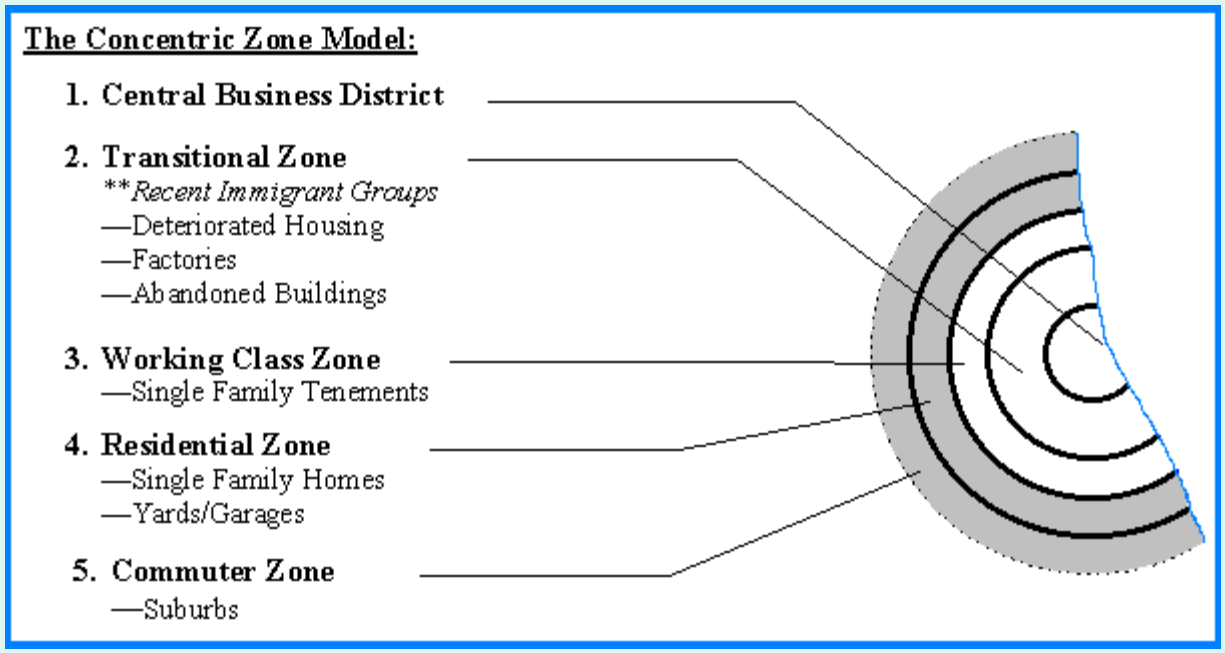
Sociology 200



April 24,2007

Urban structure, urban life

Agenda

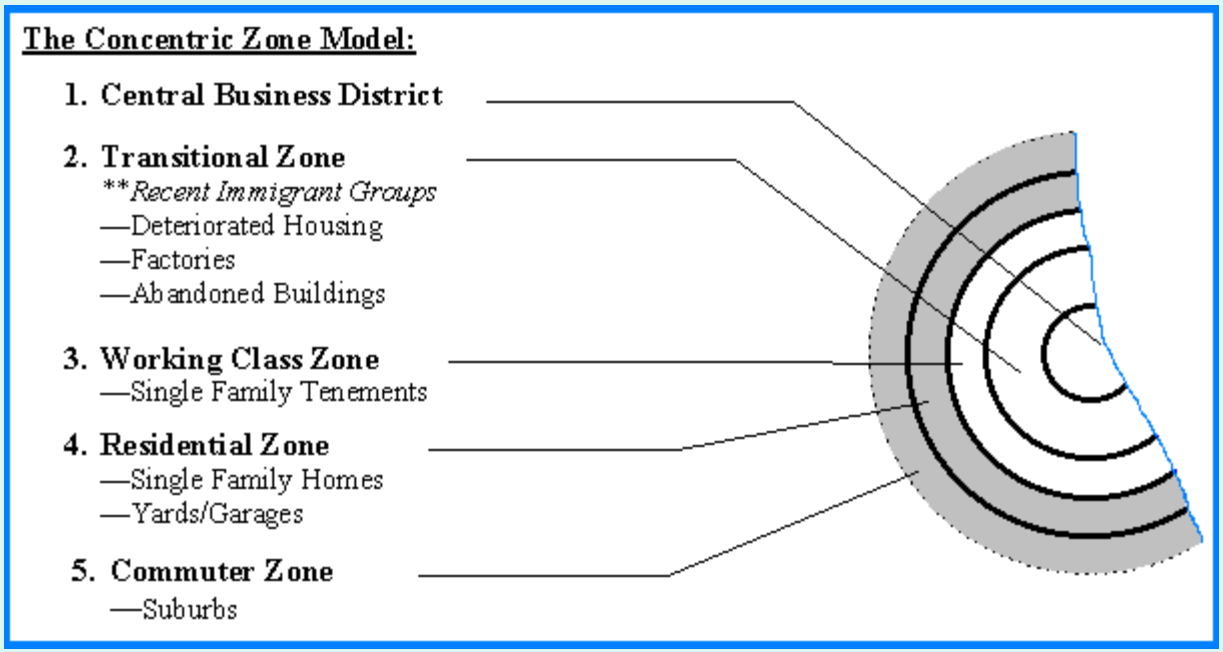
- Structure of cities
  - Concentric model
  - Sector model
  - Multiple nuclei
- Nature of urban life
- Future urban growth

Structure of cities

- Studies related to those of Park and Burgess of the Univ. of Chicago school, although Tischler calls these *human ecology*, others refer to these studies as *social ecology*
  - *Human ecology* more often looks at humans and environmental interactions that affect social development and structures (see Julian Steward's work)

Three models

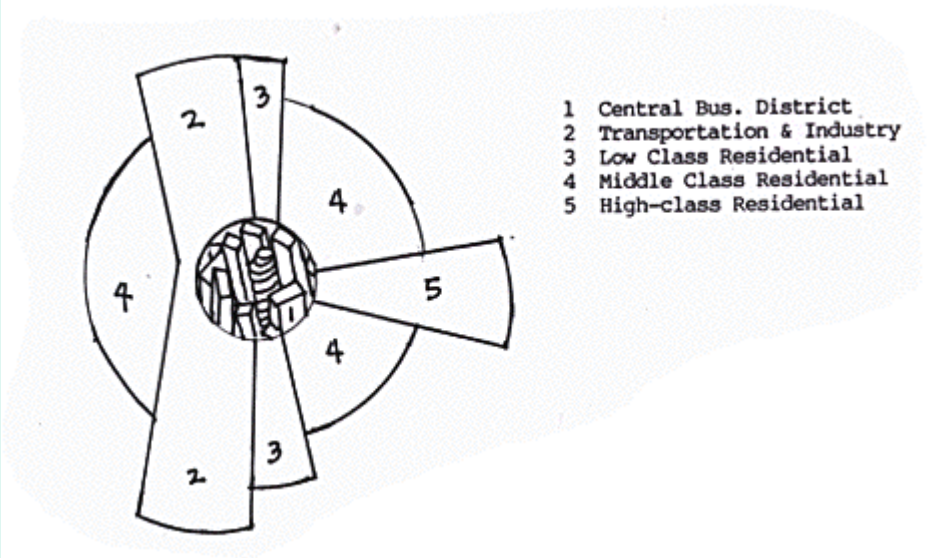
- Concentric zone model (Park and Burgess)
  - Considers zonation outward from the central city/central business district



Graphic from: http://www.crimetheory.com/Soc1/Chic1.htm accessed 2/24/07

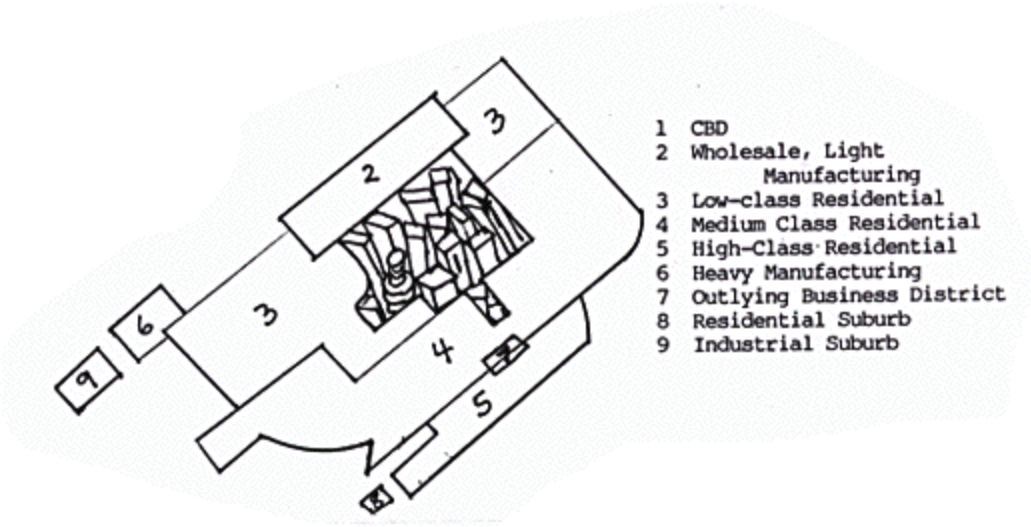
- Shows that not all zones are considered equally desirable in terms of location and resources
- This model is more effective for those constructed prior to automobile/highway development, especially those before train/trolley lines which modified the system as can be seen in the sector model
- Also considers issues of invasion and succession of areas by new residents over time
  - Mobility socially equates with physical mobility

- Sector Model
  - There are linear features that affect development, such as rivers, highways, and in earlier years, trolley lines



Graphic from:
http://www.hawaii.edu/hga/urban00/ModelsCities.html

- Multiple nuclei model
  - More reflective of modern cities/metropolitan areas,
  - Uses with certain types of neighborhoods tend to aggregate together for access to specific activities
    - i.e. college area is likely to have bookstores, campus related bars and restaurants, “head shop” and similar type shops – on one side of town, but industrial on another



Graphic from: http://www.hawaii.edu/hga/urban00/ModelsCities.html accessed 4/24/07

Critique of social ecology model

- Neglects the effects of history and cultural attraction by various factors such as parts of Boston recognized as “Italian” (North End)
- Neglects the issues with internal migration from northern (Rust Belt) cities to southern (Sunbelt) cities
- CBDs have become less important (malls draw trade from the CBD, for example)

Nature of Urban Life

- Social interactions in urban life
  - Typically people in urban areas have more anonymity in social relations
  - More choice of career/education/marriage partners
  - Although city seen as a relatively large, dense, permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals, there are numerous community cultures in which urban residents participate

- Urban neighborhoods
  - People draw mental maps of cities with neighborhoods having socially meaningful boundaries
  - These mental maps can be variable depending on the perception of the person making them, and the communities within may not be homogeneous
  - Jane Jacobs (1961) found that social interactions were more focused on the block than the neighborhood level.
  - Urban areas can be polluted, noisy, crowded and otherwise dangerous, so families with children choose suburbs for residence

- Urban Decline
  - Post WWII, white flight was followed by African-Americans with more wealth moving into suburbs
    - This aggregated lower income people in the inner cities
    - Without resources for taxes, cites began to decline
  - Since the 1980s, gentrification (re-settlement of those with higher incomes, mainly middle class, in sections of cities, displacing poorer residents)
    - Tischler states that most of the gentrifiers are people without children, but there are families moving into cities

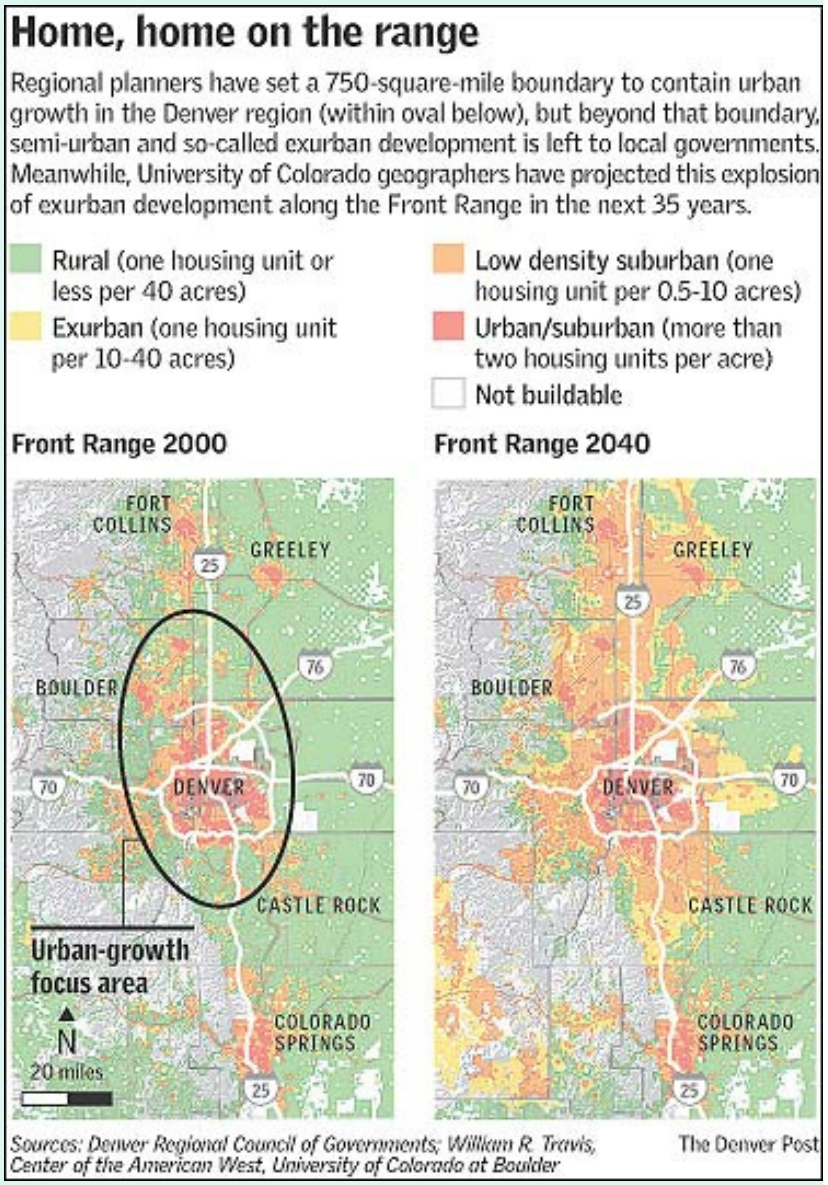
- Homelessness
  - Since WWII, cities tend to be places of business with less emphasis on living areas – people leave for the suburbs for the night
  - Poorer people have, in the past, lived in hotel rooms and boarding houses (single room accommodations), these have provided home for those now homeless
  - Conditions of the homeless:
    - Mental illness (39%)
    - Addiction
    - Poverty
    - Illiteracy
    - Disease (~2/3, with 9% having HIV)
    - Family history of homelessness (21%),
    - Crime (25% abused as children)
    - Chronic unemployment – these cannot be cured with simple infusion of money

Suburbs and Exurbs

- Suburbs
  - Incorporated or unincorporated spatial communities that lie outside the central city but within the metropolitan area
    - Example: York County for Newport News-Hampton-Norfolk-VA Beach MSA
    - Tended to be commuter communities with people working in the central city – started with access to trolley lines, ferry/steamboat down the Hudson to NYC
    - Are perceived as cleaner, more sanitary, quieter than the central city (better for raising children)
    - Suburbs began around the turn of the last century, but major growth came in post-WWII with GI bill and access to automobiles and the development of the highway system

- Tishcler contends that suburbs tend to focus on areas with little diversity by age/family development (obviously doesn't know where I live or have lived!)
- Negative aspect of suburbs is "urban/suburban sprawl" with lower density housing covering hundreds of square miles
  - Aurora, CO/east suburbs of Denver : sea of roofs/ tons of tract housing
  - Also suburbs are linked to the central city, so persevere or perish with central city (Denver metro set up cultural district to maintain museums, zoo, symphony, etc.)

Highlands Ranch, Co – urban sprawl, developed in 1980s graphic from: http://www.sprawlaction.org/contactus.html accessed 4/24/07



Projections for Denver metro growth from the Denver Post 12/14/2004
http://www.nrel.colostate.edu/~davet/in_the_news_files/Exurb%20boom%20not%20addressed%20Denver%20Post.htm

- Exurbs
  - Middle and upper class communities in outlying semirural suburbia
    - Develop own malls, have own economic base (eg. Williamsburg, VA; Evergreen, CO)
    - Residents tend to be affluent, well educated professionals
  - Movement is more to exurbs; people looking for "American dream"
    - Also, there is a real perception for middle class that suburbia is tedious/boring/sameness so looking for more focused community