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Historical Sociology of the City

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Historical sociology of the city is a paradoxical field. On the one hand, it has illustrious names to its credit: Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, Max Weber, Henri Pirenne and Lewis Mumford, to name a few. What these names signify is a practice of writing histories of the city that is concerned with *longue durée* and comparisons rather than static and insular analyses. On the other hand, while these illustrious names are often invoked, historical sociology in the way these scholars have written has been very little practised in the past century. In other words, while we have witnessed a growth of urban history in the twentieth century, historical sociology of the city has been neglected. Of course, if one conflates historical sociology of the city with urban history, this is a confusing claim to make. To be sure, there are numerous contributions by urban historians that include elements of historical sociology of the city (for example, Benevolo, 1993; Bridenbaugh, 1938, 1955; Dyos and Wolff, 1973; Ethington, 1994; Hohenberg and Lees, 1985; Ryan, 1997; Schlesinger, 1944; Teaford, 1975). However, I wish to argue in this chapter that historical sociology in its origins and practice is significantly different than urban history, and it is in this distinction that its unique contribution lies. While this contribution is amply displayed in recent historical sociologies of the city such as by Susan Reynolds (1997), Richard Sennett (1994), Aidan W. Southall

(1998), Hendrik Spruyt (1994) and Charles Tilly (1996), it is not widely recognized.

This chapter maintains a distinction between historical sociology of the city and urban history as analytical categories rather than a description of craft. It aims to illustrate that tacitly or explicitly accepted conceptions of the city with which urbanists work owe much to historical sociology of the city and its typologies. I shall first make this distinction in more detail. Then I shall focus on the three key historical sociologists of the city and illustrate how their typologies have been influential as well as being flawed. Amongst the most significant flaws is orientalism. I shall then argue that, despite their flaws, these typologies help us provide tools to undertake new analyses of the historical sociology of the city after orientalism.

THE TERRAIN OF HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE CITY

What is the distinction between historical sociology of the city and urban history? To simplify, we can begin by suggesting that urban history is about cities and historical sociology of the city is about the city as such. At first this may be a confusing statement because how can we develop an idea of the city without knowledge about specific cities?

Does this distinction create a division of labour between urban historians who investigate specific cities and historical sociologists who use their investigations to arrive at the idea of the city? Does the idea of the city as such is a sum of its parts, gleaned from specific cities? These are some of the questions that we need to address before we proceed. It is perhaps useful to use an argument Charles Tilly made to illustrate this distinction. In a provocative essay entitled 'What Good is Urban History?' (1996), he argues that urban historians have ignored the challenge of becoming the most prominent interpreters of the ways that macro-processes articulate with everyday life in cities. Writing as a social historian, he claims that social history is about connecting everyday experience to the large structures of historical analysis. Such social history should illuminate the complex interplay between large structural changes and changes in the character of the dynamics of populations, hierarchies and routines of everyday social life. Writing as an urban historian, when defined this way, Tilly argues that quintessential social history is nothing other than urban history. To treat urban history as quintessential social history gives us the means of addressing central historical questions such as how ordinary people cope with everyday life when national and international policies impinge on their routines; how rising technological and organizational complexity robs life of its spontaneity and wonder; how and why capitalism became the dominant form of economic organization in Western countries; and how and why relatively large, centralized and unified national states displaced the city-states, city-empires, dynastic empires and federations that dominated the world.

For Tilly as an urban historian, cities are privileged sites for study of the interaction between large social processes and routines of urban life. Urban historians have superior access to these sites, but they also know more than other historians about the bases of variation in these regards from one time and place to another. Tilly considers Mumford as an urban historian who practised craft as quintessential social history. First, Mumford insisted on the close connection between internal lives of cities and particular configurations of power and production within which they lay. Second, he fashioned a theory in which the relative concentrations of state power and of commercial activity stamped the character of urban

life. Mumford's typological characterizations, such as Baroque City and Coketown, are, for Tilly, precisely the kinds of characterizations that modern urban history refrains from generating. Instead, urban history treats each city as a sample case from a national frame that blinds historians to relations between processes generating or sustaining specific patterns. By doing so, urban historians oscillate between local history and grand timeless, spaceless processes, causes, and effects. 'Either they take cities as undifferentiated points within interurban processes, such as urbanization and migration, or they take city limits as boundaries for the analysis of ostensibly self-contained urban processes' (Tilly, 1996: 710).

While I am sympathetic to Tilly's critique of urban history, his distinction between macro and micro processes is ultimately a flawed one. He is simplistic in that he assumes that there are ontologically identifiable processes that can be called 'macro' versus 'micro' or 'general' versus 'specific', and that the latter set are manifest in cities, and presumably the former set in nations, states and empires, though this is not clear from his argument. But such an assumption and the distinction on which it depends are questionable (Calhoun, 1998). It is also, as I shall argue, not an assumption made either by Mumford, whom Tilly discusses with admiration, or by Fustel and Weber, whom Tilly does not even discuss. Rather, what Fustel, Weber and Mumford seem to differentiate clearly is between *civitas*, the city as association, and *urbs*, the city as place. While they all admit that there is much that can be gained by investigating *urbs* (which is the object of urban history), their focus is on the city as association. Such a focus is neither *stagist*, for developing evolutionist schemes, nor *comparativist*, for developing analogies and parallels between vastly different cities. As Weber argued

A genuinely analytic study comparing the stages of development of the ancient polis with those of the medieval city would be welcome and productive. ... Of course I say this on the assumption that such a comparative study would not aim at finding 'analogies' and 'parallels', as is done by those engrossed in the currently fashionable enterprise of constructing general schemes of development. The aim should, rather, be precisely the opposite: to identify and define the individuality of each development, the characteristics which made the one conclude in a manner so different from that of the other. This

done, one can then determine the causes which led to these differences. (1976 [1909]: 385)

The distinction he makes here does not concern scale, however conceptualized, but is an analytical concern that is focused on uniqueness of a type of city that differentiates it from another. The uniqueness of the city is understood not as a particular city (*urbs*) or the facts collected from various cities, but as a particular type of city (*civitas*). It is this distinction that requires our attention, as does the way in which prominent historical sociologists have deployed it for their substantive analyses.

ORIENTALIZING THE CITY: FUSTEL, WEBER, MUMFORD

Fustel de Coulanges, Max Weber and Lewis Mumford were quintessential historical sociologists of the city. What makes them so, in my view, is the specific ways in which they attempted (not always successfully, as we shall see later) to focus on the essence of the city in different historical moments and the elements that constituted these differences rather than either specific cities by themselves or developing stagist or evolutionist schemes. This has been recognized by some of the most prominent historians of the twentieth century, such as Moses Finley, Arnaldo Momigliano and Capgrossi Colognesi. I will briefly discuss their views on Fustel, Weber and Mumford before I discuss them in more detail.

Finley maintained that the lasting contribution of both Fustel and Weber was their insistence on the category 'ancient city' (1981: 7). Finley, not unlike Tilly, was critical of the way ancient historians practised urban history by focusing on specific cities. He found the literature too weak on the essence of the ancient city and he considered Fustel as the pioneer. But, he argued, Fustel, despite his later work on the Roman colonate and medieval Europe, had over emphasized religion too much. Besides, the 'history of the city (whether town or city-state, ancient or medieval or modern) cannot be sufficiently analysed in terms of the cult of ancestors, worship of fire and the conflict within the developed state between the kinship group and the individual' (1981: 10). Thus, while acknowledging the significant contribution made by Fustel by his insistence on focusing on the essence of the ancient city as the object of historical

investigation, Finley was critical of the results of these investigations for their emphasis on religion.

For this reason Finley considered Bücher and Sombart rather than Fustel to be precursors to Weber's analysis of the city (1981: 12–13). For Finley, some of the pivotal concepts of Weber's *oeuvre* on the city, which is scattered through *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* and the 'City' in *Economy and Society*, have obviously close kinship with those of Bücher and Sombart (1981: 15). Finley thought that while Weber began with an economic conception of the city, like Bücher and Sombart, by the time of *Economy and Society*, he had moved toward a broader and more comprehensive conception of the city embodying political and constitutional aspects. What Finley found significant in Weber was his focus on the essence of the city in specific moments, a focus on *civitas* rather than *urbs*. While Finley admitted that Weber can and should be critiqued for his particular statements of fact or interpretations, '[i]t still remains true, and needing an explanation, that the peasant was an integral element in the ancient city, but not in the medieval; that the guild was an integral element in the medieval city, but not in the ancient' (1981: 17). For Finley, an attempt at explaining these might lean towards Marx, but, despite parallels in their works, Marx was no more systematic or comprehensive about the ancient city than was Weber.

Momigliano, too, thought that Fustel was a pioneer historical sociologist of the city. He illustrated the influence of Fustel on a generation of French, German and Italian historians, but especially on the sociology of Durkheim. He emphasized how Fustel put a distance between himself and Aristotle in describing the ancient city while basing his interpretations on the material Aristotle provided.

The internal struggles of the Greek cities, which provoked or facilitated foreign intervention, are therefore for Fustel a mysterious means by which it became possible for the peoples to come together. ... [For him, t]he Roman cosmopolis was later to become the Christian cosmopolis. ... [Thus, f]earful of the revolutionary intoxication which had identified the ancient heroes with the protagonists of the Terror, Fustel deepened the gulf which separates our conflicts from the ancient ones and made it virtually unbridgeable. (Momigliano, 1977 [1970]: 332–3).

Momigliano emphasized four theses that the *Ancient City* put forward: (i) the development

of the organization of the state from gens to city through curia and tribe; (ii) the parallelism of Indian, Greek and Roman institutions; (iii) the evolution of religion from the worship of ancestors to the gods of nature; and (iv) the prehistoric origin of private property safeguarded throughout the whole evolution of the ancient world by religion, and more precisely by ancestor worship. At the margins of the ancient city, Christianity appeared, and brought an end to the security of private property founded on religion. A new epoch in which labour became the justification for private property (Momigliano, 1977 [1970]: 338). In all these theses what struck Momigliano as original was both method and substance: Fustel found both the origins and antithesis of modernity in the ancient city by an analysis of the essence of the latter on the basis of an understanding of the former.

More recently, Colognesi (1995) credited both Finley and Momigliano for having drawn attention to the work of Weber on the city. It is not that Weber's historical sociology of the city was unknown, but its depth in method and substantive argument remained under-appreciated. Following Finley, Colognesi specifically highlighted that there is a fundamental shift of emphasis between Weber's 1909 treatment of the differences between ancient and medieval cities and that of 1920. Colognesi emphasized that Weber considered ancient and medieval cities more closely to each other in 1920 than in 1909 and placed more emphasis on structural similarities between them than on their differences.

While Finley, Momigliano and Colognesi have done significant work in emphasizing the strength of Fustel and Weber in taking *civitas* rather than *urbs* as the object of historical analysis, they also remain silent about sociological orientalism that underlined their work as well as that of Mumford. I wish to argue that while recovering Fustel, Weber and Mumford for historical sociology of the city must retain the ontological difference between *civitas* and *urbs*, their orientalist perspective will have to be challenged. My focus in what follows, therefore, will be on the sociological orientalism that mobilized many of their interpretations of the essence of the occidental city, taking Greek, Roman and medieval cities as prototypes.

FUSTEL AND THE ANCIENT OCCIDENTAL CITY

The most significant distinction Fustel made was between *civitas* and *urbs*. He defined *civitas* as the religious and political association of families and tribes (Fustel de Coulanges, 1978 [1864]: 126ff.). By contrast, *urbs* was the place of assembly, the dwelling place and, above all, the sanctuary of this association. Fustel believed that the ancients were deliberate and consistent in making this distinction and being aware that they were not synonymous. What did this distinction signify for the ancients and for Fustel himself? Fustel argued that considering the city as association and the city as place as synonymous or overlapping is a modern way of thinking about cities, whereas the ancients maintained their belief in the existence of the city as an association even if it did not have a corresponding spatial form to it. Because of this fundamental difference, Fustel believed that we could not infer the essence of the city from its spatial characteristics such as concentration, arrangements and elements of its buildings, bridges and walls. Rather, the essence of the city would be revealed by investigating the city as association. That is why Fustel considered the city above all as a religious foundation. For him, as soon as various tribes agreed to 'unite' and have the same worship, they founded the city as a sanctuary for this common worship. The foundation of the city was thus always a religious act (Fustel de Coulanges, 1978 [1864]: 126).

It is on the basis of this distinction between *civitas* and *urbs* and the religious foundations of *civitas* that Fustel developed a typology of the ancient Graeco-Roman city. At the foundations of this typology was the model of the oriental city compared with the occidental city. Fustel argued that both the Greek and the Roman city went through the same stages, which he called revolutions. Since he was concerned with interpreting the essence of *civitas* rather than *urbs*, for each stage he identified the constituent social groups that were locked into a struggle for the domination of the city. The origins of the city were closely related to oriental kingship and, in fact, *civitas* was originally founded and dominated by kingship. For Fustel, this was the common origin of *civitas* in both oriental and occidental cities. The authority of the king and his role as the supreme worship as priest-king lay at the foundation

of both cities. But, as Fustel argued, the Graeco-Roman city experienced three revolutions that distinguished the occidental city from that of the oriental city.

The first revolution was the dethroning of the kings from power by the aristocracy. Taking Sparta, Athens and Rome as paradigmatic cases of the Graeco-Roman city, Fustel argued that in each the first revolution was a world-historical event where central authority represented by priest-kings were toppled by the patricians, a landowning class unique to the occidental city. For Fustel, the consequences of this revolution were significant but were still followed by another revolution, where the institutions of family and clientship (an ancient form of slavery) were radically altered. For him, the revolution that had overturned the kings had modified the exterior form of the government rather than changed the constitution of the city. 'The aristocracy had brought about a political revolution only to prevent a social one' (Fustel de Coulanges, 1978 [1864]: 243). The second revolution, which was enacted by a faction of the aristocracy and the patricians, brought about radical changes in the familial and kinship ties that lay at the foundations of the city. This new regime was still aristocratic, though the dominant families had less influence. However, a third revolution brought about the most radical change in the city by entering the plebs into both the political and social domains of the city as genuinely constituted citizens.

For Fustel, taken together, these three revolutions were the foundations of the ancient city and also the foundation of the Christian city that were to emerge. Admittedly, I have provided only a glimpse of Fustel's otherwise fascinating and magnificent account of the ancient city. What I would like to highlight, however, is fairly straightforward. First, Fustel practised (or perhaps invented) a kind of history that was clearly founded on a distinction between *civitas* and *urbs*, which he believed he was inheriting from the ancients themselves. This ontological distinction is absolutely essential in understanding the kind of history he practised, which, I would argue, is a historical sociology of the city rather than urban history. Its focus is not on *urbs* interpreted as place but on *civitas* interpreted as a space configured by its constituent social groups. Second, Fustel was an 'orientalist' whose interpretation of the ancient city was founded upon a fundamental distinction between occidental and oriental cities. This

interpretation of the fundamental difference between the orient and the occident and the 'superiority' of the latter over the former was already beginning to mobilize the Enlightenment conception of Europe as it becomes crystallized in Hegel's lectures on history (Hegel, 1956 [1830]: 111–15). The account produced by Fustel of the three revolutions that Sparta, Athens and Rome went through was designed to illustrate how the occidental city was different from the oriental city. It was also the most influential account that hinged the occidental uniqueness and superiority thesis on the city (Springborg, 1986, 1987). It is this thesis that was inherited by Weber and Mumford.

WEBER AND ORIENTALISM

In various studies between *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* (1976 [1909]) and *Economy and Society* (1978 [1921]), Weber's argument that the city as a locus of citizenship was the characteristic that made the occident unique and his reliance on synoecism (a way of seeing the city as embodying spatial and political unification) and orientalism (a way of dividing the world into essentially two 'civilizational' blocs, one having rationalized and secularized and hence modernized, the other having remained 'irrational', religious and traditional), appeared more consistently and with an increasing urgency than his emphasis on rationalization (Käsler, 1979).

For Weber, at first glance, the occidental city presented striking similarities to its Near and Far Eastern counterparts (1978 [1921]: 1236). Like the oriental city, it was a marketplace, a centre of trade and commerce and a fortified stronghold. Merchant and artisan guilds could also be found in both cities (Weber, 1958 [1917]: 33–5). Even the creation of autonomous legal authority could be found in both cities, though to varying degrees. Moreover, all ancient and medieval cities, like their oriental counterparts, contained some agricultural land belonging to the city. Throughout the ancient world the law applicable in cities differed from rural areas. However, particularly in the occidental medieval city, such difference was essential, whereas it was insignificant and irregular in the ancient oriental city. The ancient city almost always arose from a confluence and

settling together of strangers and outsiders. While Weber used this as evidence of why the city always manifested a social and cultural differentiation, he often underlined its unity over diversity (1978 [1921]: 1237). While he recognized that the urban population consisted of very diverse social groups, what was revolutionary in the occidental city was the free status of this distinct population. The fact that the city was a centre of trade and commerce led rulers to free bondsmen and slaves to pursue opportunities for earning money in return for tribute (1978 [1921]: 1238). The ancient occidental city arose as 'a place where *the ascent from bondage to freedom* by means of monetary acquisition was possible' (1978 [1921]: 1238). The principle that 'city air makes man free', which emerged in central and north European cities, was an expression of the unique aspect of the occidental city. 'The urban citizenry therefore usurped the right to dissolve the bonds of seigniorial domination; this was the great – in fact, the *revolutionary* – innovation which differentiated the medieval occidental cities from all others' (1978 [1921]: 1239). Through time, however, in many of the European cities patrician families became differentiated from the rest of the citizens and coalesced into a powerful class of knightly nobility. The feudal nobility settled in rural areas and did not acknowledge the knightly nobility based in cities. Nevertheless, the internal differentiation of the medieval city continued with more intensity and fierceness than the differentiation between urban and rural nobility. Hence,

[a]t the close of the middle ages and at the beginning of modern times, nearly all Italian, English, French and German cities – insofar as they had not become monarchical city states as in Italy – were ruled by a council-patriciate or a citizen corporation which was exclusive towards the outside and a regime of notables internally. (1978 [1921]: 1240)

The essence of the ancient *polis* and the medieval commune was therefore an association of citizens subject to a special law exclusively applicable to them. By contrast, Weber claimed, in ancient Asia, Africa or America similar formations of *polis* or commune constitutions or corporate citizenship rights were unknown.

Despite his emphasis on the internal differentiation of the occidental city, however, when Weber made comparisons with the oriental city, he overlooked its differentiation in favour of a unity signified by its corporate status: 'The

fully developed ancient and medieval city was above all constituted, or at least interpreted, as a fraternal association, as a rule equipped with a corresponding religious symbol for the associational cult of the citizens: a city-god or city-saint to whom only the citizens had access' (1978 [1921]: 1241). A significant difference between the occidental city and the ancient oriental city was that in the former there was no trace of magical and animistic castes. It was the belief of ancient citizens that their cities originated as free associations and confederations of tribes (1978 [1921]: 1242). But Weber never explained why the beliefs of the ancient Greek citizens should be taken as given. That the *polis* was a settling together of tribes was *their* narrative. Weber incorporated this narrative with a twofold move: first, he considered synoecism as the origins of cities; and, second, he interpreted the rise of the plebs as the origins of citizenship. So while the *polis* was a confederation of noble families and was religiously exclusive in its origins, it was later to dissolve clan ties and invent citizenship. Weber saw an identical trajectory in the occidental medieval city too, especially in the south, which was originally, for Weber, a federation of noble families. The entry of the plebs into citizenship, however, lessened the significance of membership in clans or tribes; rather, membership was defined along spatial and occupational lines. Yet the ancient *polis* never became a fraternized association. Weber maintained that in fact it was on its way to becoming an association but that it was incorporated into the Hellenistic and Roman kingdoms. 'The medieval city, by contrast, was a commune from the very beginning, even though the legal concept of the "corporation" as such was only gradually formulated' (Weber, 1978 [1921]: 1243).

Weber thus believed that in the ancient oriental city the magical and clan ties persisted regularly, while in Greek *poleis* and medieval cities they were progressively dissolved and replaced by spatial and occupational relationships. In Greek *poleis* this becomes visible beginning with colonization, which required the settling together of strangers and outsiders to become citizens. In addition, the change in the martial organization of the *polis* from heroic warfare to hoplitic warfare intensified the dissolution of clan ties. Although many Greek *poleis* maintained such ties for a long time, they became more ritualistic and less significant in the everyday life of politics. Similarly, the warrior associations of the

wandering Germanic tribes in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire were organized around leadership and martial prowess rather than clan ties. The development of spatial units such as the 'hundreds' as a method of distributing obligations impeded a clan's development.

When Christianity became the religion of these peoples who had been so profoundly shaken in all their traditions, it finally destroyed whatever religious significance these clan ties retained; perhaps, indeed, it was precisely the weakness or absence of such magical and taboo barriers which made the conversion possible. The often very significant role played by the parish community in the administrative organization of medieval cities is only one of many symptoms pointing to this quality of the Christian religion which, in dissolving clan ties, importantly shaped the medieval city (1978 [1921]: 1244).

By contrast, the oriental city never really dissolved tribal and clan ties.

For Weber, all cities in world history were founded by the settling together of strangers and outsiders previously alien to that space. Chinese, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Mycenaean and Minoan kings founded cities, relocated them, and in them settled immigrants and recruited people. In such cities the king who controlled the warfare apparatus retained absolute power. An association failed to develop and the urban residents maintained their tribal identities (1978 [1921]: 1244). 'Under such circumstances no legal status of urban citizenship arose, but only an association for sharing the burdens and privileges of those who happened to inhabit the city at any given time' (1978 [1921]: 1245). In the ancient *polis*, membership in one of the tribal associations remained a distinguishing mark of the citizen with full rights, entitled to participate in the religious cult and qualified for all offices which required communication with the gods. The ancient tribe remained an association in so far as it was artificially created rather than being an expression of descent or lineage. The north European medieval cities were different. The resident joined the citizenry as an individual, and as an individual swore the oath of citizenship (1978 [1921]: 1246). His membership was not in a tribe or clan but a city association. All the same, both ancient and medieval cities were able to extend citizenship to outsiders. 'In all Asian cities, including the Near Eastern ones, the phenomenon of a "commune" was either absent altogether or, at best, present only in

rudiments which, moreover, always took the form of kin-group associations that extended also beyond the city' (1978 [1921]: 1248).

The majority of Weber's interpretations on Islam, India, Judea, China and Near East rely on separate studies he undertook on these cultures, and thus each requires more detailed discussion. Although Weber did not undertake a special study on Islam comparable to those of Judaism, China and India, which we shall discuss below, he made several scattered but significant comments on Islamic cities. Bryan Turner (1974) has undertaken the most penetrating analysis of these scattered comments. For Weber, it was the urban piety of certain status groups – artisans and merchants – in autonomous cities that was characteristic of the rise of European capitalism (Turner, 1974: 94). While Christianity played a fundamental part in the development of the associational character of the occidental city, Islam impeded the development of such a character with its emphasis on clan and kinship (1974: 97). So, in oriental cities one finds a collection of distinct and separate clan and tribal groups which do not join common action, a tribalism which Christianity helped break in Europe. 'The internal development of a rich and autonomous guild and associational life within the city was closely connected with the legal and political freedom of the city from the interference of the patrimonial, or feudal officials. Not only were cities legal persons, they were also independent political agents' (1974: 97). They fought wars, concluded treaties and made alliances. Their autonomy was fundamentally connected with their martial independence.

It was in the city that urban piety, legal autonomy, occupational associations and political involvement developed; hence, the autonomous city had very important connections with the rise of European capitalism. In Islam, Weber argued, it was the combination of a warrior religiosity with patrimonialism which limited the growth of autonomous cities and which in consequence precluded the growth of urban piety within the lower middle classes. (1974: 98)

For Turner, although Weber mistakenly overstated the importance of the warrior nobles in shaping the Islamic ethos, contemporary historical research gives ample evidence for Weber's thesis that Islamic cities were internally fissiparous and externally controlled by patrimonial rulers. 'The result was that Islamic cities did not produce a rich life of independent burgher associations' (1974: 98).

But was the ostensible fissiparousness of the Islamic city any more divisive than the factionalism of the *polis* or the medieval city? Turner agrees with Weber that it was and argues that the fact that Islamic cities were aggregates of sub-communities rather than socially unified communities is illustrated by the very geography of cities of the great cities of Islam: Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo and Baghdad. These cities were divided into quarters or districts, and each district had its homogeneous community and markets. The social solidarity of these districts or 'villages' within cities sometimes reflected the religious identity of its inhabitants (1974: 99–100). 'As Weber rightly observed, the continuity of clan and tribal organization within the city context imported rural feuding arrangements into urban life' (1974: 100). The city was the focal point of Islamic government, trade and religion; yet this focal point of Islamic culture lacked corporate institutions, a civic culture and a set of socially binding forces. Urban life was a precarious balance of social forces, a balance of contending quarters, sedentarized tribes, sects and legal schools (1974: 103). 'Islamic guilds were not, therefore, organizations created by workmen to protect themselves and their craft; they were organizations created by the state to supervise the craft and workmen and above all to protect the state from autonomous institutions' (1974: 103). The guilds were a facet of patrimonial control. The Islamic city lacked 'group feeling' and also failed to provide corporate institutions which would protect individuals (1974: 104). But, as Southall emphasizes, this sharp distinction overlooks some structural similarities between Islamic guilds and their occidental counterparts (1998: 228–9). While guilds as self-governing and self-regulating bodies controlling standards of production, conditions of work and criteria of entry did not exist in Islamic cities, local authorities on behalf and by appointment of the ruler were required to control occupations by enlisting the help of guild leaders and notables (Southall, 1998: 228). In many cities this led to craft and merchant guilds in which local notables, just like their occidental counterparts, exercised power and exerted control.

Similarly, Weber recognized that craft and merchant guilds existed in India during the period in which the great salvation religions originated. The position of the guilds was quite comparable to that occupied by guilds in the cities of the medieval occident. But the

uniqueness of the development of India lay in the fact that these beginnings of guild organization in the cities led neither to the city autonomy of the occidental type nor, after the development of the great patrimonial states, to a social and economic organization of the territories corresponding to the 'territorial economy' of the Occident. (Weber, 1958 [1917]: 33)

Instead, a caste system developed that was totally different from that of the merchant and craft guilds in at least three respects. First, it regulated the social distance between members of different castes and membership was essentially hereditary (1958 [1917]: 34–5). Second, that apprentices socialized in the guilds of the occident under a master enabled the transition of the children to occupations other than those of their parents. Third, despite violent struggles among themselves, the guilds in the occident displayed a tendency toward fraternization (1958 [1917]: 35). Castes, however, made fraternization impossible because of inviolable barriers against commensalism (1958 [1917]: 36).

For Weber, this last difference – fraternization – between the caste and guild was decisive and led him to make perhaps his clearest statement about the origins of occidental citizenship. Weber mentions a letter by Paul to the Galatians in which Paul reproaches Peter for having eaten in Antioch with the gentiles and for having withdrawn and separated himself afterwards. For Weber, this emphasis on shattering the ritual barriers and refusing to regard any people as pariah means the origins of commensalism are specifically Christian, and cut across nations and groups.

The elimination of all ritual barriers of birth for the community of the eucharists, as realized in Antioch, was, in connection with the religious pre-conditions, the hour of conception for the occidental 'citizenry'. This is the case even though its birth occurred more than a thousand years later in the revolutionary *conjuraciones* of the medieval cities. For without commensalism – in Christian terms, without the Lord's Supper – no oathbound fraternity and no medieval urban citizenry would have been possible. (1958 [1917]: 37–8)

As regards the Chinese civilization, for Weber, cities were a major impediment to the development of capitalism, despite the fact that many other conditions were already there for its development. But ancient and medieval cities and emerging states in the occident were vehicles of financial rationalization, of a money economy, and of politically oriented capitalism.

'In China, there were no cities like Florence which could have created a standard coin and guided that state in monetary policies' (Weber, 1951 [1916]: 13). For Weber,

[i]n contrast to the Occident, the cities in China and throughout the Orient lacked political autonomy. The oriental city was not a 'polis' in the sense of Antiquity, and it knew nothing of the 'city law' of the Middle Ages, for it was not a 'commune' with political privileges of its own. (1951 [1916]: 13)

The cities in the orient never aimed at gaining a charter which might, at least in a negative way, guarantee the freedom of the city. 'This was hardly possible along occidental lines because the fetters of the sib were never shattered. The new citizen, above all the newly rich one, retained his relations to the native place of his sib, its ancestral land and temple' (1951 [1916]: 14). While craft and merchant guilds developed in Chinese cities, they never coalesced into an oath-bound political association formed by an armed citizenry. The city could not function as a corporate body.

Weber explained this in terms of the different origins of the occidental and oriental city. The ancient *polis* originated as an overseas trading city, however strong its base in land-lordism. But China was predominantly an inland area. The prosperity of the Chinese city depended not upon the enterprising spirit of its citizens in economic and political ventures but rather upon the imperial administration, especially the administration of rivers. On this point, Weber remarked that just as in Egypt the sign of government is the Pharaoh holding the lash in his hand, so the Chinese character identifies governing with the handling of a stick (1951 [1916]: 16). But the essential point is that '[o]ur occidental bureaucracy is of recent origin and its past has been learned from the experiences of the autonomous city states. The imperial bureaucracy of China is very ancient' (1951 [1916]: 16).

Ultimately, the legal foundations beneficial to the development of capitalism were absent in China because the cities and guilds had no politico-martial capital of their own. Chinese authorities repeatedly reverted to liturgical controls, but they failed to create a system of guild privileges comparable to that of the West during the Middle Ages. The lack of political associational character of the city in turn was explained by the early development of a bureaucratic organization in the army and civil administration (Weber, 1951 [1916]: 20).

To conclude, the occidental city was foremost a sworn confraternity, and for Weber this *was* the decisive basis for the development of capitalism. Everywhere it became a territorial corporation and officials became officials of this institution. The occidental city was an institutionalized association in which the citizen was an active creator of law to which he was subject. For the development of the medieval city into a sworn association, two circumstances were of central importance. First, at a time when the economic interests of citizens urged them towards an association, this was not frustrated by magic or religious barriers. Second, a broader power enforcing the interests of a larger association was absent (Weber, 1978 [1921]: 1249). While Weber saw essential affinities between the ancient Graeco-Roman *polis* and the medieval corporation, he believed that the latter diverged from the former by being a confraternity exclusively devoted to peaceful means of acquisition rather than warfare. Ultimately, that is why economic capitalism would emerge rather than being stifled by the political capitalism of the ancient *polis* (Love, 1991). There is not enough space to develop a critique of Weber's orientalism here (see Isin, 2002). But so far I hope to have illustrated how orientalism and synoecism were the mobilizing perspectives from which followed his analysis of the essence of the occidental city. Notwithstanding differing emphases, in both respects Weber owed much to Fustel. Weber can even be read as an update and revision of Fustel by broadening both the scope (the oriental city appears in Weber with fine analyses rather than a block) and the focus (Weber includes Christian and medieval 'polis') of historical sociology of the city.

MUMFORD AND ORIENTAL DESPOTISM

Although French geographer Jean Gottman (1957; Gottman and Harper, 1990) is credited for introducing the term 'megalopolis' to describe the coalescence of several metropolitan areas into a contiguous agglomeration of people and activity in the north-eastern seaboard of the United States, it was Lewis Mumford (1938) who first elaborated the concept. His description was based on a revised version of an idea his mentor Patrick Geddes had advanced in his *Cities in Evolution* (1950 [1915]). Geddes had outlined six

stages of city development, from *polis* to necropolis. In *Culture of Cities* Mumford modified this outline by including an earlier stage represented by eopolis, the village community, and combining two of Geddes's later stages, parasitopolis and pathopolis, into tyrannopolis. So in this new scheme, city development originated with the rise of the village (eopolis), it evolved into the *polis* as an association of villages and kinships, and resulted in metropolis, an association of *poleis*. The later three stages of city development, megalopolis, tyrannopolis and necropolis, represented the decline of the city. The significant issue here is that neither Geddes nor Mumford considered these stages as corresponding to the outlines of history of the city. Rather, these were ideal-types or typologies that represented different moments in the 'civilizing process'. The ancient Greek, Roman and medieval cities were such moments. For example, Platonic Athens, Dantean Florence, Shakespearean London and Emersonian London represented the metropolis. Alexandria in the third century BC, Rome in the second century AD, Paris in the eighteenth century and New York in the early twentieth century represented megalopolis.

For later Mumford, interpreting the city in history in terms of these moments as stages of development became too narrow. In *The City in History* (1961), he abandoned this outline in favour of a specific and detailed account of the city since its ancient origins without an effort to create a model or theory. Nevertheless, his discussions of metropolis and megalopolis in *The City in History* maintained his basic typology in *The Culture of Cities*. Remarkably, owing to his insistence on the essence of the city as *civitas* rather than a focus on *urbs*, Mumford was already able to discern the emerging outlines of megalopolis in 1938; by 1961 these had become much more clear.

In *The Culture of Cities* Mumford regarded megalopolis as the beginning of decline: at this stage of its 'development', 'the city under the influence of a capitalistic mythos concentrates upon bigness and power. The owners of the instruments of production and distribution subordinate every other fact of life to the achievement of riches and the display of wealth' (1938: 289). For Mumford, the aimless expansion of the metropolis into megalopolis was an expression of a drive for capital accumulation: everything must become rational, big, methodical, quantitative and ruthless.

Megalopolis facilitated the repression and exploitation of the working classes by regimenting them and by making life increasingly insecure and volatile. This gives rise to a new class conflict in which the frightened bourgeoisie occasionally resorts to savage repressive violence against the working classes. As the conflict intensifies in megalopolis, an alliance of landowning aristocracy, speculators, financiers, enterprises and industrialists increase their interest in controlling the urban space. The urban design professions such as planning, municipal engineering and architecture increasingly serve the interests of this class alliance by turning their attention to behaviour and manners of the working classes in their habitats and *habitus*.

Although Mumford observed the transformation of the metropolis into the 'shapeless giantism' of the megalopolis in *The Culture of Cities*, the automobile suburb had not yet crystallized by 1938. Much of his critique concentrates upon the congestion of the metropolis. By 1961, however, for Mumford, understanding megalopolis required understanding the origins of the mass suburb. His critique in *The City in History* is equally ferocious and unrelenting against both the giant metropolis and senseless suburbia. In that work the revised chapter on megalopolis is now preceded by a new chapter on suburbia.

None the less, Mumford regarded *urbs* not merely as giving expression to values and culture embodied in *civitas* but also as shaping and forming it. While he always vigilantly insisted that urban space embodied dominant values of contemporary economy, society and culture, he argued that urban space was strategically used and controlled by dominant groups to enforce and impose their own ideals.

The organizers of the ancient city had something to learn from the new rulers of our society. The former massed their subjects within a walled enclosure, under the surveillance of armed guardians within the smaller citadel, the better to keep them under control. That method is now obsolete. With the present means of long-distance mass communication, sprawling isolation has proved an even more effective method of keeping a population under control. (Mumford, 1961: 512)

Mumford was quite explicit about his stance regarding the political content of the urban container and fought against those who interpreted the megalopolis as the final or the inevitable form of urban development by arguing that they overlooked historical outcomes of

such concentration of power. He argued that the myth of megalopolis gives legitimacy to modern accretion of power. The persistence of over-grown containers such as Berlin, Warsaw, New York and Tokyo is a concrete manifestation of the dominant forces in occidental civilization. The fact that the same signs of overgrowth and overconcentration persist in both communist and capitalist societies shows that these forces are deeper than prevailing ideologies. Mumford criticized academics for their vacuous predictions of urban growth concentrating on statistics, accusing them of the 'slavery of large numbers'. Ultimately, '[w]hether they extrapolate 1960 or anticipate 2060 their goal is actually '1984'' (1961: 527).

Mumford traced the rise of the giant metropolis directly to the rise of new dominant groups in the industrial city with their insatiable appetite for expansion. In the industrial city of the nineteenth century the creed of the bourgeoisie was laissez-faire and free enterprise, but with the growth of an immense productive economy and a consumption economy, the bourgeoisie abandoned its belief in the free market and appropriated state institutions for protection and subsidies. The rise of the metropolis was a symptom of this tendency towards monopoly and concentration of great numbers. By the twentieth century, the metropolis 'brought into one vast complex the industrial town, the commercial town, and the royal and aristocratic town, each stimulating and extending its influence over the other' (1961: 531). The metropolis was an embodiment and expression of a new stage in capitalism in which industrial capital and class was among other equally powerful classes and forms of capital.

Mumford argued that massive accretion of power and concentration of numbers necessitated the rise of bureaucratic administration and management in both the ancient despotic metropolis and the modern metropolis. In both, governmental and capitalistic 'enterprises' resulted in the growth of professional and managerial bureaucracies and classes. The metropolis became a form dominated by a new trinity: finance, insurance, advertising. 'By means of these agents, the metropolis extended its rule over subordinate regions, both within its own political territory and in outlying domains' (1961: 535). The metropolis became an arena for accumulation of different forms of capital: the banks, brokerage offices and stock exchanges essentially serve a

collecting point for the savings in the entire country, centralizing and monopolizing the use of money. Similarly, the values of real estate in the metropolis were secured by the continued growth of the metropolis, thereby benefiting financial institutions. In order to protect their investment and continued profitability, banks, insurance companies and mortgage brokers encouraged further concentration and the rise of land values in the metropolis.

For Mumford, the monopoly of cultural capital was the essence of the metropolis. The effective monopoly of news media, advertising, literature and the new channels of mass communication, television and radio gave authenticity and value to the style of life that emanated from the metropolis. 'The final goal of this process would be a unified, homogeneous, completely standardized population, cut to the metropolitan pattern and conditioned to consume only those goods that are offered by the controllers and conditioners, in the interests of continuously expanding economy' (Mumford, 1961: 538). This constituted a control without kingship. The metropolis became a consumption machine. The princely ritual of conspicuous consumption became a mass phenomenon. Mumford continually emphasized that the efforts to promote agglomeration and concentration were not spontaneous; they were deliberate. It was through public subsidies and policies that the concentration of people in the metropolis was ensured.

To call the overgrown metropolis, aimlessly expanding, megalopolis is to give legitimacy to a sprawling giant. 'These vast urban masses are comparable to a routed and disorganized army, which has lost its leaders, scattered its battalions and companies, torn off its insignia, and is fleeing in every direction' (1961: 541). For Mumford this formlessness unleashed new desires for control and regulation. 'In short the monopoly of power and knowledge that was first established in the citadel has come back, in a highly magnified form, in the final stages of metropolitan culture. In the end every aspect of life must be brought under control: controlled weather, controlled movement, controlled association, controlled production, controlled prices, controlled fantasy, controlled ideas. But the only purpose of control, apart from the profit, power, and prestige of the controllers, is to *accelerate the process of mechanical control itself.*' (1961: 542). The priests of the new regime are those who command and control knowledge, who represent the Cybernetic Deity.

Like Weber, Mumford saw in the modern metropolis the elements of 'oriental despotism' represented by the citadel and king-priest. From this perspective, Mumford could not bring himself to believe that megalopolis was a legitimate form of city. Megalopolis was for him the death of the city, a stage leading to necropolis.

As one moves away from the centre, the urban growth becomes more aimless and discontinuous, more diffuse and unfocussed, except where some surviving town has left the original imprint of a more orderly life ... [In megalopolis, the] 'original container has completely disappeared: the sharp division between city and country no longer exists' The form of the metropolis, then, is its formlessness, even as its aim is its own aimless expansion. (1961: 543-4).

In 1938 Mumford had argued that the trend toward megalopolis had to be stopped. It would be nothing less than a revaluation of values of modern culture: mastery of nature, the myth of the machine and ceaseless expansion of capitalism. A regional framework of civilization that would correspond to this revaluation would be necessary, nurturing the vitality, density, vigour and diversity of the city while maintaining access to the countryside in symbiotic relationship with it. By creating the regional city, the historical balance between the city and the countryside would be restored. In the intervening years, Mumford observed in despair that the 'urban question' was considered by urban policy-makers, many academics and planners as an engineering question of efficient government, administration and co-ordination. He argued that addressing the urban question as a spatial question amounted to a 'spatial fetishism' incapable of seeing the relationship between spatial order and social order. For him, as for Fustel and Weber, the ontological distinction between *civitas* and *urbs* was crucial.

It is hopeless to think that this problem is one that can be solved by local authorities, even by one as colossal and competent as the London County Council. Nor is it a problem that can be successfully attacked by a mere extension of the scope of political action, through creating metropolitan governments ... [Rather, the] internal problems of the metropolis and its subsidiary areas are reflections of a whole civilization geared to expansion by strictly rational and scientific means for purposes that have become progressively more empty and trivial, more infantile and primitive, more

barbarous and massively irrational. ... This is a matter that must be attacked at the source ... (1961: 553-4).

Mumford believed that to master ourselves and our drives we must treat the city as a living organism. The disciple of Geddes thought that every organism contains creative and destructive tensions and processes through which it grows. Life and growth depend not upon the absence of negative conditions, but on a balance and a sufficient surplus of energy to maintain this balance. The city embodied both creative and destructive forces from its first foundation five thousand years ago. While it embodied energies that set humans free from hereditary and oppressive obligations and allowed them a degree of democratic participation and co-operation, it also owed its existence to concentrated attempts at mastering other humans and dominating the environment. Release and enslavement, freedom and compulsion, have been present from the beginning of the urban culture. Ultimately, our ability to master our dark instincts will determine whether we can renew life in the city. By 1961, the prospects did not look good:

Our present civilization is a gigantic motor car moving along a one-way road at an ever-accelerating speed. Unfortunately as now constructed the car lacks both steering wheel and brakes, and the only form of control the driver exercises consists in making the car go faster, though in his fascination with the machine itself and his commitment to achieving the highest speed possible, he has quite forgotten the purpose of the journey. This state of helpless submission to the economic and technological mechanisms modern man has created is curiously disguised as progress, freedom, and the mastery of man over nature. (1961: 558-9).

As I suggested earlier, Weber can be read as an update and revision of Fustel. Similarly, I would like now to suggest that Mumford can be read as an update and revision of both Fustel and Weber. While maintaining a distinction between *civitas* and *urbs*, which both Fustel and Weber drew, Mumford further broadened the scope (he included the origins of cities) and focus (he included the baroque or early modern city and the modern city, which Weber mysteriously ignored) of historical sociology of the city. In fact, Mumford returned to some themes in Fustel such as religion that Weber had emphasized differently.

**HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE CITY
AFTER ORIENTALISM**

By focusing on Fustel, Weber and Mumford as the quintessential historical sociologists of the city, I hope to have illustrated that their practice consisted in three interrelated but distinct assumptions: (i) a fundamental ontological distinction between *civitas* and *urbs*; (ii) a focus on the essence of *civitas* as forces or groups that constitute it at any given historical moment; and (iii) a concern with the present. Whether it is Fustel's 'client city' or Weber's 'plebeian city' or Mumford's 'baroque city', what makes these ideal-types objects of analysis is not their construction from various empirical realities such as everyday routines that related them to 'large-scale' processes, as Tilly argued, but something altogether different. What these ideal-types represent is the essence of the city at any given historical moment by virtue of its constitutive forces and groups that create the city as an association, a *civitas* rather than an *urbs*, that sheds light on the present as a question. While the essence of *civitas* can only be revealed or unconcealed through investigation of various cities, their characteristics and constitutive groups and forces, it is not reducible to them. To put it another way, the essence of the city at any given moment is not a totality of its facts but stands beyond it. There is, then, no reason to critique urban historians on the basis of their neglect of 'macro'-analyses or 'large-scale' processes. But there is a need to ask why investigating the essence of the city at present has not led to a rethink of the essence of the city in the past.

Be that as it may, and powerful though historical sociology of the city was as practised by Fustel, Weber and Mumford, the essence of their occidental *civitas* depended on orientalism. Each juxtaposed an occidental city against an oriental one, defining the essence of the occidental city as having transcended the limits of the oriental city, and warning about contemporary developments that ostensibly signalled a return or revival of oriental despotic tendencies in occidental cities. Each also defined the essence of the oriental city as a series of 'absences'. In a magnificent account of the birth of the city in medieval Europe, Henri Pirenne made scattered remarks on the 'orientalizing' of the occidental city but quickly reverted to an orientalist position where he described the essential difference

between the two as the occidental bourgeoisie as the mobilizing force dominant in occidental cities but 'lacking' in oriental cities (1925: 5, 23ff., 79ff., 231–4). What mobilized this orientalism, as Abrams obliquely pointed out (Abrams, 1982; Abrams and Wrigley, 1978), was their objective to explain the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the occident as the space of the birth of capitalism. The city was at the centre of this as a space either of religion (Fustel) or of citizenship (Weber) or of technology (Mumford) or of the bourgeoisie (Pirenne).

The question historical sociology of the city now faces is how to interpret the essence of the city without orientalism. It is precisely because its *present* objective is not (or perhaps ought not to be) the uniqueness of the occident as the birthplace of capitalism. While quintessential historical sociologists of the city, Fustel, Weber and Mumford, provide some significant tools to address this question, their underlying orientalism will have to be critiqued and deconstructed from a perspective that concerns the present. But what should be the objective? Perhaps it is because that question has not yet been articulated that historical sociology of the city has not gathered momentum in the past few decades.

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