

The Chicago School

Sociology

The first systematic urban sociology, its model, and where the model fails.

The Chicago tradition of the 1920s and 1930s, which treated the city as an ecological system of zones and studied its districts by fieldwork.

PERIOD

1920s to 1940s

MODEL

concentric zones

- Burgess: concentric zones around a centre.
- The zone in transition studied most closely.
- Invasion, succession and dominance as processes.
- Wirth: size, density and heterogeneity as urbanism.
- Produced a generation of close ethnographies.
- Sector and multiple-nuclei models followed.

LOOK FOR IT

Shaw and McKay found delinquency rates stable by zone even as the ethnic groups living there changed completely.

Educational reference. The biological analogy hides policy and money; the zone model fits few cities outside inter-war Chicago.