

Chapter 2—The Emergence of Cities

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, Hutter discusses the emergence of cities and examines “why they occurred, where they occurred, and when they occurred.” He focuses on how cities affected their residents. The chapter examines controversies over the emergence of “modern” humans, the emergence of cities in seven areas of the world, the agricultural revolution, and the “urban revolution.” In his discussion of the urban revolution, Hutter considers the ten traits that V. Gordon Childe identified as characteristic of early cities and notes how they can be collapsed into the four aspects of the POET scheme: population, organization, environment, and technology. After a brief discussion of Sumerian cities, Hutter considers the debate over the role of trade as opposed to the development of a controlled agricultural surplus in the development of cities and notes that most scholars see the agricultural surplus as essential. Hutter emphasizes the importance of the development of social institutions, social structures, and new forms of social organization as crucial elements along with the development of a controlled agricultural surplus in the development of cities. In examining these factors, he also considers Mumford’s emphasis on religion, as the recent archeological discovery of Gobekli Tepe, dated at 11,000 BCE, demonstrates that social organization may have occurred before the agricultural revolution. This adds to the controversy of Catul Huyuk and Jane Jacob’s theory that “urban primacy” occurred as the impetus for agriculture development as discussed by Hutter (p. 48).

Chapter Outline

- The Origin of Cities
 - *Experiential Activity 2.1: Create Your Own City*
- The Agricultural Revolution
- The Urban Revolution
- Sumerian Cities
- Trade Theory and the Origin of Cities
 - *Experiential Activity 2.2: Debate the Theories*
- Social and Cultural Factors and the Emergence, Development, and Decline of Early Cities
 - Religion in Early Cities
 - *Experiential Activity 2.3: Memorials to the Dead*
 - Agricultural Surplus, Trade, and Technology
 - Resources, Power, and Interactive Effects
 - Warfare
 - *Experiential Activity 2.4: Evidence of Warfare*
 - Limitations on Urban Growth
 - What Does the Evidence Indicate?
- Conclusion
- Study Questions

Web Links and Teaching Tips

1. The Debate Over Human Origins

Hutter begins this chapter by examining the debate over human origins. In that regard, a recent article may be useful for instructors who wish to discuss this. John J. Shea, Professor of Anthropology at Stony Brook University, wrote “Refuting a Myth about Human Origins,” which appeared in *American Scientist* (Volume 99, Number 2, March-April 2011:128-135).

Web link: <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/feature/refuting-a-myth-about-human-origins>.

In this review of recent research bearing on human origins, the subtitle, “Homo sapiens emerged once, not as a modern-looking people first and as modern-behaving people later,” summarizes the argument. This is a fascinating, provocative piece. Shea argues that “the concept of behavioral modernity can be said to be worse than wrong, because it is an obstacle to understanding” (135).

2. Other Early Cities

Mashkan-shapir: A Decentralized Mesopotamian City

Mashkan-shapir was a Mesopotamian city that reached the height of its power in about 2000 BCE. Elizabeth C. Stone and Paul Zimansky carried out extensive research on the site. See their “The Tapestry of Power in a Mesopotamian City” in the April 1995 issue of *Scientific American*. Stone and Zimansky provide a more complete treatment in *The Anatomy of a Mesopotamian City: Survey and Soundings at Mashkan-shapir*. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004). They argue that Mashkan-shapir suggests that early Mesopotamian cities may not have been as centralized as early European cities.

Web link: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-tapestry-of-power-in-a-mesopota/>.

A class session on Mashkan-shapir would usefully complement Hutter’s discussion of the emergence of cities and of the first urban settlements.

Caral: An Ancient City in the Americas

Another early city is Caral, in the coastal valleys of Peru, probably the oldest city in the New World. The *New York Times* published “Evidence of Ancient Civilization Is Found in Peruvian Countryside” by John Noble Wilford on December 28, 2004. The article provides basic information on the site, pointing out that this is probably the area where people in the Americas “first diverged from simple hunting and gathering and developed a highly structured culture with large urban centers and monumental architecture.”

Web link: http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/28/science/evidence-of-ancient-civilization-is-found-in-peruvian-countryside.html?_r=0.

For a useful brief overview, see *Athena Review*, Volume 4, Number 2, available online at <http://www.athenapub.com/caral.htm>. As with the material on Mashkan-shapir, Caral can be used to complement Hutter's discussion of the emergence of cities.

3. Urban Archaeology, and Monuments of Tomorrow

James Dickinson, an urban sociologist at Rider University, has written pieces that would enhance discussion of many of the topics in *Experiencing Cities*. His work would certainly complement topics in this chapter. His "Entropic Zones: Buildings and Structures of the Contemporary City," (*Capitalism, Socialism, Nature*, Volume 7, Number 3:81-95) is the precursor to his "Monuments of Tomorrow: Industrial Ruins at the Millennium," published in *Critical Perspectives in Urban Redevelopment* (Volume 6, 2001:33-74) and a complementary piece, "A Cheerless Place: Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary and the Architecture of Solitary Confinement," in *DESIGNER/builder: A Journal of the Human Environment*, November 2000.

Web link: [http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1016/S1047-0042\(01\)80004-0](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1016/S1047-0042(01)80004-0).

In "Monuments of Tomorrow," Dickinson suggests that "America's obsolete, abandoned, and increasingly derelict commercial and industrial structures are potentially the monuments of tomorrow, contemporary rivals to the antiquities admired in other older cultures" (34). Dickinson is an incisive, powerful writer and the articles are worth reading in themselves, but they could also provide the basis for an interesting classroom discussion. Hutter goes to great pains in this chapter to note the fragmentary and incomplete nature of the archaeological evidence on which theories of the emergence of cities are based. You might ask students to consider what kinds of archaeological evidence our culture will leave and what urban analysts in the future might glean from them. This might be a useful classroom exercise.

By the way, *DESIGNER/builder: A Journal of the Human Environment*, although no longer publishing, remains a valuable resource. You might want to take a look at back issues. Dickinson also wrote two earlier pieces that appeared in *DESIGNER/builder* in 2002. They are "Grain Elevators Revisited, Part I: How A Building Type Became a Modernist Icon," (March/April, 2002:27-37) and "Grain Elevators Revisited, Part II: Philadelphia's Contribution to Their Story" (May/June 2002:31-41).

4. Video: *Understanding Cities*

We show this 53-minute video early in the course because it presents important background information on the development of cities, discusses several key issues that will recur throughout the class, introduces some specific cities and topics on which one should focus, and encourages students to start thinking about key urban issues. The video looks at past and present cities around the world. We especially like to focus on urban infrastructure, such as transportation, electricity, water, and sewage, and their implications for cities and city life. The video examines the differences between cities that developed organically, or in an unplanned manner, and planned cities such as ancient Teotihuacán and Brasilia. It also focuses on Portland, Oregon, as an exemplar of effective contemporary urban planning. Robert Moses and his career are introduced in the video. Witold Rybczynski, Meyerson Professor of Urbanism at the University

of Pennsylvania, is an on-screen commentator in the video and I often find it useful to start discussions by taking issue with several of his statements.

5. Video: *Civilizations* (2006): *Mesopotamia—The Gardens of Babel*

Students seem to enjoy this documentary about one of the earliest known societies.

Web link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9G60jw0Nc0>.

Chapter 2

The Emergence of Cities

The Origin of Cities

- **Understanding social forces leading to population change based on**
 - **Requirements for Urban Settlements**
 1. **Sufficient and surplus of food and other necessities**
 2. **Social organization guaranteeing appropriate social use of surpluses**

***The Origin of Cities* (cont.)**

- **Geographic Diversity**
 - **Mesopotamia**
 - **Egypt**
 - **Indus Valley (Pakistan)**
 - **China—Yellow River Basin**
 - **Central and South America—Valley of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru**

The Agricultural Revolution

- **End of Pleistocene epoch, circa 9,000 B.C.**
- **Marks beginning of the Neolithic era, the “New Stone Age”**
- **Environmental change**
 - **Fertile valleys**
 - **Capacity to grow food crops**

The Agricultural Revolution (cont.)

- **New conditions favorable to community organization**
- **Technology advances**
 - **Tools**
 - o **Axes, hoes, sickles, and blades**
 - **Animal husbandry and use of domestic animals**
 - o **Transportation**

The (First) Urban Revolution

- **Childe's requirements for an early city:**
 1. **Larger permanent settlements**
 2. **Social classes; diversity of social functions of labor**
 3. **Taxation and capital accumulation based on surplus**

The (First) Urban Revolution **(cont.)**

- 4. Large public buildings / symbol of surplus and wealth**
- 5. Ruling class: priests, civil & military leaders**
- 6. Systems of recording and exact science**
- 7. Written language with writing techniques (supported exact and predictive sciences)**

***The Urban Revolution* (cont.)**

- 8. Specialists in artistic expression supported by surplus**
- 9. Long distance trade to support industry & religions**
- 10. Social organization based on residence**

Sumerian Cities

- **Multiple city-states**
 - **5,000 to 25,000 inhabitants**
 - **Walled, heavily fortified**
 - **Ziggurats: monumental religious structures in city center**
 - **Surrounding commercial areas**
 - **Courtyard housing**

Knowledge of Sumer

- **Religious text**
 - **Old Testament reference**
 - **Book of Genesis, chapter 11**
- **Accurate archaeology**
 - **Dating 3500 B.C. to 1800 B.C.**
 - **Physical remains and artifacts**

Trade Theory and the Origin of Cities

- **Jane Jacobs' Theory:**
 - **Primary function of Urbanized Cities**
 - **Promotion of trade and commerce**
 - **Supplemental functions**
 - **Center for animal and crop production and distribution**
 - **Agricultural as support for trade, not primary purpose of trade**

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS AND THE EMERGENCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND DECLINE OF EARLY CITIES

- **“Ozymandias” written by Percy Bysshe Shelley**
 - **Dramatizes the importance of social and cultural factors for the origin, development, and decline of the early cities**

Religion in Early Cities

- **Religion**
 - **Cohesive element central to sense of community**
 - **Predates advances in agricultural production**

The Rise of the City

- Those who live in the towns and cities are dependent upon those who work the land**
- The urban elite must provide a hierarchy for the management of production and control of wealth**
- Leads to new socioeconomic classes: military, political, and administrative elites**

The Rise of the City (cont.)

- **Impediments to growth**
 - **Diffusion of culture**
 - **Diversity as a dividing factor**
 - **Sanitation**
 - **High morbidity/mortality rates as result of little or no sanitary considerations**
 - **Lack of medical knowledge to cope with sanitation and disease issues**
 - **Natural disasters and impact on concentrated populations**

Summary

- **Balance of probability factors**
 - **Ecological change promotes agricultural development**
 - **Surpluses allow social and cultural reorganization into urban concentrations**

Summary (cont.)

- **Emergence of larger social and cultural organization**
 - **Specialization**
 - **Differentiations of functions of labor**
 - **Hierarchical power structures**

All of these factors are components of the urban revolution