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## The Future City(s): Notes on A Typology

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John McHale

## The Future City (s) : Notes On A Typology

*Traditionally, the city has been an aggregation of facilities for various functions: production and warehousing and sales and government and religion, etc. Because of rapid communication and transportation, urban functions are becoming dispersed over the countryside. The affluent, long-lived modern person enjoys a number of life styles and avocations, concurrently and consecutively. Therefore, special purpose cities are needed. Each would be a place where a different life style of its mobile population could be exercised.*

MUCH PLAY has been made with the culture of cities, and attempts have been made to restore and re-create supposedly viable elements of past forms to revitalize the older city cores or to provide a basis for the development of new urbs: for instance, the neighborhood concept, the piazza, the cultural center, or more recently the "warm slum." Most of these schemes stem from a nostalgia for the good life as pursued in some relatively ideal past. They are creditable but piecemeal efforts to restore an obsolete model, a model which is not conceived in terms of current human needs and future trends in living requirements.

The latent model in most planning and most considerations of the future city is curiously restricted to the traditional version of the multipurpose city—a static agglomeration of commercial enterprise, industrial production and distribution points related to material transportation and warehousing. Urban living was tucked into the interstices of a system for earning a living or controlling the production and flow of material goods. But it has not been seriously considered that the city may stop evolving as a multifunctional aggregate, that it might take many special forms for varied social purposes.

The earliest cities were settlements, locally static aggregates that provided a focus for dispersed hamlets and villages which were distributed horizontally over the landscape and interconnected with foot trails, carriage roads, canals, etc. The form, size and functional relationship of these settlements were determined by local geogra-

phy, food supply, and human mobility. The cities in this settlement phase of urban development were central depositories of power, of specialized skills, and of wealth in agricultural surpluses stored against future needs or in royal/religious treasure and other symbolic wealth. They also functioned in the administrative and trading networks as exchange and market points. They were often walled-in fortresses which could survive for varying periods as autonomous units under siege. The ecology of such preindustrial cities was relatively stable. Their maximal growth was governed by such factors as public health, sanitation, and food supply, all of which limited them to a particular size and location.

The above is a synoptic abstraction of city form. But we should remember that, from earliest times, other city forms co-existed with it. For example, large enclosures of many types developed not as living centers but as religious and ceremonial centers: Stonehenge, the Egyptian cities of the dead, the American Indian cities constructed for communal religious functions. There are the more recent examples of Angkor Wat and the pilgrimage centers of Mecca and Vatican City.

In our own period we may also note various types of partially specialized forms: the capital cities, such as Washington, London, Moscow, Paris, which are both ceremonial and administrative centers, and which contain a residence for the Chief Dignitary; the manufacturing city often identified with a product, such as Detroit; the neutral meeting place and conference center of Geneva, which also functions as an international wealth depository; or communications cities, such as New York and Los Angeles. A remarkably pure form is Las Vegas as the fun or recreative city—the pop spa—carrying on the specialized purposes of socially recreative activities, of display and ostentation, which were previously available in Bath, Carlsbad, and Saratoga.

Much of the implusive compacting of large numbers of people and many types of urban function into a small area occurred in the nineteenth century under the accelerated pressures of industrialization. This specific evolution of the urbs has continued into the postindustrial period and shows signs of grave instability and obsolescence. Both the settlement type and the transitional nineteenth-century multifunctional form stress long-term occupancy and a fixed centrality. Now, on the other hand, we have vastly increased mobility in certain age ranges, increased deployment of advanced technological service facilities, with an accompanying trend towards the decentralization of many human activities. With pres-

ent transportation and communication capacities, a center can be anywhere—even in orbit around the earth. In terms of these capacities, the standard of living which was previously only available in cities may now be enjoyed in remote areas, and the services of the city are now available without the need to go inside the city walls.

Even so, the city is tending to become a specialized service center rather than a multifunctional manufacturing, processing, and distribution unit. This accords with the shift of major industry away from the city, and with the shift within industry itself—from a production orientation to a serviced and maintained supply orientation. Products may be manufactured in astronomical runs with less and less input of human and mechanical energies. The major public or private production utility is therefore less concerned with the creation of products than with their use-life in various consumption/rental/service cycles.

The displacement of production and warehousing from the city and their mobile deployment over widely separated areas is matched by increasing human mobility. This occupational, economic, and social mobility requires, in turn, the diversified use of a greater number of facilities. Again, this is marked by the trends in new service industries, such as rentals. Increased physical mobility constrains ownership and encourages temporary use/consumption-time relations to equipment, space, and other facilities. Mobile service/rental now extends from drive-in banks, movies, and churches, to renting a car, a dinner service, a bridal gown, a set of family heirlooms, or a pair of skis.

Associated with these trends, and important from the environmental planning viewpoint, is the demand for 24-hour availability of some of the above services, while many of our urban concepts are still tied to agricultural time. There is a growing diversity of spaces and service facilities specifically devoted to a widening range of life styles. This proliferation of life styles requires, in turn, an increasing number of social milieux—the beauty parlor, laundromat, pool, lounge, church, bowling alley, or “singles” bar—all of which afford opportunities for different social interactions, both casual and formal.

This increasing range and flexibility of life style is a key issue in any typology of future city requirements. The widest diversity of life style options is probably displayed in the young single or young married age range. The youth culture also offers an extraordinary range of mutually inclusive life stylings, each with its appropriate dress, location, communications, and spatial mode. Other examples

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of highly mobile and differentiated life styles may be noted in, for example:

- (i) *air line flight personnel*, with their extended physical and psychophysical mobility, their around-the-clock environmental requirements, and their social flexibility;
- (ii) *corporate staffs, scientists, technologists, etc.*, whose occupational/residential location often vary from year to year, with frequent in-year mobility to conventions, meetings, task forces, and projects;
- (iii) *the new property class of professionals*, whose intellectual assets are amortized against frequent forays into different tasks, milieux, distant geographical locations: government/business/university consultants, communications people, politicians;
- (iv) *the students*, an economically identifiable group whose mobility is now recognized as financially important by airline, hotelling, recreational, and other service industries;
- (v) *the new leisure activities of almost all social sectors*, as expressed in their increased use of recreative and travel facilities.

Generally speaking, the important implications of life styles for environmental planning are: (1) the co-existent requirements of a number of styles by the individual; (2) mobility, both social and physical; (3) the fact that the number and diversity of life styles varies with age; (4) institutions have diverse styles: the family as an institution has a quantitative and qualitative difference in its styling from the bank, the womens' club, or the veterans' association.

With reservations, one may state that the life style mapping of age, as well as occupational and institutional roles in their various physical, psychophysical and social aspects is a crucial part of the conceptual modelling of the future city. Much of our thinking is still oriented to the city as a center in an agricultural and fixed society, or one in transition through early industrialization in which occupations, social roles, functions, institutions and their requirements are also tied to industrial production and to the creation of material artifacts. We are now, however, in the developing phase of successive industrial revolutions in which refined electronic means are displacing most of the previous time, energy, and spatial relationships which were the guidelines of our thinking. Many of our urban facilities are still tied to agricultural time—to local dawn-to-dusk usage or to other pre-electronic periodicity—and are no longer suited to a world society which, because of its global nature, functions around the clock. Similarly, the city as lodestone for earning

a higher living is no longer operative within the present trend to automated, dispersed production, distribution, and service facilities whose location requires no such relatively massive labor concentrations as did the nineteenth-century city.

In fact, we are already in the instant city phase where we need no longer be restrained from diversity and flexibility by massive energy investment in visible concrete rock piles or in underground sewer pipes, wires, and ducting systems. We can avoid future problems of urban renewal, congestion, and dislocation by designing for required density and frequency of use changes, for expendability, for expansion and contraction, in a manner which exploits our present range of mobile environmental controls—from oceanliners to huge air transports to orbiting multi-manned satellites.

We may therefore suggest that much of our present concern with designing and planning the ideal city is indeed misdirected. We should rather reconceptualize our model of the urbs and reduce our level of abstraction to allow for a large number of possible and alternate models.

The typology given below is an ad hoc and approximate one. In its inclusion of past forms it recognizes that many of these are now re-evolving to fit emergent needs. Their renewed aspect lies in the continuing viability, not of their component physical elements, but in the continuity of social and cultural requirements which they serve. As evolutionary forms such past models were sidetracked or destroyed by the swift impact of the first phases of industrialization. Like many other social forms and human activities relegated to marginal status in the survival economics of this period, they may now return to a more central role.

*The Ceremonial City*—This is now observable, in secular form, in the political and administrative capitals; but there are other sub-capitals for various local communal ceremonies, public observances and events. One may note that such centers may be adopted by a social group as their spiritual center: San Francisco as the recent hippie venue for collective ceremonies; or the ceremonial capital may be a shifting one as with the Olympic Games or a World's Fair, requiring often, in the latter case, the construction of an ancillary instant city to accommodate specialized events. The U.N. may be also considered such a center insofar as its function is to provide a stage for the collective ceremonial observances of the world community.

*The University City*—It exists where either the older form has continued its sustained growth or where such centers have been

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created by the establishment of new universities, colleges, and institutes. These latter centers have often been set up in relatively remote locations and are capable of further development. Such city centers for learning provide high frequency group interaction and access to complex centralized equipment. Obviously our present technologies allow the most flexibly dispersed learning, and the university city recognizes the both/and rather than the either/or approach to education.

*The Scientific City*—It is usually an outgrowth of the above form but it has sometimes evolved as an aggregate of research and development efforts such as those involving atomic energy. Many exist as international cooperative forms, as in the weather stations and research units in Antarctica. Concerned more with the production of new intellectual capital, such cities, though now only in embryo form, may be expected to grow in numbers and importance. The ability to process information or to produce new knowledge has begun to replace the older indices of material capability such as the G.N.P.; and we now speak in terms of R & D investment, brain drains, or technological gaps to define the status and productive capacity of countries and regions.

*The Festival City or Arts City*—It could obviously be related to the University or Ceremonial capitals, but it shows signs of developing an autonomous form. As in the revival of Edinburgh, Venice, Salzburg, old city forms are given a new functional life by their fit to an emergent social requirement. There is also a tendency for each cultural sector to develop its own network of festival cities: the film festivals run an annual and global gamut with various fixed ceremonial observance centers such as Cannes as the high point of their festival calendar, and the arts festivals have their biennials and triennials allocated to various status spots around the world.

*The Recreation or "Fun City"*—Already noted as one of its purest examples is Las Vegas, but the whole of the Côte d'Azur, the Costa Brava, or the Miami Strip are similar. The degree of specialization may extend to the ski city, the sea city, or the theatre/opera city. Again, obviously, there is an overlap in function with other city forms, but we have a sufficient number of specifically vacation, leisure, or recreative centers to postulate that they require a different plan.

*The Communications City*—Again, this may also be functionally a part of the Capital or the University city. New York is now the center for the communications industries of television, radio, newspapers, advertising, publishing, etc. Most of the older multi-func-

tional cities also encompass this function, but often at an increasing cost to other urban needs and with decreased efficiency in the communications area.

*The Convention/Conference City*—Many of the core facilities of major cities—their hotels, railroads and air networks, and ancillary services—now depend for their major revenues on the conventions or conferences which bring in thousands of transients. Where cities are not well suited to serve this function or are inadequate in other regards, the major airports are now beginning to take on this specialized conference/convention job. Other types of conference city centers have sprung up in vacation cities, in relatively isolated rural locations, or on such mobile platforms as the Delos Conference Cruise, an early paradigm for the floating conference city.

*The Museum City*—This is the city in and of history, and there are many examples. The main capitals come immediately to mind, but there are countless smaller and purer examples. There is also the growing number of actual or reconstructed historical sites around which facilities for the tourist, the scholar, and the casual visitor grow: Williamsburg and Angkor Wat are distant in time and space but share more functional features than do Paris and Chicago. Within a museum city, one may envisage the future tourist or student trying to live in the past. The museum city or restored archaeological site becomes a kind of psychophysical time machine within which the individual or group may choose to re-enact or re-experience the human condition in a variety of historical periods. The trend is already perceptible, for example, in Williamsburg, and to a lesser degree in the use of castles, monasteries, and even ancient prisons as tourist hotels.

*The Experimental City*—Presently enjoying a vogue, this concept needs to be extended not only toward forms within which the physical and social functions of urban living may be experimentally studied—as in a controlled laboratory environment—but towards a range of experimental situations. We need, even more, other experimental situations where people may go to experiment socially: to explore different life styles, different kinds of social relationships, different tempos of living.

Such experimentation has always been inherent in the urban form. The city was a place where a man could escape the traditional fixities of the rural enclave, where he could have access to a wider range of life style. The vacation city, the oceanliner, the convention city, etc., now afford this function in a more explicit form. Already a growing number of socially experimental communities, often of

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the utopian type, exist in advanced countries. Drop City and Libre, founded recently by young people in the U.S., are the highly visible manifestations of a great variety of such experimental communities established as alternatives to present urban forms. Other experimental cities may take on the functions of the therapeutic or health community organized around large scale medical facilities, and many "senior citizens" communities have recently developed their own characteristics and activities.

The experimental city, as we have seen, must be beyond the physical in its conceptualization and must take into account the full range of human idiosyncratic requirements. The "aseptic and well lighted place" of so much current city planning is certainly not accommodative to the diversity of human desires and proclivities. Planning for those who fall out of the normal range is relegated to how deviance may be *controlled* and the seaminess of the bohemia and the bar strips avoided. Yet a considerable measure of aberrance may be expected in any human group. To plan only for the control and surveillance of those areas of human behavior which do not accord with present norms is not future but past-oriented.