1924a, 97). The majority of these projects were rapidly adopted by the LCRC, others were added, and in the autumn of 1924, Burgess obtained approval from the committee for a group project titled “The Growth of the City and Social Surveys of the Individual Local Districts of Chicago.”<sup>6</sup> Thus began what was later considered the “golden age” of the Chicago sociology department, which ended in 1929–30 with the elimination of the LCRC and its replacement by a Social Science Research Council more directly controlled by men from the Rockefeller Foundation. This authority put an end to the work on Chicago and its “local communities,” which were judged insufficiently scientific.<sup>7</sup>

5. “Extract from Mr. Ruml’s statement of policy” to the memorial, 1923 (President’s Papers 1889–1925, Box 61, Folder 13, cited by Bulmer 1980, 71).

6. For more on Burgess’s projects and the recruitment of his assistants, see “Local community research appointees. VI Sociology” (Meeting of the executive committee, March 21, 1924, JRL, Social science research committee, Box 1, Folder 1, 8); “Reports on projects in sociology under the direction of the committee on social research for the autumn quarter, 1924” (JRL, Burgess Papers, Box 13, Folder 4). Burgess’s program was renamed “Local communities of Chicago” in 1926 (“Meeting of the executive committee, March 13, 1926,” JRL, Social science research committee records, Box 1, Folder 1, 133–37).

7. This aspect of the end of the “golden age” of the “Chicago School” is barely brought up in the historiography (see, for example, Bulmer 1984, 148–9). It does, however, clearly come up in the SSRC archives, a point that I cannot develop here.

Park's initiative, and perhaps even his very election to the head of the ASS, cannot be understood outside the extraordinarily favorable circumstance that resulted from the support given by the LCRC to the research on the city of Chicago launched by Burgess and Park in 1923–4. The manifesto book itself was in part composed of texts originally intended for different audiences: some for university sociologists, some for social reform activists—particularly those who were mobilized around a cause then called “community organization” in the United States, with whom Park would continue to talk at least until 1929 (Topalov 2003). Burgess's two chapters were recent lectures: “The Growth of the City. An Introduction to a Research Project” (1924a) had been presented at the December 1923 meeting of the ASS, and “Can Neighborhood Work have a Scientific Basis?” (1924b) at the National Conference of Social Work, a large annual meeting of social workers and relief officials held in June–July 1924 in Toronto. Some of Park's chapters had been written for a scholarly audience: “The Natural History of the Newspaper” had been published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in November 1923, and “Magic, Mentality, and City Life” was a presentation to the ASS in December of the same year. Others had originally been intended for lay audiences: “Community Organization and the Romantic Temper,” first presented to the community organization section of the ASS in 1923, had just come out in May 1925 in the *Journal of Social Forces*, a scientific journal of social work; “Community Organization and Juvenile Delinquency” was a report presented at the Recreation Congress in October 1923, and “The Mind of the Hobo: Reflections upon the Relation between Mentality and Locomotion” had first appeared in the Christian sociology magazine *World Tomorrow* in September 1923.

The flagship chapter of the manifesto remains, of course, the Park article reprinted in a new context ten years after its first publication.

*A Theoretical Text Considered as a Conversation: The 1915 Article and its 1925 Version*

Park had just been hired by the University of Chicago when he published the programmatic 1915 article “The City” in the journal closely controlled by Albion Small, his department head (Abbott



1999, chap. 3). This text was a scientific proposal that allowed him to rise above the specialization that had been assigned to him based on his prior experience—race relations—and one might hypothesize that this article is not unrelated to the fact that in 1915, he began to teach a course on “the social survey,” which he then gave until 1933, on the eve of his retirement (Harvey 1987, 256–83).

The link between the text and his teaching activity doubtless explains the singular craftsmanship of the article, which is modeled on how courses were given in the department: one begins with definitions borrowed from authors; next, each is developed in a more concrete fashion by choosing examples of application in current affairs or in daily life; and finally, a series of questions is proposed for student reflection or inquiry—questions whose status is indicated by a particular typography.

I will set aside for a moment the theoretical opening of the article, which evolved greatly between 1915 and 1925 (Lannoy 2004a and 2004b), to address the manner in which urban planning is approached in the first part, entitled “The City Plan and Local Organization.” This title, which sounds odd today, requires clarification if one wishes to recreate the terms in which Park’s contemporaries would have understood them.

Park intended to establish an essential point from the start. Despite appearances, the American city does not result from “artless” growth, for it has “its institutional character,” as he said in 1915 (1915, 578); it is “a living entity,” as he said in 1925 (1925, 4). Consequently, a plan defined by city regulations (“the city plan”) cannot be arbitrary, for it must respect the physical and the moral organization of the city, which interact with each other and ultimately result from the “habits and customs of the people who live in it.” It is thus that “the city acquires an organization...which is neither designed nor controlled” (1915, 579; 1925, 5, hereinafter: 579/5).

This organization is particularly expressed in the spatial distribution of the population and of the groups into which it is divided in neighborhoods—defined as “a locality with sentiments, traditions, and a history of its own” (579/6). To support this statement, Park offered a long quotation from Robert A. Woods, who defines the neighborhood as a “social unit” at the same time as a “mentality” or a “social mind.” The choice of this reference had a precise significance. Woods

(1865–1925) was one of the leading figures of the prewar reform movement: founder of a famous social settlement in Boston, he had made this statement before the 1913 ASS annual meeting, which Park had attended (Woods 1914). The ASS regularly welcomed representatives from the fields of philanthropy and social work, and reciprocally the National Conference on Social Work invited university professors, so that community organization and neighborhood were the topics of an ongoing conversation between these two worlds, which overlapped in part. In 1915 as in 1925, Park wanted to show his interlocutors that “the neighborhood exists without formal organization” (580/7), that it does not depend on the efforts that may be made to create or to change it. But it is precisely because the social forces that make and dismantle neighborhoods are not infinitely malleable and can be subject to scientific study that sociologists can collaborate with social reformers:

“Efforts have been made...to reconstruct and quicken the life of city neighborhoods and to bring them in touch with the larger interests of the community. Such is, in part, the purpose of the social settlements.... We should study, in connection with the investigation of these agencies, these methods and this technique, since it is just the method by which objects are practically controlled that reveals their essential nature, that is to say, their predictable character” (581/9).

Thus Park’s scientific program is at the same time an offer of service to the world of urban reform and social work. A number of problems listed as worthy of study also form part of the preoccupations of reformers at that time: the improvement of bad neighborhoods with playgrounds and athletic fields (582/9), the “disintegrating influences” of the city on church, school, and family (594/24), and, more generally, the new forms that “social control” must take in a situation in which “the effect of the urban environment is to intensify all effects of crisis” (596/27): juvenile delinquency, prostitution, alcoholism, political machines (595–604/26–37). And one should not forget the additional worries mentioned in 1925, following the postwar red scare: “mob violence,” “strikes,” “revolutionary movements” (1925, 22). Park’s perspective and tone are greatly distanced from the moralism of the reform leagues—particularly in his ironic manner of bringing together facts that, to his eyes, spring from the

same social forces, but which are ordinarily situated on opposite sides of the bounds of respectability: the inhabitants of Greenwich Village in New York and those of Little Italy in Chicago (1925, 3), the racial communities of immigrants and the residential enclaves of the wealthy (582/10), the anxiety of brokers at the stock exchanges and mob psychology (591/20).

Nevertheless, reformulated from an asserted sociological perspective, the litany of the big city's social evils was recycled in Park's scientific program. From this point of view, the 1925 version contributed a small additional element, which signaled that the alliances sought by the sociologist now extended to the promoters of "city planning studies" (1925, 5). Unnoticed by Park in 1915, the planners had become more identifiable—Park evokes "the rise of a new profession" (1925, 5)—especially due to the fact that the Russell Sage Foundation had in 1922 launched preparatory work for a Regional Plan of New York, supervised by people brought in from Chicago. A second conversation had thus just been added to the one long before established with the social workers: on similar intellectual bases, Park now offered the planners the collaboration of sociologists.

Such connections were indispensable in order to find allies for sociology in the world of action. But in order to form a basis for this claim, it was necessary at the same time for sociology to establish that it was much more than a general discourse about the evolution of human societies—much more, too, than just a somewhat scholarly way of talking about social evils. Extending a hand to reformers and offering them something they did not already have implied the ability to distinguish oneself from them unambiguously. It was necessary to draw a clear dividing line between science and social action.

In 1915, Park had limited conceptual tools at his disposal to establish this claim. In the very brief (one page) introduction to his article, he went to William G. Sumner to seek a notion of "institution" that would allow him to characterize the city. Sumner (1840–1910), the Yale sociologist who had recently passed away after publishing his major work, *Folkways* (1906), and presiding over the ASS (1908–9), defined an "institution" as a state in a continuum having "folkways"—accepted ways of being—for its basic form, and for its more complex and balanced forms, laws and institutions habitually considered as such. Thanks to this notion, Park posited, one might see the city as

something other than an aggregate of places, things, and people, but as an institution, “a mechanism—a psychophysical mechanism—in and through which private and political interests find a collective expression” (1915, 578). Having once complied with the obligation to cite a major author, Park never returned to this kind of highly abstract, and not very operational, conceptualization for the inquiries that he wanted to conduct.

By 1925, the conceptual setting had utterly changed. Park had abandoned Sumner with no noticeable inconvenience. The fashion of the moment was what most likely led him to cite Spengler’s (1918–22) *Decline of the West*, in support of the idea that the city has “its own culture” (1925, 1). But above all, he had arrived at an independent definition of his subject: “The city is...a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition” (1925, 1). He singles out a few elements essential to a complete study of the city: it is “a geographical and ecological unit,” “an economic unit,” and “a cultural area” (1925, 2). One major innovation is the call for a “human ecology,” a science that studies “the forces at work within the limits of the urban community...which tend to bring about an orderly and typical grouping of its population and institutions” (1925, 1). It is in this discipline, drawing from natural sciences—animal and vegetable ecology—that Park and Burgess had, for several years already, sought the references that would allow them to claim the status of science for sociology. This operation could be described as a return toward the social science of categories that biologists had borrowed from political economy—in Germany since the 1860s, in the United States since the 1890s—to describe the behavior of animal and vegetable populations in competition for territories (Gaziano 1996). Park and Burgess’s appropriation of these resources began in their 1921 textbook, in which the term “human ecology” appeared for the first time, and in which are found texts by several representatives of biological ecology. Terms are borrowed from this vocabulary to allow for the description of forms of social interaction (competition, conflict, adaptation, assimilation) and the various stages in the cycle of the relationships between groups in a common territory, with the destruction and recreation of neighborhoods.

The reference to ecology presented the Chicago sociologists with the immense advantage of building a solid barrier between themselves on one side and activists in philanthropy and social work on the other, just at the moment when they were securing a strategic alliance with them. As shown by Gaziano (1996), this was “scientific boundary-work” (Gieryn 1983), which borrowed from biology notions used in a purely metaphorical manner. Catherine Rhein speaks of a “scientistic shield” put up by Park and Burgess against supporters of eugenics and, more broadly, against the nativism and racism of the United States in the 1920s (Rhein 2001, 122).

Considering the 1925 version of Park’s text as a conversation thus makes it possible to see that the author is engaged here in multiple interactions. *Vis-à-vis* academia, he claims scientific status for sociology by using the vocabulary of a biological discipline, which at the same time gives him weapons against the disciples of “biological sociology.” More specifically *vis-à-vis* his sociologist colleagues, he promotes himself as the leader of a school. *Vis-à-vis* the worlds of action, he addresses two groups of professionals: social workers and city planners. The former are closely tied to sociology, including its scholarly institutions: Park intends to simultaneously maintain this connection and to clarify its nature. The planners are a new target. Park proposes a collaboration with both groups: he affirms the usefulness of sociology in order to shed light on the questions to which they seek an answer, and that he agrees to address. In the same motion, he shows that these questions must be transformed in order to get a scientific response; he claims the specificity of sociology as a science.

### **A Sociography of Park’s Partnerships: The Components of an “Urban Sociology”**

Burgess presented the work that he had compiled by selecting a portion of the presentations given at the December 1925 ASS meeting, writing:

“The volume is something more than an exhibit of research in progress; it is an introduction to an urban sociology” (Burgess 1926, IX).

The list of twenty-nine people whose papers were published (see table) does indeed give an idea of the elements from which Park

could compose a new sociological specialization.<sup>8</sup> Most likely, not all those who could constitute resources were present, and not all of those present were the most relevant. Those who were there participated nonetheless, willingly or unwillingly, at an event intended to be foundational. It is, therefore, of interest to describe the groups, networks, and interests that they represented.

*The Men from Chicago and the Midwestern Universities*

A first network, essential to structuring the meeting, was formed of Chicago professors, students, and alumni. Of the twenty-nine people gathered for the meeting, ten fall into one of these categories. Ellsworth Faris, the star of the social psychology division, was a professor in the department and would soon, upon Small's retirement in 1926, become its chair. William I. Thomas had left Chicago in 1918 and taught from then on at the New School for Social Research in New York, but he was a reliable ally of Park's, who had supported him at the time of his dismissal from the university. Several Chicago alumni had answered the call.

8. In the two sections mentioned here, there were about ten additional participants whose contributions were not published. In the other sections—which did not deal with the general theme of the meeting—there were about twenty.

## Participants at the 1925 Annual Meeting of the ASS (Published Papers Only)

<b>Preface</b>					
Ernest W. Burgess	(1864–1944)	University of Chicago	(professor at Chicago)		
<b>Introduction</b>					
Robert E. Park	(1864–1944)	University of Chicago	(professor at Chicago)		"The Urban Community as a Special [sic] Pattern and a Moral Order" (pp. 3–20)
<b>Human Nature and the City (papers presented to the Social Psychology division)</b>					
Ellsworth Farns	(1874–1953)	University of Chicago	(professor at Chicago)		"The Nature of Human Nature" (pp. 21–37)
William I. Thomas	(1861–1947)	New School for Social Research	(former professor at Chicago, nonmember of ASS)		"The Problem of Personality in the Urban Environment" (pp. 38–47)
Emory S. Bogardus	(1882–1973)	University of Southern California	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1911, nonmember of ASS)		"Social Distance in the City" (pp. 48–54)
Nicholas J. Spykman	(1891–1945)	Yale University	(nonmember of ASS)		"A Social Philosophy of the City" (pp. 55–64)
<b>Social Biology of City Life (papers presented to the Social Biology division)</b>					
Edward B. Roster	(1880–1946)	Iowa State University	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1919)		"Sociology and Biology" (pp. 67–69)
Edwin H. Sutherland	(1882–1950)	University of Illinois	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1913)		"The Biological and Sociological Processes" (pp. 70–78)
Roswell H. Johnson	(born 1877)	University of Pittsburgh	(nonmember of ASS)		"The Eugenic of the City" (pp. 79–90)
Melville J. Herkovits	(1892–1965)	Columbia University	(nonmember of ASS)		"Some Effects of Social Selection on the American Negro" (pp. 91–97)
Harvey W. Zorbaugh	(1896–1965)	Ohio Wesleyan University	(former research student at Chicago)		"The Dweller in Furnished Rooms: An Urban Type" (pp. 98–105)
Louis Wirth	(1897–1952)	University of Chicago	(research student at Chicago)		"Some Jewish Types of Personality" (pp. 106–112)
<b>Statistics of the City (papers presented to the Statistical Sociology division)</b>					
Walter F. Willcox	(1861–1964)	Cornell University			"A Redefinition of 'City' in Terms of Density of Population" (pp. 115–121)
Howard B. Woolton	(1876–1961)	University of Washington	(nonmember of ASS)		"American City Birth-Rates" (pp. 122–132)
Charles E. Ghalke	(born 1884)	Western Reserve University	(nonmember of ASS)		"Some Economic Factors in the Determination of the Size of American Cities" (pp. 133–138)
Homel N. Hart	(1885–1967)	Bryn Mawr College			"The Urban Expectation of Life in 2000" (pp. 139–145)
James G. Thompson	(1866–1949)	Regional Planning, New York			"The Relation between Population and the Urban Form" (pp. 144–150)
LeRoy Bowman	(1887–1971)	Columbia University			"The Basis of City-Center Orientation" (pp. 151–154)
Marned C. Elmer	(1886–1988)	University of Minnesota	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1914)		"Migration Mobility and Community Organization" (pp. 155–160)
					"Male Aquitment of Youth in Relation to Density of Population" (pp. 161–163)
<b>Ecology of the City (papers presented to the Human Ecology division)</b>					
Roderick D. McKenzie	(1881–1940)	University of Washington	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1921)		"The Scope of Human Ecology" (pp. 167–182)
Womans S. B. Goss	(1884–1956)	University of Minnesota	(nonmember of ASS)		"The Rise of the Metropolitan Community" (pp. 183–191)
Robert S. Lynd	(1897–1984)	University of Chicago	(Ph.D. Chicago, 1922)		"The Birth of the Metropolitan Community: A Sociological Analysis" (pp. 192–205)
Shelby M. Harrison	(born 1881)	Russell Sage Foundation			"Community Participation in City and Regional Planning" (pp. 206–218)
Harvey W. Zorbaugh	see above				"The Natural Areas of the City" (pp. 219–229)
<b>Typical Studies in Urban Sociology (papers presented to the Social Research section)</b>					
Cecil C. North	(born 1878)	The Ohio State University			"The City as a Community: Introduction to a Research Project" (pp. 233–257)
Clarence A. Perry	(1872–1944)	Russell Sage Foundation			"The Local Community as a Unit in the Planning of Urban Residential Areas" (pp. 238–241)
Bliss Chappentier	(born 1893)	University of Buffalo			"The Research Resources of a Typical American City as Exemplified by the City of Buffalo" (pp. 242–246)
Paul A. Hirschi	(born 1897)	University of Kansas			"The City as a Community: Introduction to a Research Project" (pp. 257–261)
John A. Queen	(1890–1987)	University of Kansas			"Segregation of Population Types in the Kansas City Area" (pp. 251–253)
Stuart M. Gillette	see above				"The Effect of Immigration upon the Increase of Population in the United States" (pp. 254–256)
Pitrim A. Sorokin	(1889–1968)	University of Minnesota			"Changes in Occupation and Economic Status of Several Hundreds of American Families during Four Generations" (pp. 257–261)

Sources: Burgess 1926 and others. The table follows the order of the summarized proceedings of the meeting. Bibliographic references to the articles are not repeated in the list of references hereinafter.

Edward B. Reuter (University of Iowa), who was also very close to Park, chaired the biological sociology division, which also included Edwin H. Sutherland (University of Illinois). Their role was to counterbalance the one true eugenicist at the meeting, Roswell H. Johnson, a University of Pittsburgh biologist who dedicated his talk to showing that “the city’s greatest evil [is] the subfecundity of its superiors” (Burgess 1926, 89). Manuel C. Elmer (University of Minnesota) was in the statistical sociology division. The human ecology division was, of course, chaired by Roderick D. McKenzie (Washington State University), and also included a more recent student of Park’s, Walter C. Reckless (Vanderbilt University). Finally, Stuart A. Queen (University of Kansas) was in the social research section. To these Chicago alumni—not all of whom had been students of Park’s or Burgess’s—one should add two students who worked on LCRC projects, Louis Wirth and Harvey W. Zorbaugh.

To the men from Chicago can be added those who were connected to them through collaborations or common institutional affiliations. The head of the social psychology division was Emory S. Bogardus, professor at the University of Southern California, who had worked with Park and McKenzie on an inquiry into race relations on the West Coast and recruited Erle F. Young as an assistant after Young had earned his PhD at Chicago and had briefly drawn a salary from the LCRC budget. The participation of Howard B. Woolston was perhaps not unrelated to the fact that he was McKenzie’s colleague at Washington State University, as Norman S. B. Gras and Pitirim A. Sorokin were Elmer’s colleagues at the University of Minnesota. These two universities, at any rate, were the only ones besides Chicago and Columbia to supply more than one author to the book published by Burgess.

Another recruitment network was made up of leading figures from the American Sociological Society who usually performed duties at its annual meetings. Park had to make room for some of them, and they could do nothing but play the game. Bogardus, for example, had chaired the social psychology division in 1922, Faris in 1924. At the 1922 meeting, John M. Gillette had organized a session on rural sociology. Very recently, at the 1924 meeting, Walter F. Willcox had chaired the statistical sociology division; Hornell Hart had organized a section on the teaching of the social sciences in schools



and was in charge of the permanent committee on the subject; and Howard B. Woolston was in charge of the permanent committee on an encyclopedia of the social sciences.

If one considers the meeting's recruitment area in relation to the geography of North American universities, one is struck by the weak representation of the Ivy League universities, those prestigious East Coast establishments despite the fact that sociology was generally taught there. Although Columbia University hosted the meeting, it had only two representatives, and they were at the margins of the discipline: Melville J. Herskovits was a young anthropologist, LeRoy Bowman an activist in the community organization movement. Cornell was represented by Willcox, a former federal census bureau statistician who had made a late career change to academia. Yale was represented by Nicholas J. Spykman, a young philosopher, and Brown by Bessie Bloom Wessel, a young sociologist from Connecticut College, who was on loan to a research project funded by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. No one came from Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth College, or the University of Pennsylvania. On the other hand, there was a plethora of representatives of universities in the Midwest, particularly the second-tier schools, while only two West Coast universities were represented. Those were the general recruitment tendencies of the ASS, but noticeably more evident in this session than in others.

### *Sociologists of Social Work*

If the ASS was primarily an association of university professors, it remained open to scholars who had institutional affiliations of a more markedly practical nature. Additionally, the university sociologists themselves were often connected to social work departments or local social organizations, or were engaged in investigations commissioned by such organizations (Diner 1975, 1980; Deegan 1988). A portion of the forces mobilized in the foundation of urban sociology was thus connected to the world of social work and to the reform movements developing from it.

After early formal contacts with professional organizations at the ASS meetings in 1921 and 1922, their presence became the norm. In 1923, some sessions were specially devoted to the American

Association of Social Workers and to the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Work. In 1926, a permanent “sociology and social work” section was created. Burgess was constantly active in that context, whether as a discussant or as the author of papers on topics such as “What Social Case Records Should Contain to be Useful for Sociological Interpretation” (1927), “Is Prediction Feasible in Social Work?”—a study of three thousand cases of conditional release—(1928), and “The Value of Sociological Community Studies for the Work of Social Agencies” (1929).<sup>9</sup> Conversely, university sociologists frequently attended the National Conference of Social Work. Park went there three times, in 1918, 1920, and 1921, to speak on immigrants and the press. Burgess participated in 1924, 1926, and 1928 to highlight the interest of the studies conducted on local communities in Chicago for social work. McKenzie was a member of the “neighborhood and community life” committee from 1924 to 1926.

The ASS engaged in a permanent discussion with a more specific reform group, the community organization movement, which had flourished in the postwar years and aroused much hope in the wake of the war, its goal being to “rebuild community” in small towns and city neighborhoods. Starting in 1922, the National Community Center Association (NCCA)—a component of this movement that was close to the Russell Sage Foundation in New York—was invited each year to joint sessions with the ASS. In 1926, a section of the ASS was created with the title “community organization”—later changed to “on the community”—and was placed under the chairmanship of Arthur E. Wood, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Michigan who was responsible for the social work curriculum and was president of the NCCA. Since then, this section organized the annual joint session of the ASS with the NCCA. Park was very engaged in this discussion, and he himself presided over the sessions in 1927 and 1928. A good number of projects undertaken by Park’s and Burgess’s research assistants under the auspices of the LCRC were placed under the “community organization” label,<sup>10</sup> and Harvey

9. The records of these talks and papers can be followed in the *Proceedings* through 1931.

10. For the project titles, see note 5. See also Chapin and Gillin (1924, 159), who provide a list of thirteen “Studies in community organization” in progress at the University of Chicago.

W. Zorbaugh's investigation of the Near North Side of Chicago, conducted in 1924–5 and published in 1929, was constructed entirely as a discussion with the “organizers of the community” (Topalov 2003).

Some of Park's partners at the 1925 meeting were well-known figures from the community organization movement. LeRoy E. Bowman was one such figure in New York, serving as secretary of the NCCA at the same time as he was teaching at Columbia University—a double affiliation that positioned him as a fulcrum between social work and sociology. When in 1928 the *American Journal of Sociology* began its yearly issue on the social changes that had taken place the previous year, Bowman was given the assignment of writing the column on community organization. Since 1923, he had regularly attended meetings of the ASS, where he often chaired sessions on the theme of “community”; he also attended the National Conference of Social Work. In both venues, he maintained a continuous debate with some university sociologists, especially Park and Burgess. Another activist in the movement, Cecil C. North, taught at The Ohio State University. At the ASS, he presented a research project on “The city as a community,” closely inspired by Park.

Some other participants at the 1925 meeting were university professors who willingly defined sociology with reference to its applications in the field of social work. This was the case for Ellsworth Faris, a man who wrote few books but in 1930 edited a book titled *Intelligent Philanthropy*, to which he contributed the chapter “Charity and the Social Sciences.” This was also the case for Stuart A. Queen, who at Chicago had completed an MA on the origins of public relief (1913), followed by a PhD on prisons (1919), and was teaching in the sociology department at the University of Kansas. He had published a book in 1922 on the history of social work and, in 1925, a textbook titled *Social Pathology*. Hornell N. Hart had also endeavored to define what qualified as a “social problem” (1923), so as to clarify the subject that was to be taught under this title in schools. After having worked for the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, he taught at Bryn Mawr College, an elite women's college in Pennsylvania, and was above all a pedagogue and an author of textbooks, to which he gave a “frankly pragmatic” emphasis (Hart 1927, v).

Emory S. Bogardus was the chair of the sociology department at the University of Southern California, the director of the School of

Social Welfare and editor in chief of the *Journal of Applied Sociology*, a periodical devoted to the dialogue between university sociologists and the social professions. While he presented a paper at the ASS meeting on “social distance” in the city, which he considered mainly from the point of view of racial prejudice, Bogardus was simultaneously conducting an investigation in Los Angeles on “The City Boy and his Problems” (1926), commissioned by the city’s Rotary Club, with a team that included some members who had worked for the Pacific Coast Race Relations Survey directed by Park (Bogardus 1926, 3 and 7). Among the cartographic techniques used for the study of youth, it is no surprise to find the one most commonly employed at Chicago, the “spot map” (Bogardus 1925, 78).

Some sociological specializations were considered to have a natural affinity with an urban sociology that was yet to be born, in particular the study of criminality, sometimes called “criminology.” Three Chicago alumni represented it at the ASS meeting. Edwin H. Sutherland had chosen this new field of research at the University of Illinois, after having earned a PhD in 1913 for his study of unemployment and public employment bureaus. In his very general report on sociological and biological processes, he stressed: “At one time crime was explained as due to biological equipment. Now it is rather generally agreed by sociologists that we have practically no explanation of crime in terms of biology” (Sutherland 1926, 75). Manuel C. Elmer, who had obtained his PhD in Chicago one year after Sutherland on the topic of social surveys (1914) and worked at the University of Minnesota, presented a study to the ASS on juvenile delinquency in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul—where he found confirmation of Burgess’s model. Finally, Walter C. Reckless, assistant professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University, had been among the first research assistants recruited to an LCRC project; his subject was prostitution in Chicago. He had just earned his PhD (1925), and he reported on the main results, which, once again, constituted an ecological explanation of the phenomenon and a confirmation of Burgess’s model.

*Planners from the Russell Sage Foundation*

Park took advantage of the fact that the American Political Science Association was meeting—as was customary since 1921—at the same time as the ASS to organize a joint session with the theme of “The City Plan.” This was a testimony that, among the existing scholarly societies, it was the political scientists rather than the sociologists who had managed to establish connections with the city planners, after the latter had weakened their initially close relations with the social workers (Topalov 1989). City planning had recently emerged as a new profession, drawing on a large reform movement organized in 1909 through an annual National Conference on City Planning, alongside which the American Institute of Planners was founded in 1917. This was conceived as a professional organization that would protect the title, promote curricula and certify doctrine and techniques. Among the major achievements of the men who promoted the new profession, one might mention the Chicago plan (1909) commissioned by that city’s City Club, and the New York Regional Plan, undertaken in 1921 at the initiative of the Russell Sage Foundation. Several of the key players in the Chicago plan, particularly Charles D. Norton, had joined the New York project.

The sole city planning professional to speak at the 1925 ASS meeting was Ernest P. Goodrich, a consulting engineer who collaborated on studies concerning automobile traffic for the New York plan—along with Harold M. Lewis, a municipal engineer in New York and a major figure in the American Institute of Planners. Goodrich’s paper at the ASS meeting discussed the establishment of a statistical law that would have made it possible to determine what the population of New York would be in the year 2000. Two other people, directly tied to the Russell Sage Foundation, were, on the other hand, frequent visitors to ASS meetings. They spoke on the theme of neighborhood, the sociologists’ preferred scale. Shelby M. Harrison was a high-level official at the foundation, specializing in social surveys. In his paper for the ASS, he advised the participation of local groups and schoolchildren in the study of the problems in their neighborhoods. From a far more modest rank in the institution, Clarence A. Perry had established himself as the inventor of an idea that was to make its way in planning milieus: the “neighborhood

unit," defined as the constituent element of the plan for urban extension or renewal. He tried this concept for the first time in 1924 at the National Conference of Social Work as part of a panel on which Burgess and Bowman also spoke, then again in 1925 to the ASS, before publishing a complete theory in 1929 as part of one of the volumes of the *Regional Survey* (Perry 1929).

Meanwhile, the American Political Science Association brought together the major figures from the New York Regional Plan, from the Russell Sage Foundation that financed it, and from the National Municipal League that supported it, for a roundtable on regional planning (Harrison 1926). Park's effort to associate planners with the birth of an urban sociology therefore experienced limited success in both the short and long terms. From the composite world of planning, the only people to heed his call were the usual reformers oriented toward education, neighborhood rehabilitation, and, once again, the organization of the local community.

#### *The Narrowness of Alliances in "Human Ecology"*

Finally, in the human ecology division, which was truly strategic for Park's project, the number of contributions was rather limited. McKenzie made a general, theoretical presentation of substantial length, based on the ongoing work of students from Chicago and from the New York Regional Plan, as well as on references to real estate economics, human geography, and economic history. In particular, he cited Norman S. B. Gras, an economic historian at the University of Minnesota who, in 1922, had published a book in which he defined the notion of metropolitan economy. A man given to broad overviews, Gras took up that topic again at the ASS meeting. He foresaw a world in which borders would be swept away, economic activity internationalized and organized in vast metropolitan regions. Two young sociologists who had worked as research assistants in Burgess's project on local communities in Chicago then presented their results: Reckless presented on the ecology of prostitution, Zorbaugh on the "natural areas" dividing the city.

Until at least 1931, the ASS annual meeting included a human ecology division. In some years, it was controlled by the men from Chicago: Park himself chaired the session in 1926, Carl A. Dawson in

1927, and McKenzie in 1931, and they mainly called on alumni of the department and research assistants from the LCRC. But sometimes human ecology changed its contours, as in 1928, when Luther L. Bernard chaired the session. A professor at the University of North Carolina, this fierce adversary of the University of Chicago and all its sociologists (Lengermann 1979) became the president of the ASS in 1932. In the meantime, he invited rural sociologists from southern universities and expressed the deepest of doubts about the pertinence and potential longevity of the notion of human ecology (Bernard 1929).

The themes promoted by *The City* were also present in the permanent section on community, and even in the one on sociology and social work. The existence of these two sections made it impossible to create one on “urban sociology,” since their topics contained too much overlap with those that could be broached under that label. By contrast, some other sociological specializations were organized in a stable manner and attracted a large number of participants. Three were the subject of permanent sections: rural sociology (which recruited from among the sociologists at agricultural schools and from the federal and state agencies interested in the reform of the countryside); educational sociology (to which progressive pedagogues flocked); and the sociology of religion (which was being developed in universities at the intersection of sociology and divinity schools).

Thus the institutionalization of urban sociology within the ASS clashed with the preexistence of solid practical and intellectual communities within the field. In order to make room for the new specialization, it would be necessary either to conflate these communities or to shift their borders—tasks that these promoters obviously did not have the strength, or possibly the goal to accomplish.

Park and Burgess’s overall intellectual project was thus split into two poles, at which two scales of analysis and two types of personnel coincided. On one side, human ecology tended to consider vast territories—notably the “region” or “metropolitan area”—and to include certain aspects of rural sociology. These interests, which could be observed starting in the 1920s, were reinforced considerably when the New Deal policies launched planning interventions of such scope. But the university-based personnel open to these concerns remained small in number, just as federal and local planning agencies

were until the late 1930s, and these agencies' relationships with the world of sociology were in any case very limited. On the other hand, the world of social work—particularly community organizers and neighborhood reformers—continued to develop its demands for science within the ASS and to settle sociologists' attention on the local scale. The two themes corresponded to different social worlds, the latter benefiting from solid, longtime establishment within the ASS, due to the closeness of university sociology departments with social work and urban reform. As active as the LCRC was, providing a sufficient quantity of research assistants and study results, it remained possible for the Park/Burgess group to be present at different elements of the ASS meetings simultaneously. When this program came to an end (1929–30), the divergent forces quickly won the day.

### **The Reception of Park's Project: "Urban Sociology" and "Human Ecology" after 1925**

It was not Park who invented the term "urban sociology."<sup>11</sup> It was already in use at several universities as a name for courses dealing with the social problems of the big city. A study of 365 colleges conducted in 1925 showed that only twelve offered a course with that title at the time, while twenty others offered similar subjects, with names such as "municipal sociology," "the modern city," "city problems," "human ecology," "community organization," or "poverty problems" (DeGraff 1926). The study brought together a very interesting body of definitions of the subject matter, gathered in the colleges' brochures. In most cases, these definitions emphasized the practical side of the subject. At the same time, some highlighted the scientific nature of the approach: "Urban sociology is the scientific study of social conditions in urban communities, of the factors in urban life, and of the nature and possible solutions of urban problems."

Another example is: "Urban sociology may be defined as that phase of the general science of sociology which deals specifically with the growth of cities, characteristics of urban life and features of municipal progress."

11. Contrary to my previous assertion (Topolov 2005), which goes to show that the search for the first occurrence of a term can only ever yield provisional results.



But other definitions did not take such trouble: “A study of the social problems of the city. A practical sociology applied to the modern city.”

Or: “A city social worker’s understanding of his world.”

The target audience for urban sociology courses was then essentially composed of young men and women who wished to familiarize themselves with certain burning issues in the contemporary world and, in some cases, to dedicate their careers to solving these problems. The elements of this audience were well described by Scott E. W. Bedford, a professor at Chicago from 1910 to 1925, in his 1927 textbook titled *Readings in Urban Sociology*, which was addressed to “persons interested in every type of city life and improvement, such as students and all socialized citizens, including ministers, city officials, physicians, lawyers, teachers, social service workers, city managers, civic secretaries, community center workers, and secretaries of chambers of commerce. The book is designed primarily for teaching purposes. The material is the result of several years of classroom experience with students in the University of Chicago.” (Bedford 1927, VII).

In fact, in the Chicago sociology department, it was Bedford who was responsible for teaching such courses, until Small pushed him to resign over his refusal to collaborate with Burgess. Courses titled “Rural Communities” and “Urban Communities” were created simultaneously in 1913, both of them entrusted to Bedford—the latter only in 1918, having gone unassigned until that time. Soon thereafter, in 1914, a course called “Modern Cities” was added, also assigned to Bedford. The titles of the two courses on “communities” then changed, with a semantics that more clearly established them as specializations. The term “Rural Sociology” appeared first (1916), the year when the ASS dedicated its annual meeting to the subject. Later followed the appearance of “Municipal Sociology” (1918–23), then “Urban Sociology” (1924–5). After the departure of Bedford—who was then hired as “research secretary” by the United Charities of Chicago, the umbrella group for the city’s philanthropic organizations—his courses remained in the course catalog, but went unassigned for a while: “Urban Sociology” until 1928, “Rural Sociology” until 1932, and “Modern Cities” until 1939.

Beginning in the fall of 1925, Burgess took over the urban curriculum, but with different course titles: "Local Community Studies" (1925–36), which was no longer taught after 1929, and "Growth of the City" (1926–39), which was no longer taught after 1933 (with one exception, in 1935). These were precisely the names of the programs that Burgess directed at the LCRC, and the courses disappeared at the same time as those programs, or shortly thereafter. A break thus took place in the department's "urban" course offerings as of 1933. Wirth later took on the topic with a new course on "Urban Civilization" (1938), then "The City," which was initially taught by Wirth (1940–48), followed by Albert Reiss, Jr. (1948–51). The other innovation of 1925 was the creation of a course on "Human Ecology," which remained in the course catalog until 1951. It was first offered by Park, but apparently in a very intermittent fashion. McKenzie offered it in 1929 as a visiting professor, Wirth took it on in 1940 and 1946, then Burgess from 1947 to 1951. In the meantime, a course on "Quantitative Studies in Population and Human Ecology" was introduced in 1936 and intermittently offered by Stouffer, and finally, a course titled "Introduction to the Study of Population and Human Ecology" (1948) was offered by Hauser, then by Duncan—both of them activists for statistics.

From this sinuous history of the course names at the University of Chicago, one can recall that the label "urban sociology" was not taken up again by Park and Burgess following Bedford's departure; that the urban themes took on the names of Burgess's LCRC projects and disappeared at the same time as they did; and finally, that the label "human ecology" was appropriated by the quantitative sociologists upon Park's retirement.

It should also be noted that the term "urban sociology" was born as the counterpart to "rural sociology," a well-established specialization since the turn of the century: a study from 1913 revealed that there was a course by that name in 64 percent of agricultural colleges, in 45 percent of state universities, and in 31 percent of normal schools, which is to say, the three institutional bases of the field (Sanderson 1913, 434). After the great agrarian protest movements of the late nineteenth century and the official reports that followed on the rural exodus and the decline of the countryside, "the 'rural problem' became an epidemic" and rural sociology developed at lightning

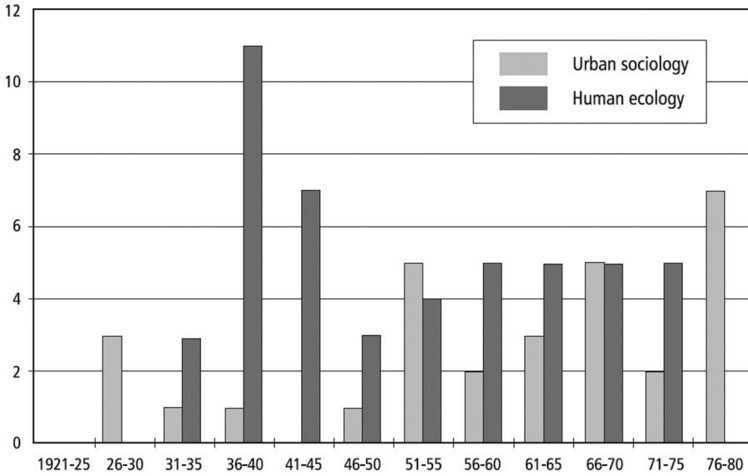
speed, as John M. Gillette, one of the main representatives of the discipline, noted a bit later (Gillette 1916, 5). The creation of a permanent section of the ASS in 1922 solidified the autonomous nature of this specialization.

When a course topic spread, a significant textbook market opened up at the same time. The number, titles, and general content of these books are therefore precious clues to the state of a field of study (see graphic). No book title included the term “urban sociology” prior to Park’s initiative in 1925. A very small number of treatises or textbooks followed between 1927 and 1938, and then the term disappeared from the titles between 1939 and 1949. It was not until 1950 that the term’s fortunes rose again, this time for good, reaching their peak in the late 1970s.<sup>12</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, these works fell into two categories: while the textbook by Anderson and Lindeman (1928) is written in quite a scholarly manner and is very faithful to Park’s teachings, the textbooks by Bedford (1927), Davie (1932), and Muntz (1938) are a systematic examination of the social problems of the big city or of the policies intended to solve them. A fifth title, *Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology* by Sorokin and Zimmerman (1929), is in reality a treatise on rural sociology. The twelve or so textbooks that appeared during this period and touched on urban questions are divided between these same two genres, the reform register being the more prevalent. Thus the main difficulty confronting the new definition that Park wished to give to urban sociology was that this label was appropriated by scholars who were more interested in social work and reform, and thus took on their preferred meaning. This is probably the reason why Park and Burgess so quickly renounced the term.

“Human ecology,” on the other hand, was guaranteed not to be appropriated by ordinary reformers. In this field, the Chicago sociologists were much discussed from the mid-1930s through the mid-1970s, with particular intensity between 1936 and 1946 (graphic). This scientific label began to encounter a real success with the New Deal and the new interest on the part of the federal administration

12. The same table results from a study of the titles of articles published in the *American Journal of Sociology*: in the 1920s, numerous articles were written by Park, Burgess, and their students, but the term did not appear in any title, and, unlike rural sociology or education, it was not an organizational category in the reports published by the journal.

and its experts in “planning” on a variety of scales. Park’s and McKenzie’s theses and Burgess’s concentric zones thus attracted attention, and their group came to be identified in 1938 as “the ecological school” (Alihan 1938).



Frequency of Urban Sociology and Human Ecology (1921–1980)

Definitions and sources:

- *Urban Sociology*: Number of books published in the United States in the title of which the term appears (source: Library of Congress Catalog).
- *Human Ecology*: Number of books and journal articles discussing this discipline such as it was practiced at the University of Chicago—excluding publications written by McKenzie, Park, and Burgess themselves (source: general bibliography of Chicago sociology discussed in Janowitz’s seminar and published by Kurtz in 1984).

Therefore, the numerical values of the two sets cannot be compared, but only their relative trends.

As human ecology strengthened as a specialization, commentators played an essential role, whether they were critics in favor of a “sociocultural ecology” intended to reintroduce “values” into analysis, or of “neo-orthodox” leanings, oriented toward the use of quantitative models—a trend that took hold in Chicago even after Park’s 1934 retirement, became established in the late 1940s at the University of Michigan, where McKenzie had finished his career, and which was soon to gain control over the direction of the discipline. In the decade or so starting in about 1938, a new definition of what the

pioneers stood for was forged. Maines, Bridges, and Ulmer (1996) have convincingly analyzed the reconstruction of Park as a supporter of an “economic ecology,” which a large handful of authors have carried out with success. All of these texts cited the precedents cumulatively and ended by building a totally repetitive and self-referential argument. It followed, in any case, that the term “human ecology” and its definition slipped away from Park’s initial inspiration, while McKenzie and Burgess either did not want or were unable to resist the powerful trend that redefined the discipline as aiming at quantified models of the evolution of territories.

This is why, when the faithful Hughes set about reviving Park by republishing him in the early 1950s, he hesitated greatly over what title to give to the collection he was dedicating to Park’s texts on the city (Park 1952): “The City” or “Human Ecology”? It was James Rorty, the husband of Park’s devoted scientific secretary Winifred Raushenbush, who ended the dilemma by proposing “Human Communities” (Hughes in Park 1955, 8): “urban sociology” was apparently not considered even for an instant. At the same time, when Hatt and Reiss—Reiss had been trained in Chicago—relaunched the label by devoting the first major postwar textbook to it, they lamented: “This literature is widely scattered both with reference to the disciplines which have produced it and with reference to the publications in which it appears. Attempts at integration are singularly rare and generally unsatisfactory” (Hatt and Reiss 1951, IX).

Thus it took about a quarter century for “urban sociology,” the term launched by Park in 1925 to name a new specialization, to become established in North American vocabulary. No matter whether or not the scientific content of the initial proposition was solid or convincing: what caused the temporary failure of the label was that it was appropriated by those practicing an old-fashioned applied sociology, who did not perceive the necessity of redefining social problems in another kind of language so that they could be treated scientifically. Like the vocabulary developed to that end by Park, McKenzie, and Burgess, the vocabulary of human ecology was taken up and transformed by the quantitativists, who had gone from one success to another since the 1930s. For a long time there were hardly any words to say what this group of sociologists had tried to do—which contributed in no small way to the long eclipse that they

experienced from about 1935 to 1965. With the temporary triumph of planning and the boom in urban studies beginning in the 1950s, urban sociology, endowed with a new face, could finally exist as a recognized specialization. There followed a redefinition of the “Chicago School” as urban sociology (Topalov 2004), under which was buried the history that I have tried to render here.

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