

A City as a Symbol. The Revaluation of the Chicago School in Sociology

by Lodewijk Brunt

Does every sociologist know about the Chicago School? Some people think this to be true, but is it? If so, what exactly is known about it? That question is central to this broad review article, in which both the city of Chicago and its University are being dealt with as well.

For the purpose of exploring the knowledge about the Chicago sociology I studied the contents of some 75 elementary sociological textbooks. It appears that in one third of these introductory books absolutely no mention at all is being made of any sociological activity at the University of Chicago. In the rest of the books some attention is being paid to the Chicago sociology, but not in a standardized way. The information given is diverse and sketchy. So, indeed, what do we know about the 'famous' department of sociology? In this article I'm inclined to agree with Rolf Lindner's view, based on a thorough search in the Chicago University's archives, that the Chicago School was tightly organized around Robert Park's classic manifest for the study of the city, published in 1915. Although, especially since the end of the sixties, more and more stress is being laid on Chicago as the cradle of symbolic interactionism, the core of the Chicago School consisted of urban ethnographic activities, organized in a typical journalistic manner, due to Park's background as a newspaper editor.

The annexation of the Chicago heritage by some recent theoretical traditions, especially symbolic interactionism, is being explained by pointing out the sharp decline in popularity of urban sociology as a consequence of its close association with abortive urban poverty programs in the sixties and seventies. This left the heritage for the taking. Whereas in sociology the close relationship between Chicago sociology and urban studies seems almost to be forgotten, in other disciplines – especially social and cultural anthropology, social geography and social history – there has been a recent revival of this very urban sociological core of the Chicago School. Each discipline selects its favourite kind of tradition and sources of inspiration. This sheds some interesting light on the difference between these disciplines. Some few exceptions left aside, sociology has become a formalized, standardized and routinized kind of activity compared to the more empirically minded, down-to-earth sister disciplines.

Urban poverty and ethnicity in a welfare-state; the case of Amsterdam

by Sako Musterd and Wim Ostendorf

It is argued that the Dutch version of the welfare-state until now offered the conditions to reduce urban poverty successfully. A clear redistribution of affluence (income, housing, etc.) is realised, and social and spatial segregation could be avoided substantially. However, the third aspect of poverty, we distinguished in this paper, the promotion of social mobility, did

not show up so prominently. The Dutch model of the welfare-state is reflected in the poverty situation of ethnic groups.

The current restructuring of the welfare-state may lead to a number of threats, that may increase poverty. The challenge seems to be to improve re-entry on the labour market, and to maintain the success of the battle against poverty in terms of responding to the needs of consumption.

Values of former high school students

by Joep de Hart

In this article the values, which are subscribed to by a national sample of 687 Dutch young adults, all former high school students, are analysed. Several hypotheses, derived from the so-called individualization thesis, are examined. It is concluded that there are indeed various indications that among modern Dutch youth an individualization of values has been taken place, but also that the independence of values from traditional social contexts has been overestimated. Church affiliation for instance, appears to be one of the most prominent factors influencing the respondents value orientations.