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TWO CONCEPTS OF URBANIZATION:

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A Comment

IN A RECENT ISSUE, David Popenoe draws a distinction between what he calls "urbanization" and the "urban process." He writes:

*"Urbanization (the aggregation of people into relatively large, dense, and heterogeneous settlements) is not the same thing as the urban process. Rather, it is a spatial manifestation of that process. People and activities cluster in larger and denser spatial aggregates as a concomitant of the broader urban process. This distinction is critical because, among other reasons, 'urbanism' (a term which generally refers to the culture of urbanized communities) so often is discussed as a result of urbanization; whereas it is in fact a result of the broader urban process (together with related processes)."*¹

I should like to insist on this distinction, and to show the reason for its transcending importance in urban studies. In so doing, however, I shall employ a vocabulary somewhat different and, it seems to me, more appropriate than Popenoe's. The term urbanization is commonly used to refer to two quite different processes, the one leading to the evolution of a spatial settlement system, the other to the evolution of a socio-cultural system (initially a sub-system, but eventually the dominant system in a given society). Or, to be more precise, urbanization refers to processes that: 1. Incorporate a growing proportion of the total population into urban settlement patterns, giving rise to the city as a basic ecological matrix for social life and production and leading to its expansion, multiplication, and transformation in space; and 2. Incorporate a growing proportion of the total population into urban social structures and styles

1. David Popenoe, "On the Meaning of 'Urban' in Urban Studies," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September, 1965), p. 30.

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of life and leading to the modification and transformation of these structures into always new configurations.

It is essential to hold these two meanings rigorously apart, even though it is recognized that social structure, mediated by technology, interacts with spatial form. It is an essential distinction, because there are cities that are not wholly urban in the socio-cultural sense, just as there are urban populations that do not live in cities. Consequently, a failure to make this distinction can only lead to confusion.

To prevent this argument from becoming circular, it is necessary to offer definitions of "city" and "urban" that are independent of each other. But it is not possible to do this, except in a broad historical context, for the meanings of city and urban have changed with time and place. I shall not go very deeply into this matter here; at any rate, simple one-sentence definitions are quite worthless in this connection. As a start, the reader may be referred to Gideon Sjoberg's discussion of the pre-industrial and industrial city.² In both periods, however, the social and spatial processes of urbanization coincided: urban social structures were found only in cities, and continued migration to the cities eventually led to the recruitment of the majority of the population into these structures. The city appeared as a kind of receptacle of urban culture. Indeed, the image of the city which was current until quite recently is that of a large settlement having closure, composed of a distinctive architecture of streets, squares, and public buildings that serve to symbolize the presence of the city, whose population is contained at high densities and engages in activities primarily other than farming. This image of the city as a unique place has survived largely untarnished despite important internal changes in its ecological structure. It was complemented by an image of urban society which stressed, at least for the industrial city, bureaucratic organization, universalistic and achievement standards for action, an open class system, the conjugal family, and science and technology as engines of social transformation.

This close correspondence of social with physical fact is no longer valid today. As the United States is rapidly moving into the post-industrial period, and as other countries are suddenly propelled into the era of industrialism, it is common experience not

2. *The Preindustrial City: Past and Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

only to find cities that are not wholly urban but also urbanization that occurs without cities. The former isomorphism of social and spatial urbanization processes appears to be broken.

If we look at the current situation in the United States, we note first of all that the traditional image of the city is dissolving and that its place as an ecological matrix is being taken by what I have elsewhere called the *urban field*.³ This is not essentially a physical construct, but a field of forces, a "pattern of point locations and connecting flows," that transcends relations of dominance and dependency and extends the space for urban living far out into "inter-metropolitan periphery." In the urban field, geographic mobility and communications are, to a large extent substituted for place, and the traditional place-bound community is seriously weakened and will eventually be replaced by other forms of social relation. It has been estimated that by the end of this century nearly all Americans will be living in one or another of some 70-odd "urban fields." Furthermore, the long-run tendency is for urban fields to merge and fuse into vast, complexly structured urbanized regions which can no longer be visualized except through mathematical models.

So much for the ecological pattern of the emergent post-industrial society. The main point to be remembered is that Euclidean geometry is no longer adequate to describe it. Ring-theories, sector-theories, and all the other relatively simple constructs of recent ecological writings, from Burgess to Bogue, have become outmoded and need to be replaced by finer-grained, more disaggregated, more dynamic models.

As for urbanization in the social and cultural sense, there is no question that better than 90 per cent of the population participate in a system that conforms, in the main, to the criteria of urbanism as these were evolved during the industrial era, regardless of whether they are counted by the Census Bureau as urban residents. Even farming, as a specialized, rationalized, heavily capitalized, and efficiently managed enterprise, has become an urban activity. Industrial urbanism as we know it grew out of a production-oriented economy, and this economy is now changing. Post-industrial economy is geared primarily to consumption, to the spending of money, especially on services, rather than to the or-

3. John Friedmann and John Miller, "The Urban Field," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (November, 1965), pp. 312-320.

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ganization of resources for the production of tangible goods. Involved is a major shift in emphasis that, in turn, is reflected in changes in prevailing conceptions of urbanism.

It is difficult to describe a social system emerging from a matrix of traditional culture (i.e., industrial urbanism), when only the beginnings of it are known and its linkages do not extend yet very far. Nevertheless, it may be possible to strike at some of the salient system characteristics by focussing on its incipient culture hero, the prototype of post-industrial man. Where the period just ending took as its model the business executive, so the new age looks upon the international civil servant with admiration and with envy. The following traits appear to be essential: 1. High educational level (post-graduate degree); 2. Adherence to a code of professional conduct; 3. Occupational membership in a large, bureaucratic organization, combined with: a. considerable autonomy in decision-making, b. escape from the performance of routine chores, c. non-hierarchical (horizontal) relationships at least as frequent as vertical (dominance-subordinate) relationships, d. participation in many fluid, impermanent small groups of professionals engaged in problem-solving activities; 4. High geographic mobility, involving frequent residence changes, often across international boundaries; 5. Participation in a communications network of extremely high intensity, both as a receiver and as a sender;⁴ 6. Member of a "community without propinquity," participation in interest communities rather than place communities in which emotionally neutral relationships predominate;⁵ 7. Ability to feel at ease in several different cultures while adhering to a value system that is characterized by universal ethical norms, instrumental rationality, diffused loyalties, and an orientation predominantly towards the collectivity; 8. Recruitment into the profession and maintenance of social standing within it by peer judgments of his professional attainments; 9. A life-style characterized by the absence of a marked boundary line between work and play; 10. A relatively high income

4. Richard L. Meier, *A Communications Theory of Urban Growth*, published for the Joint Center for Urban Studies of M.I.T. and Harvard University (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1962).

5. Melvin M. Webber, "Order in Diversity: Community without Propinquity," in Lowdon Wingo, Jr., ed., *Cities and Space: The Future Use of Urban Land*, published for Resources for the Future, Inc. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963); by the same author, see also "The Urban Place and the Nonplace Urban Realm," in Melvin M. Webber, ed., *Explorations into Urban Structure* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964).

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but little tangible wealth (property); security assured by various forms of social insurance.

Urbanization during the post-industrial era, then, means the incorporation of growing numbers of the total population into structures that make possible the style of life of the prototype man. Since these structures will appear first in those geographic areas which have high concentrations of what Jean Gottmann has called the "quaternary" services (professional, research-based, communications-intensive), it may be hypothesized that future migrations within the United States will occur from traditionally urbanized areas to the new "growing points" of post-industrial society. On the other hand, it is typical for post-industrial urbanization to be relatively free from locational constraints. The tendency will be for an initially thin but gradually strengthening and consolidating network of post-industrial urbanism to spread over the entire globe. And this suggests that urbanization in both the physical and social senses has led over historical time to a steady increase in the geographic scale of social integration. In highly condensed form, an attempt is made to express this hypothesis below.

Urbanization as a Form of Social Integration

<i>Era</i>	<i>Leading technologies</i>	<i>Scale of social integration</i>	<i>Dominant ecological system</i>	<i>Social prototype</i>	<i>Approximate dating (U.S.)</i>
literate pre-industrial		city	individual city	traditional models for each social class	prior to ca. 1780
early industrial	steam engine, railroad	region	functional city hierarchies	capitalist entrepreneur	ca. 1880
late industrial	internal combustion, electric power, telephone, radio, television	nation	metropolitan regions, conurbations	business executive	ca. 1930
early post-industrial	electronic computer, automation, lasers, communications satellite	multi-national region	urban field interaction	international civil servant	ca. 1980
late post-industrial	?	world (?)	?	scientist (?)	ca. 2030 (?)

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The distinction between spatial (ecological) and social urbanization processes, emphasized by Popenoe as "critical" and here elaborated further, can be of immense importance in orienting the field of urban studies. It may be convenient to divide this field into investigations of urban pathologies and (national) urbanization policies.⁶ The conceptual distinction made in this paper will help to identify and order types of problem areas for research and to prevent confusion from setting in which is inevitable when the two principal meanings of urbanization are not distinguished. Thus, in the study of (1) *urban pathology*, research should concentrate on issues arising from: a) Shifts in location and changes in the ecological organization of the city (e.g., urban renewal; metropolitan government); b) Discrepancies between ecological form and function (e.g., transportation and urban form; urban densities and their effect on values and behavior); and c) Imperfect integration of social groups into urban structures and inadequate participation in urban decision processes (e.g., the phenomenon of social marginality: exclusion by virtue of undereducation, race, sex, or old age; unemployment; delinquency).

With respect to (2) *urbanization policies*, research should focus on such problems as: a) The spatial integration of "urban fields" (e.g., regional transportation and location of facilities; land development and conservation policies);⁷ b) The orderly evolution of post-industrial urbanization in the social sense (e.g., manpower and education policies; professionalism in public life; work-leisure patterns; mobility—consequences for personality, family, and community, subsidy policies; information processes and decisions; organizational analysis under conditions of rapid change); c) Urbanization policies for newly industrializing countries, especially the problem of the extent to which urbanization patterns (spatial and social aspects) necessarily must follow the exact sequence of already industrialized countries;⁸ and d) Social (and economic) inte-

6. The completely disinterested study of urbanization phenomena could be added as a third category. Each discipline would focus on those theoretical problems which are of current interest.

7. See Friedmann and Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-319 for a more complete discussion of research and policy issues in connection with the emergence of "urban fields."

8. Some aspects of urbanization policy are discussed by Lloyd Rodwin, "Choosing Regions for Development," in John Friedmann and William Alonso, eds., *Regional Development and Planning: A Reader* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1964); and by

gration of multi-national regions (e.g., the development potentials of national and subnational regions; locational shifts of population and economic activities; impact on existing ecological patterns; international transportation and communication networks; political and decision-making organization).

This classification of research topics is biased in three ways: (1) It focusses on the interplay between the ecological and social aspects of urbanization; (2) Gives preference to process and change over studies of structural relationship under equilibrium conditions; and (3) Gives priority to problems of public policy and program. No excuse is offered for this bias, but as a bias it has often found to be persuasive.

David Popenoe, whose thoughtful article stimulated this comment, asks at the beginning of his essay: "in a society mostly urban, aren't most affairs urban?"⁹ The answer, of course, is yes. But not everything deals with the processes of urbanization. And the term "urban affairs" should be limited, it seems to me, to a study of these processes in both their meanings. As I have tried to suggest, the United States continues to be a rapidly urbanizing society as the result of shifting from an industrial to a post-industrial economic base. Moreover, the urbanization which we are now undergoing is an entirely novel and unequalled experience in world history, engendering changes in location and social structure which are as dramatic as those which formerly took place under the impact of rural-urban migration; and the ultimate outcome will completely transform the world as we now know it. It is fitting that journals such as *Urban Affairs Quarterly* should provide a forum of expression for those who are attempting to understand and guide these processes.

John Friedmann in *Regional Development Policy: A Case Study of Venezuela*, published for the Joint Center of Urban Studies of M.I.T. and Harvard University (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966).

9. David Popenoe, *op. cit.*, p. 17.