

URBAN STUDIES

A Canadian Perspective

Edited by
N. H. Lithwick and Gilles Paquet

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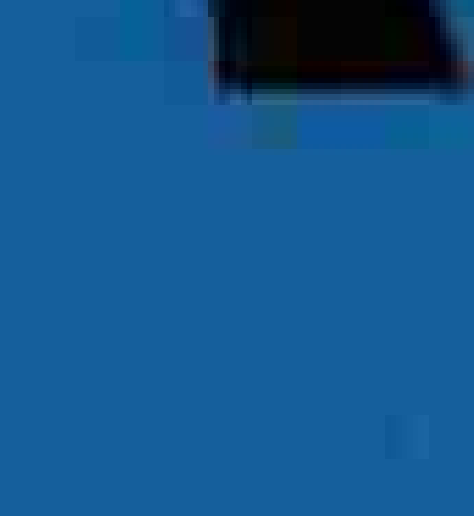
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Urban Studies: A Canadian Perspective

edited by

**N. H. Lithwick
Gilles Paquet**

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Urban Studies: A Canadian Perspective

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Preface

This book emerged from an experiment in cross-disciplinary work launched in Ottawa under the auspices of the Canadian Political Science Association (Ottawa Chapter). During the academic years of 1965-1966 and 1966-1967 a series of seminars dealing with problems of cities and regions in Canada was presented at the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to a study group directed by the editors. This book, which we hope will be of interest to a larger public, is a compendium of these papers.

Many organizations and individuals were involved with the launching of this experiment. Most important among these is Alan Armstrong, the Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research, who has provided both moral and financial support for our own research in urban economics and has triggered our interest in greater interdisciplinary dialogue in the area of urban studies. We would also like to acknowledge the collaboration of the two research officers of the Council who have taken great interest in this effort, André Saumier and Robert Cournoyer. Our seminar participants have provided subtle encouragement and direction to our research in a number of useful ways. Finally we wish also to thank Audrey McCallum for her endless patience and care in typing and retyping major portions of this book.

Research Seminar in Urban Economics
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
Spring 1968

N. H. Lithwick
Gilles Paquet

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Introduction

1 Prolegomena to Urban Analysis

N. H. Lithwick
Gilles Paquet

The Rise of Urbanology

The trickle of interest in the city that began in the inter-war period now has turned into a flood. All around us there has been growing concern over the problems of the structure of cities, their functioning and their evolution, and in the "inter-connectedness of city shape, city movement and city values".¹ Entire issues of the most widely circulated American magazines have been devoted to a panoramic view of the scope and the scale of the problems created by urbanization.² Thus, the public at large has been made aware of them. In Canada, the climax of concern was reached at the Federal-Provincial Conference on housing and urban development in Ottawa the week of December 11, 1967.

¹ David Riesman, "Some Observations on Community Plans and Utopia", *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 57, December 1947.

² *Scientific American*, September 1965; *Life*, December 24, 1965; *Saturday Review*, January 8, 1966.

This interest has been deepened by the conviction of scholars that urban issues will prove to be the most important problem of the second half of the twentieth century.³ Revelations such as the fact that as many persons were urbanized in Quebec in the 1940's as in the entire preceding century, or that there were as many families with income below \$3,000 in Montreal and Toronto as in the whole of the Maritime provinces have further awakened the Canadian public to the urban reality.

The field of urban analysis has been given a tremendous impetus by these developments. Many research projects have been launched and entire research institutes brought into being.⁴ Partly because of the very recent emergence of academic interest and, as we shall show, partly because of some inherent difficulties in the analysis of complex systems such as cities, we have not progressed much beyond superficial pronouncements about the urban crisis facing our nation of cities.⁵ Nevertheless, the newly acquired academic acceptability of urban analysis and the institutionalization of research in this field permit us to conclude that the birth of urbanology has taken place.⁶

Historical Antecedents and Current Analysis

The recency of these developments has led many urban scholars to feel that they were entering an entirely new field. But urban research has a very long history with very impressive credentials dating back to ancient Egypt, to the Greek *polis* and Roman *civitas*, through Pirenne's medieval cities, Renaissance Italy's cities and the cities of the industrialized

³ For example, Wilbur R. Thompson, *A Preface to Urban Economics*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1965, p. v.

⁴ Most impressive in this connection has been the work of Resources for the Future, Inc. through its Committee on Urban Economics.

⁵ D. J. Elazar, "Are we a nation of Cities?", *The Public Interest*, Summer 1966.

⁶ The ultimate consecration of this name was the *Time* cover of July 28, 1967, featuring Pat Moynihan, urbanologist.

world.⁷ As a result we have a substantial stock of descriptive material, including comments, critiques and comparisons of diverse urban phenomena.

Even the antecedent for urban analysis as a discipline *sui generis* goes back at least fifty years. Some of this work developed within the boundaries of the traditional disciplines. For example, in sociology and ecology there was the work of Park and Burgess⁸ which found its Canadian interpretation at McGill and Laval Universities.⁹ Then there was the pioneering work of Christaller and Lösch in economic geography.¹⁰ In addition, there were several attempts to deal with the urban problems at a cross-disciplinary level, including possibly the work of Bowley and the English authors of the demographic-socio-economic civic surveys.¹¹

An important and venerable attitude toward the city has been to visualize it as a global society in the small, because it has "the advantage of mirroring the complexities of society within a frame that respect(ed)s the human scale".¹² Man has been led by this attitude to use the city as a laboratory in which to conduct his social experimentation. Thus, it has been "in terms of the city" that "Utopias from Plato to Bellamy have

⁷ Robert S. Lopez, "The Crossroads Within the Wall", in Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (eds.), *The Historian and the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, pp. 27-43.

⁸ R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess, *The City*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1925.

⁹ J. C. Falardeau, "Problems and First Experiments of Social Research in Quebec", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 10, No. 3, August 1944.

¹⁰ W. Christaller, *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland*, Jena, 1933; A. Lösch, *The Nature of Economic Regions*, Southern Economic Journal, 1938, pp. 71-78.

¹¹ A. L. Bowley and A. R. Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty*, G. Bell and Sons, London, 1915. For a very short but illuminating discussion of this approach and related ones, see L. Chevalier, "Le Problème de la Sociologie des Villes", in G. Gurvitch (ed.), *Traité de Sociologie*, Tome I, Les Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1958, Section 3, Ch. 3.

¹² L. Mumford, "Utopia, the City and the Machine", in F. E. Manuel (ed.), *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1966, p. 3.

been visualized".¹³ The consequences of this attitude have been mixed. On the one hand, the need for public policy at the urban level has long been appreciated.¹⁴ On the other, however, the need for a comprehensive understanding of the reality has not been recognized and anything with sufficient aesthetic or fiscal appeal has sometimes been palmed off as urban policy.

Thus, despite long-standing interest in and concern for the city, it has remained a particularly elusive entity. The urban landscape has been examined but the urban phenomenon is still very poorly understood. And while the complexity of the problem is acknowledged in scores of books, nowhere does one find a strategy for the analysis of the urban unit in all its complexity.

This book then is an attempt to find avenues that might lead us toward a global concept of the city.

An Approach to Global Analysis

If, despite the need for a global approach to the urban unit, research has remained partial in scope, the reasons must be clearly understood. All too often research workers are accused of having too narrow a focus on the problem, or their disciplines are viewed as being too compartmentalized to permit cross-disciplinary dialogue. The real difficulties lie on a more basic plane, namely the weakness of the conceptual apparatus for dealing with these complex problem areas or meta-problems.¹⁵

In a number of ways the problems facing anthropology are analogous to those facing the urbanologist. In both cases the *globality* of the socio-economic-cultural system is fundamental.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ In Canada, an early plea for such policy can be found in Canada, Commission of Conservation, *Report on the Fifth Annual Meeting*, report no. 16: Preliminary Report of the Committee on Town Planning Legislation, Bryant Press, Toronto, April 1914.

¹⁵ The notion of meta-problem has been introduced by Michel Chevalier, *Stimulation of Needed Social Science Research for Canadian Water Resource Problems*, Working paper, Science Secretariat, Ottawa, 1967.