



The First Big Bang: The Urban-Generated Agricultural Revolution



Prof. Edward Soja
University of California, Los Angeles

1300 Campo Sano, CS 250
April, 9th (WED) 2:00 PM

Internationally renowned geographer, Edward Soja will be presenting on his work completing a quasi-novel in which, after a factual introduction to every chapter, he dramatize 1) the decision-making of hunters and gatherers in southwest Asia more than 12,000 years ago to create permanent urban settlements; 2) how these fundamentally egalitarian settlements grew into Neolithic cities with populations of more than 3000 (almost 100 times larger than traditional hunting bands); 3) how urbanization pushed the settled hunters and gatherers into farming and animal husbandry, something they already knew how to do; 4) how the rise of agrarian society worked to destroy most of the egalitarian traditions of the “first urban revolution cities” such as Çatalhöyük; 5) how a second urban revolution (Gordon Childe’s first and only Urban Revolution) grew out of the first as city-state formation shifted from northern (centered in Tell Brak) to southern Mesopotamia, peaking in the city-state of Uruk, the largest city in the world at its peak. There are many challenges to traditional archeological and paleo-anthropological thinking, mainly involving a greater appreciation for the stimulus of urban agglomeration and the generative power of cities for economic development, technological innovation, and cultural and artistic creativity. If time permits, he will discuss the third urban-generated (industrial) revolution and the possibility that another, a fourth urban revolution, has been occurring with the contemporary shift from metropolitan to regional urbanization

Response by Professor Traci Ardren, Department of Anthropology, University of Miami

Edward W. Soja is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Urban Planning at University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions and the co-editor of The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century among other books.