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## Introduction

William Weismantel

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William Weismantel

## Introduction

IN THE PREINDUSTRIAL period most people were farmers or nomads rather than city dwellers. Clothes, tools, housing were handmade by users. The preindustrial city was small and supplied intangibles such as religion and political control to the rural population. The preindustrial city was stable, had an elite and a proletariat with no middle class, and depended on tradition. Its institutions were not rational, and were unique to each city. For example, each city had its own set of coins and measures and might indeed have several sets.

The industrial city was made possible when those living on the land produced an agricultural surplus. Farm machinery made in the city further increased agricultural productivity and further freed people for urbanization. Most city workers engaged in mass production, while others learned specialized forms of service. The resulting social and economic mobility weakened kinship ties. The large metropolitan area, where a massive labor force was concentrated, became the ultimate urban form during this period.

The postindustrial city is the spatial arrangement of an economy which has successively seen its agricultural, manufacturing, and more recently its service sector automated. This automation frees people to leave the big city, just as automation of agriculture freed people to leave the farms. City people are able to return to the farms, stay in the industrial city as spectators, or form postindustrial cities. The individual is primarily a consumer rather than producer in the future city. Free of the demands of mass production and the logical communication needed to conduct industry and commerce in the style of the industrial city, residents of the postindustrial city can revive some of the more comfortable features of the preindustrial city.

We examine here whether the postindustrial city is desirable.

The average household in this country is expected, by the year 2000, to enjoy twice the real income it now has. It is time we asked future pay check recipients if they will prefer to retain their present average income but work half as long for it. Do these contributing experts on cities and styles of life propose meaningful alternatives to the occupational way of life? In other words, this collection ignores both sides of the debate over whether automation will replace employment by investigating whether it *should*. If a society whose members are mainly occupied with living and consuming rather than making a living and producing seems worthwhile, assuming we can afford it economically, then automation can be maximized with more confidence.

The first three articles concern the developmental process by which a society's cities evolve from preindustrial to postindustrial functions. John Price shows that residents on both sides of a border separating nations in contrasting stages of development are enriched in different ways by border-crossing forays. Robert Riley argues that small towns and villages, bypassed during the period of industrialization and formation of large metropolitan areas, should be renewed for the future. John Friedmann shows that a nation cannot develop economically without forming large cities. When further developed, a nation reaches a trans-urban stage, with city size a matter of taste, not economic necessity.

Sketches of Auckland, New Zealand, by Gerhard Rosenberg, and of Clovis, New Mexico, by Windell Kilmer and Mark Miller, reveal residents of these contemporary cities turning to beaches and rain forests where these are available, or motor-promenading where wide streets are the local resource. Donald Finkel, the poet, leaves the contemporary metropolis burning under debris and garbage.

There are five articles dealing with future cities. Eldridge Lovelace discloses what student city planners have in store for us. Steve Baer rails against "energy freaks" who are blind to such organic wonders as paternity. Eduardo Lozano contends that the true postindustrial city is a linear region of large centers. Daniel Cook, by contrast, urges that Megalopolis is obsolete, and that postindustrial urbanity would be in one hundred new cities, many to be built on federal lands in the west. John McHale derives a postindustrial city(s) to fit the diversity and mobility capabilities of modern man.

If you reflect on all these articles together as I have, you notice they propose different future ideal forms: an urban region two hundred miles in diameter; new cities of 500,000 to 3 million population; a return to villages; and more. Yet a recurring theme is that

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each city will be more highly specialized than in the past. This implies a smaller city, and one that is easily understood and enjoyed from eye level.

These writers show little interest in technology for its own sake, though several rely on it to clear slums, build new cities, provide accessibility and communications over great distances. The only advocate for a scientific utopia is Steve Baer, and he speaks for a low-voltage one. This collection generally neglects past cities and cultures as models for the future. Indeed, John Price and John Friedmann categorically state that development to the postindustrial stage is an improvement. Therefore I recommend that postindustrial planners read Charles Mountford's *Ayers Rock* (1965). The Australian aborigines portrayed there enjoy more satisfying interpretations of geology than does the typical Grand Canyon visitor. We can learn from Andrew Acoya, a graduate in architecture from the University of New Mexico, who, in proposing new housing for his own Laguna Pueblo, drew on Indian traditions in housing rather than innovations from the contemporary city.

Do these articles, taken together, offer values and avocations in lieu of employment? Do they imply that automation should be stimulated or retarded? These writers, in general, reject present urban values such as the diverse metropolis even more finally than they reject history. They see postindustrial man in pursuit of fulfillment: on a freeway to Baja, in a holiday caravan in New Zealand, driving through Clovis. They do not make clear what the man of the future will do when he arrives at his destination. I choose to read the articles on the developmental process as suggesting one main postindustrial goal: aiding those in the less developed nations and deprived portions of nations, so they too may join in our mad postindustrial pursuit of a new fulfillment. For example, Denis Blackett and his group, known as Housing Innovations Inc., are doing this within the Boston ghetto by helping low-income blacks become home-owners.

Another postindustrial goal that this volume offers is building the cities and routes extolled here: new clusters of tin-roofed adobes; a Boston to Washington monorail; Cosmopolis, where everyone is a capitalist; Experimental City, where one can try on a new life style, and others. What postindustrial man does in these delightful places and vehicles is his business.

Let me extend thanks to Mary Adams, who suggested that I edit an issue on urban topics, and those who helped with the editing, especially Joseph Frank and Jeanne Weismantel.