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The Roles of Cities in National Development

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The formation of large cities and the extension of urban services to their hinterlands are necessary steps in a nation's drive from backwardness to general abundance. For within expanding cities there are the stimuli for goods-producing innovations, and the individual enjoys unlimited opportunity. At the stage when leisure, mass consumption and space science are national preoccupations cities become optional rather than necessary. The size and distribution of postindustrial 'cities and the relation between such cities and national goals are terra incognita.

THERE IS A GROWING conviction that the individual destinies of national societies are converging on a common path, that the ultimate level of integration is a global one.[1] This belief has given rise to the well-known distinction between underdeveloped (U) and developed (D) societies. The language suggests that the latter are passing through a phase in their historical unfolding that has not yet been reached by the former. Both societies may be "developing;" but, as late arrivals, the underdeveloped are obliged to follow in the footsteps of the "developed" nations.

The argument is subtle and can be properly understood only if we introduce two levels of abstraction. On the first, U-countries must acquire certain traits that are common to D-countries in order to survive in a developing world system. On a second, more specific level, each country must itself invent the concrete social forms and institutions corresponding to its actual condition.[2]

The bifurcation of the world into U- and D-countries is rudimentary. Nonetheless, it suggests that U-countries will hold in common certain comprehensive aims that, at an earlier period, were typical for the presently "developed" nations. These aims include:

1. *an increase in the autonomy of national society*, by gaining effective political sovereignty, increasing its military strength, enlarging the number and range of available choices, and acquiring a sense of national dignity;

2. *an increase in the levels of living of the population*, by increas-

ing production at faster rates than population growth, maintaining monetary stability, redistributing income in favor of the poorer segments of the population, and granting the rights of the people to certain basic claims of creature security;

3. *an increase in social integration*, by promoting a wider and more effective participation of all the adult population in the decision processes of society;

4. *an increase in modernization*, by creating an institutional framework adapted to the requirements of generating and adjusting to continuous change and promoting those activities, especially in science and artistic creation, which will permit the country to share more fully in an emerging universal culture;

5. *an increase in spatial integration*, by articulating the development process across the entire settled space of the nation through an internally balanced system of cities.

Although these aims are sufficiently general so that they will, to some extent, also be present in the "developed" nations, the idea of national development is not confined to them. After a critical point is reached in the evolution of a national society, the erstwhile aims may lose their urgency, while other social goals will rise to take their place. Contemporary D-countries appear to have shifted their attention to the uses of wealth and leisure, the problems of mass culture, the progress of science, and the conquest of space. These new aims appear to be so remote from the perceived realities of the U-countries that they are thought to have little relevance for them. The idea of development thus undergoes a radical change as we pass to D-countries. The historical meaning is new; what remains is the driving ethical imperative.

Implicit in the idea of development is the preparedness of a society to take responsibility for its performance and to intervene in the normal processes of change where the results expected from them fail to be produced. Development has the connotation of an *intended good*; it is a process endowed with moral purpose for which developing societies assume responsibility; and almost always this involves attempts at guided change or planning.[3]

The Settlement System

As a form of human settlement, the city is a social system that is located in geographic space and occupies a precise position in a system of interconnected settlements, extending from hamlet to megalopolis. National development occurs within this social interaction network stretched out over the landscape. But its occurrence in the

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spatial system is neither uniform nor simultaneous. Impulses for development originate at certain localities and are relayed through existing channels to other localities in a definite sequence. The pattern of settlements creates a structure of potentials for development which will eventually be registered in indices of regional performance and which will condition the evolving character of the society.

Since the goals of national development differ between U- and D-countries, each set of countries must be separately studied. In both, the spatial pattern of settlement will bear a close relation to the key events of national development, but the specific role of cities will be radically different in each. If, as is claimed, the pattern of spatial dependency relations is a controlling one for national development, it is reasonable to focus attention on those subsystems which display a greater than average capacity for autonomous transformation and consequently for sustained innovation. The development capacity of the system as a whole will, therefore, come directly to depend on the performance of these centers or *core regions*. For each core region, one or more dependent *peripheral regions* may be defined, bearing in mind that lower-order cores may fall within the periphery of, and be dependent on, one or several higher-ranking cores. Core regions can thus be arranged into a hierarchy according to their relative autonomy in development decisions. Peripheral areas, on the other hand, may be divided into upward- and downward-transitional regions in keeping with their estimated potentials for development. Finally, on core region peripheries, new settlement areas or *resource frontiers* may come into being.

The entire settlement space of the nation will thus be spanned by an array of regions that is articulated through a system of nodes and connecting channels of communication. This polarized space will display systematic variances in the capacity for development of given areas. Core regions possess the means for limiting and controlling the development of their peripheries and for extracting from them the resources that will contribute to their own accelerated growth. This imbalance of power between core and periphery, which displays a strong tendency to increase over substantial segments of the development path, will naturally lead to social and political tensions. Where these tensions cannot be reduced to tolerable levels, they eventually undermine the stability of the system and its ability to generate further development.

Spatial integration—which appears as a major development objective for U-countries—thus requires action that will increase the

autonomy of peripheral regions with respect to their controlling cores, diminish conflict between them, and assure the stability of the system during its transition.

Urbanization and the Development Process in U-Countries.

City growth appears as an irrepressible accompaniment of modern development in U-countries.[4] The data for nearly all of the developing U-countries also show that large cities tend to grow at faster rates than smaller ones and that the national capital complex is particularly favored. But statistical associations constitute no proof of a causal relation. It is to this question of causality that we shall therefore turn by examining three fundamental forces in the process of development: the passage from tradition to innovation, from a culture of limited to one of constantly expanding opportunities, and from an elitist to a mass political system striving for national integration.

1. *Innovation and urbanization.* Invention must be distinguished from innovation. The former consists of the creation of something new out of a rearrangement of already existing elements, while the second may be viewed as the transformation of inventions into historical fact. Both terms may be applied to tangible and intangible objects. According to Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran,

> The term 'invention' for anthropology does not mean only the deliberate creation of a machine, of any type of mechanism, or of any other material achievement of a culture, an achievement in the nature of a radical innovation, but also new ideas, new concepts or patterns in social, political or religious organization, as well as new economic systems which play such an important role in the entire historical evolution. Man's inventive mind and the cultural process which ensues from it do not act exclusively upon elements of culture that are in some way tangible, but certainly also upon its universal life.[5]

Accepting this broad interpretation, we may say that a comprehensive development occurs when single innovations—large and small—are linked into innovative clusters and systems. Since innovations arise out of a traditional matrix, their integration into larger systems occurs as an asynchronic process, pitting new forces against an already established order.

We can now assert a first hypothesis: *the frequency of inventions is positively correlated with a high potential for interaction; that is,*

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a *high probability of information exchange or communication*. The probabilities of communication over a given surface can be plotted on a map to yield a landscape of communication potentials or communication fields.[6] Cities, especially large cities, appear as peaks in this landscape. It is in the large city that the frequency of new idea combinations is generally greatest.[7]

A second and related hypothesis will say, first, *that urbanization will positively vary with the probability of communication at any given locality; and, second, that as cities are joined into systems, the probability of information exchange among them will increase*. The growth of a single subsystem and the expansion of inter-city linkages are, to a large degree, substitutes for one other.

When we pass from invention to innovation, a third hypothesis may be stated, *that the frequency of innovation in a given locality is a function of its internal structure of social power*. A tightly controlled, rigid, hierarchical system of power will be less permissive of innovations than an open, horizontal, non-bureaucratic system of dispersed power. We should expect to find significant variations in the structure of social power among cities. But, speaking generally, it is possible to assert that increasing size creates conditions which will bring the city's power structure into greater conformity with the open system of dispersed power.[8]

We are now in a position to ask whether a high probability for information exchange is causally related to certain forms of social and political organization. The answer, presumably, would be affirmative. If so, a fourth hypothesis may be stated: *increases in the level of urbanization will lead to an increasing openness of the system of social power and hence to an increase in the frequency of innovation*. This, then, may be regarded as the first positive contribution of urbanization to national development: it will transform traditional society into an innovative system.

2. *Opportunity and urbanization*. George M. Foster describes peasant societies as "an image of the limited good."[9] In such a society, it is believed that the interests of one person can only be advanced by depriving someone else of the coveted benefits. The result is a brutally egocentric, defensive society whose members behave in accordance with this rule: "Maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise."[10]

The image of the limited good—a kind of zero-sum game—tends to be associated with isolated peasant societies. Contemporary urbanization is based on the opposite image of constantly expand-

ing opportunities.[11] Cities undergoing development tend to transform the bitter zero-sum games of traditional peasant society into competitive non-zero-sum games. We should expect this image of the "unlimited" good to vary a good deal with the rate of increase in employment and with city size. Both variables will increase economic choice and multiply the upward channels of mobility.

Of course, image and experience do not always coincide. Expectations are not always bartered for the real thing. The older residents of the city, having pressed against the very real obstacles to opportunity that do exist, may think society a fraud. Their political behavior will reflect a growing frustration with the social order. It is the recent migrant to the city, comparing his present condition with a dismal rural past, who looks upon his new environment with hope.[12] Return migration to the countryside is rare.[13]

What we may call the culture of the "unlimited" good is, on the whole, less tooth-and-claw, more given to accommodation, than are societies organized around the opposite cultural image. Urban society, in contrast to rural society, in U-countries tends to be more tolerant and generous; it reinforces the achievement impulses of large numbers of people. Continuous expansion of the urban system will tend to lower the level of interpersonal friction that might otherwise be expected.[14] The modern notion that development involves unceasing, positively valued change has grown out of urban experience. And this, then, is the second contribution of urbanization to national development: *the city has not only invented the concept of unlimited opportunity, it has also made it possible and finally internalized it as the basis for its own unique form of culture.*

3. *Political transformations and urbanization.* Industrialization and urbanization are not always parallel phenomena. Migration to cities in U-countries generally takes place at faster rates than the absorption of the new labor force into employment of high productivity. Accelerated urbanization in this sense will inevitably lead to the formation of a massive urban proletariat whose members, lacking special skills, are only partially (if at all) within the labor market, and for this reason are excluded from most of the material and spiritual benefits of the developing society. The political significance of this situation derives from a heightened visibility of the city proletariat which, being viewed and viewing the world from which it is excluded in any but the strictest functional sense, may acquire a keen sense of its own "marginal" condition and become potentially available as a potent political force to whatever leadership is capable of capturing its confidence.

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The second result for political development is the emergence in cities of innovative groups that pose a challenge to the established powers by their attempt to legitimize new claims and create a social climate favorable to further innovation, insofar as this would be consistent with their own schedule of values. In this endeavor, innovative counter-elites may seek alliances among successively larger, more inclusive sectors of the population: the upper middle class, the lower middle strata, the workers, the urban proletariat, and eventually the excluded rural proletariat on the periphery. As their base for political action expands and the masses become politicized, the politics of innovation first turn populist and later integrationist on a national scale.[15] Strongly doctrinaire and ideological during the struggle for power with the established elites, innovative groups will become open to compromise once they have risen to power.[16] Political parties may consequently become transformed into giant bartering systems striving to aggregate ever widening circles of multiple and overlapping interests.

This outcome is not inevitable; it is merely possible. We may, therefore, wish to test the following hypothesis: *the resistance of the "established" powers to innovative counter-elites'diminishes with the acceleration of the urbanization process.* And this may be regarded as the third main contribution of the city to national development: *accelerated urbanization hastens the coming of a national mass politics based on bargaining and compromise among competing interest groups.*[17]

We have tried to suggest that the three basic processes of national development—innovation, social transformation, and political transformation—are closely linked to yet another process, that of urbanization. Urbanization, in turn, tends to reinforce the latent predispositions to developmental change through increasing the communication potential and through changing the pattern of social organization from Euclidean hierarchies to Einsteinian systems existing in time. We have further tried to show that large cities are more effective in promoting these changes than are small cities, and that the linkage of cities into urban systems has an effect analogous to increasing city size. It is also probably true that these variables—urbanization, city size, and expanding urban systems—are positively correlated with conflict. Urban society is a conflict society, but this conflict is only the external and highly visible accompaniment of more creative processes beneath the surface. Where conflict is absent, we can be certain that development does not occur.[18]

Notes on Urbanization and National Development
in D-Countries

Sometime during the course of spatial transformation just de-scribed, a country will pass, quietly and unnoticed, from a condition of underdevelopment to one of development. The exact timing of this changeover is somewhat arbitrary, for the process of transition is relatively smooth. Moreover, admission to the select company of D-countries signifies neither that all internal phenomena are auto-matically consistent with each other—the oxcart coexists with the jet engine—nor that the process of development has ceased. On the contrary, election to D-status means that a country has pushed forward into a period of self-reinforcing and continuous change, based on invention and innovation. Inevitably, therefore, discrepancies arise among the elements of which developing societies are made. Development again appears as an asynchronic process.[19]

Nevertheless, in taking stock of the changes that have occurred, students of development will discover that the general situation of a D-country differs radically from earlier periods. For our purposes, the most important change that has occurred is the substitution of time for place. Expressed differently, this means: 1) increased freedom from economic constraints in location decisions; 2) increased geographic mobility of population and productive resources; 3) larger networks of social interchange; 4) larger number of decision-making centers; and 5) easier communication among centers.

The substitution of time for place also means a substantial reduction in the so-called friction of distance, and this, in turn, enlarges the options for locational choice and makes the real time of reaching other places in the system a more decisive fact than out-of-pocket costs of movement. Eventually, even time may cease to be important: as the time for covering a certain distance shrinks, a situation of approximately equal access is eventually approached. This will extend to the entire space of the nation the salient traits of a core region.

Modern development tends to push these changes further in the same direction. This does not mean, however, that location decisions will henceforth be treated whimsically. For even in postindustrial societies the past bears heavily upon the present. Old centers persist in retaining strong attractive power, though their activities may spill out into wider areas, enlarging the concept of city and constituting a new unit of spatial integration.[20]

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If the substitution of time for place reduces economic constraints on location decisions, the city ceases to be a propulsive force of development. Spatial patterns of development were primordial national concerns of an underdeveloped society seeking greater autonomy, higher living levels, more social integration, greater world participation, and a more complete integration of its territory. They cease to be so for countries that are rapidly slipping into postindustrial systems.[21] The new salient interests in leisure, mass consumption, and science are no longer dependent on an urban focus—they may be called trans-urban. Nor is the city any longer an important instrument for their fulfillment.

This is not to claim total irrelevance of the settlement pattern for development in these societies. Problems of transition will continue to command the attention of policy makers.[22] Pockets of peripheral poverty remain; dramatic changes in the internal ecology of meta-urban units call for difficult adjustments; the poor are handicapped in taking advantage of the new location freedom; massive transportation problems demand urgent solutions. In addition, the policy of linking national economies into supra-national systems, such as a common market, will pose problems of spatial reintegration similar to those of U-countries and amenable to a similar treatment. In both cases, the urban pattern will play a major role. The problem of urban form, however, remains an open one where the dominant social concerns fall more in the realm of culture than of politics or economics. For locational freedom imposes a special kind of responsibility: freedom for what? The forms of urban settlement are therefore not unimportant to postindustrial societies.

Which patterns are optimal for this new phase of development? In attempting to answer this question, we trespass on terra íncognita. U-countries, after all, have the example of the more developed societies as a guide, and we are able to study the regularities and phases of succession in spatial organization. But on what model may D-countries pattern their development?

NOTES

1. Gideon Sjoberg, "Cities in Developing and Industrial Societies: a Cross-Cultural Analysis," in *The Study of Urbanization*, ed. by Philip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1965), pp. 249-502.

2. See Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," for a subtle development of this argument: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IX, 3 (April, 1967), 292-346.

3. The literature on developmental planning has grown impressively during the past seven or eight years. For a good summary, see Albert Waterston, *Devel-*

opment *Planning: Lessons of Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).

4. A good recent summary of data is found in Gerald Breese, *Urbanization in Newly Development Countries,* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966). See also Lowdon Wingo, Jr., "Recent Patterns of Urbanization Among Latin American Countries," *Urban Affairs Quarterly,* II, 3 (March, 1967), 81-109, for a sophisticated comparative analysis of urban population trends in one major underdeveloped world region.

5. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Confluence of Culture in Anthropology," *Diogenes,* 47 (Fall, 1964), 4-5.

6. John Friedmann, "A Strategy of Deliberate Urbanization," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners,* XXXIV, 6 (November, 1968).

7. A still excellent reference on the study of innovation is H. G. Barnett, *Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953).

8. The two alternatives describe extreme situations. Optimal innovative systems may result from some combination of authoritarian and democratic power structures. As ideal types, however, the two polar models of social organization may still be useful as a heuristic device. See T. Burns and G. M. Stahler, *The Management of Innovation* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1962), pp. 119-125.

9. George M. Foster, *American Anthropologist* (April, 1965). I am indebted to Carlos Delgado for this reference.

10. Edward C. Banfield and Laura Pasano Banfield, *The Moral Basis of Backward Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958), p. 85.

11. This is illustrated by abundant data in Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo, Universidad Central de Venezuela, *Estudio de Conflictos y Consenso.* Serie de resultados parciales, Vols. 1-3 (Caracas, 1965). The Venezuelan survey shows a surprisingly high incidence of hope among urban population samples.

12. Myron Weiner, "Urbanization and Political Protest," *Civilizations,* XVII, ½ (1967), 44-52.

13. Richard D. Lambert, "The Impact of Urban Society Upon Village Life," in *India's Urban Future,* ed. by Roy Turner (Berkeley: U. of Cal. Press, 1961), pp. 135-136.

14. This, of course, is still a relatively unorthodox view. More commonly, rural arcadia is contrasted with urban violence and *anomie.* There are no definite studies on the subject, but the evidence on *rural* violence is steadily accumulating. Irving Louis Horowitz, for instance, cites data on the positive rank correlation of deaths from group violence and numbers of people in farming. At the same time, he notes an inverse correlation between the urbanization process and these causes of death. "Electoral Politics, Urbanization, and Social Development in Latin America," *Urban Affairs Quarterly,* II, 3 (March, 1967), Table 7.

15. Torcuato di Tella, "Populism and Reform in Latin America," in *Obstacles to Change in Latin America,* ed. by Claudio Vóliz (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); K. H. Silvert, ed., *Expectant Peoples: Nationalism and Development* (New York: Random House, 1963).

16. John Friedmann, *Venezuela: From Doctrine to Dialogue* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965); and Fred D. Levy, Jr., "Economic Planning in Venezuela," *Yale Economic Essays,* 7, 1 (Spring, 1967), 273-321.

17. Francine F. Rabinovitz, "Urban Development and Political Development in Latin America," *CAG Occasional Papers* (Bloomington, Indiana; October, 1967). For a specific country study, see John Friedmann and Thomas Lacking-

ton, "Hyperurbanization and National Development in Chile," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, II, 4 (June, 1967), 3-29.

18. The problem of controlling urban conflict is how to guide it towards constructive ends while keeping rapidly changing social systems from disintegration. See Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1956).

19. The following analysis of Japan's development is to the point: "The attempt to evaluate Japan's place in the scale of economic development reveals a paradox. In terms of a set of variables for which data have been presented by Ginsburg, Japan is in many respects among the most developed countries in the world. On the other hand, in terms of the criteria of backwardness described by Leibenstein, Japan may be classified as a backward country. Specially, Japan is backward as measured by the criterion of per capita national income." Leon Hollerman, "Japan's Place in the Scale of Economic Development," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, XII, 2 (January, 1964), 139.

20. John Friedmann and John Miller, "The Urban Field," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXXI, 4 (November, 1965), 312-320.

21. Daniel Bell, "Notes on the Post-Industrial Society, I and II," *The Public Interest*, No. 6 (Winter, 1967), 24-35, and No. 7 (Spring, 1967), 102-118.

22. United States Department of Commerce, *Area Redevelopmental Administration, Area Redevelopmental Policies in Britain and the Countries of the Common Market* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965).