

Unit 3

City and Metropolis

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept of city;
- describe the legal basis of city;
- describe the statistical basis of city;
- discuss the differences between cities on the basis of occupation;
- discuss how the Census of India defines town/city;
- provide the sociological definition of city;
- explain the multiple criteria of defining a city;
- outline the definition of city on the basis of market, and finally
- discuss the meaning and nature of metropolis.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous two units—What is Urban Sociology? and Urban Centre, Urbanisation and Urban Growth—you learnt about the origin and development of urban sociology as a branch of the discipline of sociology. You also became familiar with its subject matter, socio historical background and other concepts which form the body of this branch of sociology.

The present unit explains the concept of city and the concept of metropolis. It will provide the general as well as sociological understanding of what constitutes a city and a metropolis.

3.2 Concept of City

There are very few sociological terms on whose definition experts agree. The concept of the city is no exception. In defining the city we encounter

numerous problems which are known to all sociologists. Mumford (1968) also mentions this fact in his article on *City: Forms and Functions* in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, he writes "Although the city as a form of human settlement dates back to the beginnings of civilisation, it long escaped scholarly scrutiny; and its very definition is still under debate. Levi - Strauss's attack on the ambiguities of "totemism" would apply equally to the term "city" but with less justification, since the city has undergone many changes without losing its architectural and institutional continuity." Everybody seems to know what a city is but no one has given a satisfactory definition. Since English lacks a neat vocabulary to distinguish the succession of urban forms from embryo to adult, their purely quantitative aspect is best rendered in German: Dorf, Kleinstadt, Mittelstadt, Grosstade, Millionenstadt. In English, eopolis, polis, metropolis, megalopolis, and conurbation have been proposed as equivalent series, with regional city and regional urban grid as possible emergent forms (Mumford *ibid.*).

Like many other sociological categories, the city is an abstraction, but the elements of which it consists—residents, structures, means of transportation, installations, and so on — are concrete entities of varying nature. What makes a city is the functional integration of its elements into a whole (Bergel, 955). Yet a city has not merely a single function but rather an assortment of many functions and not all of them are present in every city. These may vary from city to city and time to time. There are different ways to define city such as legal, statistical, density, occupation, sociological and economical. Let us discuss all of them in detail one by one.

3.3 Definition on Legal Basis

The city in many countries has been defined in legal terms. A place is legally made a city by a declaration, called a charter, which is granted by a higher authority. In India the State Government has the responsibility of granting municipal/civic status to a settlement or notifying it as a town. Such towns are known as statutory towns. The procedure is very clear but the bases of identification are not uniform across the states and extremely unsatisfactory. It is an explanation *ex post facto*. A place is not a city because it has received a charter; the grant of the charter is recognition that it has become a city. The definition disregards the fact that many eastern cities have never had a charter and that in the West the legal distinction between cities and rural places evolved at a rather late date.

3.4 Statistical Basis

Another equally simple approach is provided through statistical indicators. The U.S. Bureau of Census considers as cities all "incorporated places" of 2,500 or more inhabitants. This method meets the needs of statisticians but offers little sociological insight. The arbitrariness of this kind of definition is revealed by the fact that the United States census has had to alter its criterion from 8,000 inhabitants to 4,000 and finally to the present figure. To meet other difficulties, the census has had to include additional

urban developments, such as “unincorporated towns or townships or political subdivisions.” There are also substantial international variations. Most European countries follow the example set by France in 1846, requiring a minimum population of 2,000. This figure was approved by the International Bureau of Statistics in 1887. It has not been universally accepted, however, since Korea, for example, still sets the minimum limits as high as 44,000. In India the cut off point for non-statutory towns is 5000.

According to the statistical definition noted above, a place having a certain number of persons will be known as a city. It is obvious that a place does not become a city by merely reaching that figure. It is equally obvious that a place with that minimum number of persons and another one with over one million persons must have something in common, besides having a certain number of inhabitants if we have to justify our calling them both cities, as distinct from rural settlements.

3.5 Basis of Density of Population

Another quantitative criterion for defining the city on is the basis of population density. Like the definition based on the number of persons, the definitions based on the density of population have also been questioned for similar reasons. It is impossible to state at what density a settlement changes from the rural to the urban type. Some villages are rather thickly settled while some urban sections represent a residential vacuum. In Mumbai more than 55 per cent of slum population occupies only 6 per cent of residential areas. These are the areas which are densely populated in Mumbai, where as many sections of the city may have a density of less than 50 persons per acre. Same is the case in New Delhi. The “City” of London has practically no inhabitants and the borough of Richmond, which is a part of New York City, has a much lower density than the Neolithic European pile dwellings which possibly housed as many as 1,300 persons on less than 30,000 square yards. The density of cities varies from 10 (Australia and New Zealand) to 33 (Paris) per square hectare.

For these reasons attempts to arrive at an exact minimum figure of density which signifies the urban character of a settlement are rarely made. Walter F. Willcox tried to arrive at a numerical definition by investigating the density of Tompkins County, New York. He proposes the following figures: density of less than 100 per square mile constitutes “country,” density; from 100 to 1000 constitutes “villages,” and density above 1,000 “cities.” His proposition was only tentative since he had analysed only one American county. A Willcox himself realised, conditions in other counties might be different. But if the density varies from area to area while the cities maintain their character, the validity of the measurement would collapse, since a yardstick must not vary.

3.6 Basis of Occupation

Not satisfied by the density criterion, Willcox added the criterion of occupational structure in defining an urban centre. According to his own

definition, he regarded a district as rural only if “presumably agriculture is the only occupation,” while cities are places “in which there is practically no agriculture.” He remarked, “the fundamental difference between country and city is the difference between agriculture and the group of other occupations.”

3.7 Town / City According to Indian Census

The census of India has defined urban /town by combining legal, population, occupation and density, which is clear from the definition given below:

- a) All places with municipality, corporation, cantonment board, or notified town area committee, etc.
- b) All other places which satisfied the following criteria;
 - i) a minimum population of 5,000.
 - ii) At least 75 per of male working population in non-agricultural pursuits; and (this criteria has been used in many other ways as well. The confusion arises as in some census updates the criterion is stated as (1) 75% of all working population (2) 75% of adult male population. (3) Also some use “non primary” rather than “non agriculture”.)
 - iii) a density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

Reflection and Action 3.1

Visit the local municipality office or village Block Development Office. Interview an officer there about the village/town/city you are residing in about its legal basis or statistical basis.

Write a report of one page on your city/town/village regarding the above topic. Compare your answer with those of other learners at your Study Centre.

The above definition underwent a slight change during 1981 and 1991. The urban criteria of the 1981 and 1991 Censuses varied somewhat from that of 1961 and 1971. The workers in occupations of forestry, fishing, livestock, hunting, logging, plantations and orchards, etc. (falling under Industrial Category III) were treated under non-agricultural activities in 1961 and 1971 Censuses, whereas in 1981 and 1991 Censuses these activities were treated as agricultural activities for the purpose of determining the male working population in non-agricultural pursuits. Besides, the discretion of Directors Census in consultation with the State Government to treat some places having distinct urban characteristics as urban even if such places did not strictly satisfy all the criteria mentioned under category (b) above was discontinued at the 1991 Census and it has been followed in the 2001 Census also.

- a) **City** : Any urban area with a population of 100,000 or more is treated as city in the Indian Census.

Box 3.1 New York City

Officially the City of New York, is the most populous city in the United States and the most densely populated major city in North America. Located in the state of New York, New York City has a population of over 8.1 million^[2] within an areas of 321 square miles (approximately 830 Km²)^[3].

The city is a center for international finance, fashion, entertainment and culture, and is widely considered to be one of the world's major global cities with an extraordinary collection of museums, galleries, performance venues, media outlets, international corporations and financial markets. It is also home to the headquarters of the United Nations.

The New York metropolitan area has a population of about 22 million, which makes it one of the largest urban areas in the world.^[4] The city proper consists of five boroughs: The Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. With the exception of Staten Island, each of these boroughs is home to at least a million people and would be among the nation's largest cities if considered independently.

Nicknamed the 'Big Apple', the city attracts large numbers of immigrants (over a third of its population is foreign born) as well as people from all over the United States who come for its culture, energy, cosmopolitanism, and economic opportunity. The city is also the safest of the 25 largest American cities.

Source: The Encyclopedia of New York City, Kennath T. Jackson 1995)



3.8 Sociological Definition

Some scholars have defined a city as a place which has become so large that people no longer know each other. Sombart calls this a "sociological" definition. For very small cities the statement is patently incorrect. In big cities face-to-face contacts are more numerous than anywhere else in the country; for this reason Sorokin and Zimmerman correctly consider greater number of contacts as an urban, not as a rural characteristic. In India small towns are just like villages where such definition may not be applicable.

3.9 Multiple Criteria

Since the quest for a single criterion has met with no success, some authors—notably, Sorokin and Zimmerman, Maunier, and Sombart - hold that a proper definition must consist of a combination of factors: "multiple" or "compound" definitions. Maunier's own solution, however, is hardly satisfactory. According to him, a city is a "complete society whose

geographical base is particularly restrained for the size of its population or whose territorial elements is relatively meager in amount compared to that of its human element." This formula is only an elaborate way of defining a city as a habitat of great population density. Since it fails to explain at what degree of density a settlement changes from rural to urban, the definition loses its usefulness.

Sorokin and Zimmerman are much clearer. They assemble eight characteristics in which the urban world differs from the rural world. They are: (1) occupation, (2) environment, (3) size of community, (4) density of population, (5) heterogeneity or homogeneity of the population, (6) social differentiation and stratification, (7) mobility, and (8) "systems of interaction" (i.e., number and type of contacts). Some of these characteristics have been discussed above. All these characteristics are present in both cities and villages, the question here is at what stage a rural area turns into an urban?

Reflection and Action 3.2

Do you think that Indian Cities like, Delhi, Agra, Lucknow etc. are truly urban in the sociological sense?

Write your views in about ten lines. Share your opinion with your peers at your Study Centre.

3.9 Basis of Market

In some parts of the world we still find an unusual form of human settlement: "artisan villages" where all residents are engaged in the same craft. Another case: fishing villages are neither rural nor entirely urban in character but represent a special category. Fishing, as a specialised kind of food gathering, is much older than the domestication of plants and animals and is thus prerural in character. Fishing villages existed in Europe before the advent of Neolithic times, for instance, near Muge, Portugal. Some of our primitive contemporaries still live mostly on the sea yields. But their settlements cannot be placed in the same category as, for instance, Salem, Massachusetts, whose residents became millionaires by fishing. The difference is clear: one group literally lives on fish; for the other group fishing is a commercial enterprise. Therefore, we shall consider all communities non-urban if their activities are mainly consumption centered. On the other hand, if these activities are oriented towards a market, the settlement is urban in nature, for a market is one of the basic features of non-agricultural activities. Without organised exchange of goods and services the urban dweller would have nothing to eat.

In fact, Marx specified a different relation of the city to the society in each mode of production. It is this changing relation of city and society that Southhall (1998) takes as justification for the study of the city; and of urban anthropology.

The attempt to define the urban leads to contorted tautologies (Plotnicov, 1985). The unity lies in the wholeness of the total human experience of it, bounded at the beginning by the temporal immensities of the pre-urban

era and at the end by the still impenetrable mysteries of the post-urban age. Cities have never been seriously and comprehensively looked at as a whole, so the nature of their unity has never been fully explored or perceived.

Southall's approach to the city is on the idea of concentration, but, it extends beyond mere population to include its more profound social, cultural and politico-economic implications, since these are even more highly concentrated. He previously defined these on the basis of role relationships (1973:106), which are far more highly concentrated in cities than population as such, but the notion applies differentially to different general domains of role relationships, such as kinship, religious, political, economic (production) and recreation (consumption)—concentration applying in its most extreme form to the latter two. Concentration of social relationships in general defines the most fundamental characteristic common to cities in all time and space. The purpose of studying cities in this sense is to understand how the relationship of those concentrations to the rest of society has varied over time and space, and how these variations reflect the changing organisation of urban concentrations and the organisation of production and society as a whole.

At the end I would like to quote R.E. Dickinson (1951) he has been able to combine most of the characteristics of city. He writes, firstly, the city is an institutional center, the seat of the institution of the society which it represents it is a seat of religion, of culture and social contact, and of political and administrative organisation. Secondly it is a seat of production, agricultural and industrial, the latter being normally the more important....thirdly, it is a seat of commerce and transport. Fourthly, the city is a pleasurable seat of residence for the rulers, the wealthy, and the retired, where they can enjoy all the amenities of civilised life that the institutions of their society have to offer. Fifthly, it is the living place of the people who work in it.

3.11 Concept of Metropolis

Metropolis, a Greek word actually consisting of two words-meter (mother) and polis (city). Hence, metropolis can be translated into English as mother city.

Lewis Mumford classified cities on the basis of levels of technological development in Europe such as; Eopolis, Polis, Metropolis, Megalopolis, Tyrannopolis and Necropolis.

In ancient times, the term metropolis was reserved for a specific type of a city: the capital of an empire, state, kingdom and places from which "the rest of the world" (or at least some major territory) was ruled. Thus, a metropolis would rank considerably higher than a provincial city.

In modern days, any major city likes to be thought of as a metropolis, even if it is not the seat of the government. This is true particularly of the cities in the United States because a typical US state Capital is not a big city. By the same token, most US States have at least one big city, which is not the Capital of the State.

Box 3.2 Metropolitan Cities in India					
Urban Agglomerations/Cities having population of more than one million in 2001					
State Rural Urban Data/Definitions					
		Urban	Population 2001		
Rank in 2001	Agglomeration/ City (1,000,000 + population)	Civic Status	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	7	8	9
1	Greater Mumbai	VA	16,368,084	8,979,172	7,388,912
2	Kolkata	VA	13,216,546	7,072,114	6,144,432
3	Delhi	VA	12,791,458	7,021,896	5,769,562
4	Chennai	VA	6,424,624	3,294,328	3,130,296
5	Bangalore	VA	5,686,844	2,983,926	2,702,918
6	Hyderabad	VA	5,533,640	2,854,938	2,678,702
7	Ahmadabad	VA	4,519,278	2,397,728	2,121,550
8	Pune	VA	3,755,525	1,980,941	1,774,584
9	Surat	VA	2,811,466	1,597,093	1,214,373
10	Kanpur	VA	2,690,486	1,440,140	1,250,346
11	Jaipur	M.Corp.	2,324,319	1,239,711	1,084,608
12	Lucknow	VA	2,266,933	1,199,273	1,067,660
13	Nagpur	VA	2,122,965	1,097,723	1,025,242
14	Patna	VA	1,707,429	925,857	781,572
15	Indore	VA	1,639,044	861,758	777,286
16	Vadodara	VA	1,492,398	783,237	709,161
17	Bhopal	VA	1,454,830	766,602	688,228
18	Coimbatore	VA	1,446,034	743,161	702,873
19	Ludhiana	M.Corp.	1,395,053	789,868	605,185
20	Kochi	VA	1,355,406	670,462	684,944
21	Visakhapatnam	VA	1,329,472	674,080	655,392
22	Agra	VA	1,321,410	708,622	612,788
23	Varanasi	VA	1,211,749	644,922	566,827
24	Madurai	VA	1,194,665	604,728	589,937
25	Meerut	VA	1,167,399	624,904	542,495
26	Nashik	VA	1,152,048	619,962	532,086
27	Jabalpur	VA	1,117,200	588,556	528,644
28	Jamshedpur	VA	1,101,804	580,336	521,468
29	Asansol	VA	1,090,171	576,813	513,358
30	Dhanbad	VA	1,064,357	578,602	485,755
31	Faridabad	M.Corp.	1,054,981	580,548	474,433
32	Allahabad	VA	1,049,579	581,876	467,703
33	Amritsar	VA	1,011,327	543,638	467,689
34	Vijayawada	VA	1,011,152	531,084	480,068
35	Rajkot	VA	1,002,160	525,797	476,363
TOTAL			107,881,836	57,664,396	50,217,440

Furthermore, at least in the US, the population in the area surrounding a major city is typically much larger than the population of the city itself. The two populations are typically added up and published as the population of the greater metropolitan area.

Naturally, if we follow the ancient tradition, any State Capital still deserves the title of metropolis even if it is not the cultural and business center of that state.

So, a modern meaning of the word metropolis often is any place which is a political, cultural, or economic center, though not necessarily all of the above.

According to Indian census a city having more than 10 lac persons or a million plus city is known as a metropolis. According to the 2001 census, there are 35 million-plus cities having total population of 107.88 million which constitutes 37.8 percent of the total urban population of the country. In identifying metropolitan cities, Census uses the population of the entire urban agglomerations rather than the population of the central municipal corporation. Consequently, most of the million plus metropolises are multi-municipal agglomerations. Such agglomerations comprise a large city in the core with smaller urban areas on the periphery (Sivaramakrishnan, Kundu and Singh 2005). In India the smallest metropolis is Rajkot (1002,106 persons) in India and the largest one Greater Mumbai with a population of 16,368,084 persons. It is sixteen times bigger than Rajkot. Indian census has further divided these metropolises into four categories given below:

1,000,000–1,999,999

2,000,000–4,999,999

5,000,000 –9,999,999

10,000,000 and above

We may mention that this is a central govt. programme JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Reversal Mission) that covers all metro cities (plus others) and mega city programme covered all mega cities noted below.

There are six mega cities in India, with a population of more than five million in each in 2001. These are Greater Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Box 3.3 Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Reversal Mission (JNNURM)

“India is being seen as the place to be in - whether to invest or pick up a job assignment. But one thing that natives as well as foreigners, including investors, lament is the lack of decent infrastructure in the country. That’s why, the UPA Government’s mega scheme, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Reversal Mission (JNNURM) seems like a touch of new life. The centre is offering money to improve the lot of 63 metro, cities and towns - from Ahmedabad to Imphal and Srinagar to Thiruvananthapuram. Says Kavas Kapadia, Head, Department of Urban Planning and Architecture (SPA). “The government has suddenly recognised that cities are not to be ignored.” Out of India’s one-billion plus population an increasing number-about 30 per cent of people live in urban regions. “Pretty soon it will become very uncontrollable. In 20 years, 40-50 per cent will be in urban areas.”

Launched in December 2005, the seven year Rs. 1,20,536 crore mission is being used to funnel money directly to nodal agencies. Under one sub-mission the money is supposed to be spent largely on road networks, transport, water supply and sanitation, solid waste management and old city redevelopment projects. This might also mean moving commercial and industrial units to designated areas. The second sub-mission has been drawn upto fund housing and create basic amenities for the urban poor..... ”

(Bano, Rahat-Mission Possible reported in Hindustan Times, HT Estates, Saturday 08 July, 2006).

3.12 Conclusion

Like all sociological terms, the concept of city too has its own problems. It has been defined by various sociologists and other social scientists in many different ways based on the criteria which they find significant. City is an abstraction like any other sociological category but it is based on concrete elements like, residents, means of transport, etc. In this unit you have learnt about the city and the different ways it has been understood, such as legal basis, statistical basis, basis of density of population, and so on.

You also learnt about the metropolis. Metropolis, the very term means ‘Mother City’. It has the distinct criteria of population and also it is a city where the political cultural and economic center is present. In India a city with the population exceeding a million is considered to be a metropolis according to the census. Rajkot is the smallest metropolis and Greater Bombay the largest in India.

3.13 Further Reading

Bergel, E.E. (1955). *Urban Sociology*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.

Shivaramakrishnan, K.C., Amitabh Kundu and B.N. Singh, (2005). *Oxford Hand Book of Urbanisation in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.