

URBANIZATION & URBAN PLANNING IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY



edited by Michael Dear
and Allen J. Scott

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Preface

This book is an attempt to define a general theory of urbanization and planning. It seeks to achieve this goal by bringing together and synthesizing a wide range of critical perspectives on the urban question. In particular, the book attempts to capture and to give form to much of the new urban theory (and its cognate analytical procedures) that is currently emerging in North America and Western Europe. This is a theory that generally insists upon the explicit derivation of contemporary urbanization processes out of the structure of the capitalist mode of production.

The book unfolds in a series of six logical stages. First, the argument opens with a broad *introductory statement* which outlines the main qualities and properties of a critical analysis of urban phenomena in capitalism. Second, the argument proceeds to examine the *conceptual preliminaries* necessary for the establishment of a theory of urbanization and planning as rooted in capitalist social structures. Third, a theoretical exposition is undertaken of the *fundamental logic of urbanization and urban planning*. Fourth, there follows a detailed discussion of *commodity production in cities* and of its effects on urban development. Fifth, a series of analyses is presented of the subtle and controversial problems of *reproduction and social life* in capitalist cities. Sixth, by way of a broad conclusion, a synthesis is made of some of the important political relationships linking *urbanization, social class, and the capitalist State*.

The text as a whole is a joint effort, and each of the chapters that follows was written by a different author or authors. In spite of this, the book was conceived from the outset as a whole, in that a basic outline was defined, and authors were subsequently commissioned to write specific chapters. We have largely kept to this plan, except for the inclusion of two previously published papers which are essential to the development of our argument. In spite of its preconceived structure, the book does not offer any collectively agreed-upon viewpoint. Whilst all the authors share a perspective somewhere to the 'left' of mainstream urban analysis, the arguments found in the various chapters are often at odds with one another. Wherever possible, we have preserved this conceptual tension.

Our objective has been to capture the main currents of a vigorous, ongoing discussion rather than to put the finishing touches to a definitive and final statement. Hence, this book provides not only the analytical foundations for a critical and reconstituted urban theory, but also (by provoking new questions) the conditions for the further development of this theory.

As an immediate consequence of these qualities, the book is long; it is often dense in its argument; and it is occasionally repetitious. These qualities have arisen precisely because we have been anxious to provide a *comprehensive* overview of a crucial area of analysis. Furthermore, the universe of discourse from which this book grows addresses arguments which remain in a preliminary and highly unfinished state of development. Unlike, for instance, neoclassical economic theory which has been thoroughly explored and systematically codified, there is little that can be taken as being generally settled in the theoretical framework that is suggested here. Consequently, one of our primary editorial precepts has been to tolerate bulk and repetition of first principles as the inevitable cost of meaningful exposition. One advantage that the reader will immediately enjoy is the unusually high degree of definition and completeness which characterize the discussions of this book.

Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society is a closely argued book that extends over an intricate system of ideas. In order to ease the reader's task, we have devoted the greater part of this Preface to a simple exposition of the book's main contents. This exposition is reconstructed at a significantly higher level of generality in Chapter I, where we undertake to outline the basic elements of an urban problematic. Finally, we conclude this preface with some general observations on the use of this book.

Part I The urban question

Chapter 1 Towards a framework for analysis

Dear and Scott introduce the book as a whole by setting out the broad structure of a theoretical framework. It is shown how the processes of urbanization and planning are embedded in and derived out of the overarching capitalist social formation. It is then demonstrated how a specific urban question (i.e. a nexus of conceptual problems) appears as capitalist social and property relations are projected through the urban land use system. The authors go on to discuss the logics of production and reproduction in cities. Urban life within capitalism is seen as being inherently problematical, and urban planning makes its historical appearance (as a structured element of state apparatus) in order to deal with the in-built predicaments of the capitalist urbanization process.

Part II Prolegomena to a theory of urbanization and planning

Part II of the book is an attempt to address some basic theoretical issues that are necessary, but also essentially prior, to any investigation of urban phenomena. A description of the structure and internal dynamics of capitalism is established. This is then followed by a critical discussion of the role and scope of the State in capitalism. In the light of these analyses, an epistemological investigation is undertaken of the dual character of urban planning as both a concrete socio-political phenomenon and as a routinized practice that is typified by certain abstract decision rules and procedures.

Chapter 2 Capitalism, accumulation and the explanation of urban phenomena

Edel proceeds to lay down some of the conceptual preliminaries needed to understand the urbanization process as it emerges out of the capitalist mode of production. He explores in considerable detail the relationship of urban phenomena to accumulation. The capitalist mode of production is defined by : (a) domination by a hegemonic class through the control of capital; (b) presence of a proletariat as a subordinate class; (c) extraction of surplus value in the process of production; and (d) monetized exchange of commodities. However, specific capitalist social formations may vary in terms of other dimensions including: (a) landownership arrangements and the presence of non-capitalist social fractions; (b) family and social institutions for the reproduction of labour-power; (c) the role of the State; and (d) the degree of unification and class consciousness within each of the principal classes. Edel goes on to discuss accumulation as a driving force in capitalism and he discusses the genesis of crises within the accumulation process. The final section of the chapter considers the extent to which specific urban phenomena can be explained by reference to the accumulation process and to the general structure of capitalist society. The analysis is then applied critically to an examination of some recent attempts to explain urban policies, social patterns, and built environments.

Chapter 3 The State in capitalism and the capitalist State

Clark and Dear argue that a proper understanding of urban and regional processes requires a comprehensive theory of the State. Two approaches to such a theory are reviewed. The first examines the functions of the State in capitalism focusing on the empirically observable dimensions of state intervention. The second approach analyzes the *capitalist* State as such, and attempts to derive the form and functions of the State from the specificities of the capitalist social order. Four major theories of the

State in capitalism are evaluated and found wanting. These are: (a) the State as simple supplier of public goods and services; (b) the State as facilitator and regulator of the economy; (c) the State as social engineer; and (d) the State as arbiter of social conflicts. In their place, a more complex and historically selfconscious explanation of the capitalist State is sought. A historical materialist theory of the State is derived from analysis of the classical Marxist texts, from the recent literature on the Marxian theory of the State, and from the German debate on the 'derivative State'. The significant emphases and directions posed by a materialist theory of the State are synthesized, and their implications for a theory of urban planning described.

Chapter 4 Some reflexions on epistemology, design and planning theory

In this chapter, Los elaborates upon the implications of the preceding chapters for a general theory of urban planning. To a large extent, Los's chapter is an attempt to address the question of whether, and to what degree, urban intervention constitutes a social process ('planning') or a technical idea ('design'). Los claims that an understanding of this problem can only be achieved if we have a clear understanding of the link between knowledge and action, and of the epistemological concepts that are necessary to determine what that link is. Los discusses the link between knowledge and action in terms of Piaget's genetic epistemology. On this basis, he then examines the problem of the objectivity of theory *in* planning, and the concepts of rationality and optimality. An attempt is made to justify the position that social science and planning cannot be completely objective and value-free, and that both a theory of planning and a theory of design are important. In their proper perspective, abstract concepts of optimality and rational decision-making have an important role to play in planning research and practice, as part of a theory of design. The role of planning theory is then to situate these concepts in a socio-historical context. Planning theory, by its self-reflexive functions and by the importance it attributes to the uncovering of hidden beliefs and assumptions, should make planners more aware of their social responsibilities. This latter theme is picked up with some force at a later stage by Rowe (Chapter 7).

Part III Urbanization and planning in capitalist society

Having laid the foundations of a focused discourse, the book now moves into an examination of urban phenomena proper. It is shown, in general, how an urbanization process emerges out of the capitalist mode of production and how this process manifests itself geographically as a system of interacting land uses. Four major themes are tackled in this part of

the book. First, the complex and crisis-prone relationships linking the built urban environment to the capitalist accumulation process are elucidated. Second, an attempt is made to decipher the social dynamics that govern the peculiar geographical structuring of this environment. Third, the forces underlying the historical emergence of urban planning are examined, and an analysis made of the manner in which the substantive content of urban planning interventions is determined at any given historical moment. Fourth, problems of the comparative analysis of urbanization processes are discussed and the question as to how urbanization varies from social formation to social formation is addressed.

Chapter 5 The urban process under capitalism: a framework for analysis

The objective of this chapter is to sketch a general problematic for the interpretation of the urban process within capitalism. To this end, Harvey develops the two inter-related themes of accumulation and class struggle introduced by Edel (Chapter 2). The Marxist theory of accumulation views the role of investment in the built environment in the light of the internal contradictions of the accumulation process. Hence, investment in the built environment is seen as a response to the different forms of crisis which appear within the capitalist system. The manner in which the built environment itself expresses and contributes to the crisis of capitalism is then explored. It is argued that a permanent struggle exists, in which capitalism attempts to construct an environment in its own image, only to destroy it when a new crisis appears. The analysis then considers the issue of class struggle and how it influences investment in the built environment. Of particular interest is the manner in which class struggle in the workplace is in part transformed, via the urbanization process, into struggles around the reproduction of labour in the living place. Some examples of these struggles are presented in order to illustrate how they derive from the fundamental conflict at the point of production while, at the same time, they influence the direction and form of investment in the built environment.

Chapter 6 The urban land question

Here, Rowe and Scott discuss the logic of urbanization as a system of dense, polarized differential locational advantages embedded in capitalist social and property relations. Urban land is seen as a complex use value produced collectively by the interpenetrating activities of (a) firms and households on the one hand, and (b) urban planners (i.e. the State) on the other hand. The intra-urban locational dynamics of firms and households give rise to persistent breakdowns in the social efficiency and viability of urban space. These breakdowns then call for new rounds of planning intervention. In capitalist society, however, such interventions are necessar-

ily reactive and palliative, and themselves lead to new urban problems and predicaments. In conclusion, Scott and Rowe point toward the relevance of their analysis for a comprehension of urban politics (cf. Part VI).

Chapter 7 Urban planning in early and late capitalist societies: outline of a theoretical perspective

This chapter pursues in greater detail the concept of urban planning developed in Chapter 6. Rowe writes that urban planners tend to lack a systematic knowledge of their discipline-*cum*-profession. Lacking an effective map of social reality, planners tend to vacillate between utopianism and technical pragmatism. The chapter seeks to remedy this situation by deriving urban planning as a concrete social relationship rooted in the overarching structure of capitalist society, and specifically charged with dealing with intra-urban land use predicaments and conflicts. The argument proceeds through a series of inter-woven propositions. First, some methodological questions are addressed to show how planning can be seen specifically as a mechanism of collective (as opposed to private and individual) action in capitalism. Second, the broad structural qualities of early and late capitalist societies are described. Third, the nature of urban planning in these two historical contexts is discussed, and it is shown how planning (and its ideological reflection, planning theory) appears as a response to specific urban problems and social imperatives.

Chapter 8 Notes on comparative urban research

While most of the theoretical chapters in this book are addressed to the question of urbanization as a general process in capitalism, Harloe discusses in detail a number of important issues concerning matters of comparative urban research. The first part of this chapter examines some aspects of the work of the French Marxist urbanists, Castells and Lojkine, in order to illustrate the problems that can appear in the absence of a thorough historical and comparative approach to studies of urban development. The second part of the chapter discusses the meaning and value of comparisons of urban development and policy in Western and Eastern (capitalist and socialist) societies. The last part of the chapter considers some recent arguments advanced by Offe concerning possible limitations to a comparative approach to policy analysis.

Part IV Commodity production and urban development

Part III of the book provided a general overview of the urbanization process in capitalism. Part IV begins the task of looking at some of the detailed components of this process. Specifically, Part IV deals with the

all-important matter of the relations between commodity production and urbanization. It is shown how the structural evolution of the commodity-producing process leads to persistent locational change with powerful repercussions on urban development (including, in particular, a constantly deepening crisis of inner-city areas). This phenomenon of locational change is in part mediated by state policies which in both North America and Western Europe have tended to encourage the movement of industry away from large metropolitan areas and into less developed regions. At the same time, an overview is provided of the capitalist logic of the property sector as that specialized branch of production that is geared to the development and re-development of the built urban environment. Finally, an attempt is made to broach the complex problem of the structure of the urban hierarchy in capitalism via an analysis of the multinational corporation and the international division of labour.

Chapter 9 The UK electrical and electronics industries: the implications of the crisis for the restructuring of capital and locational change

Massey presents some results of an empirical investigation of the locational implications of retrenchment, rationalization and aggregate employment decline. She indicates that the present economic situation in the United Kingdom may be having certain distinctive spatial and regional repercussions. Her essay examines in particular the changing distribution of employment between the depressed and the relatively prosperous regions of the country, and the continuing decline, as centres of manufacturing, of the major conurbations of the country. It is shown that both the intersectoral reorganization of production (the reallocation of capital between branches), and the differential impact of intrasectoral attempts to reduce the cost of variable capital and increase the rate of surplus value, are contributing significantly to these spatial changes. Some of the political implications of these trends are mentioned at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 10 Policies as chameleons: an interpretation of regional policy and office policy in Britain

Pickvance seeks to describe the aims and evolution of regional and office policies in Britain and their effects on urban and regional development. The evolution of these policies is shown to reveal a chameleon-like shift away from their original aims which were to secure more balanced spatial distributions of manufacturing and office employment. It is argued that their actual effects are: (a) to subsidize industrial capital vacating the large conurbations and locating in depressed regions; and (b) to promote central London as an international centre of business. The first effect comes about because incentives to locate in depressed areas rarely influence the basic

locational decision, and are allocated irrespective of the number of jobs created. The second effect results from the influx into London of prestigious firms, facilitated by lenient 'control' of new building in central London. This shift from the policies' original aims is due to changing pressures on the State – in particular the growing internationalization of production and the greater leverage of industrial capital in times of economic crisis. The British State is thus increasingly obliged to place the subsidy of industrial capital and the promotion of 'invisible exports' above any concern with the spatial distribution of manufacturing or office employment. The explanation of the two policies as necessary legitimations of capital accumulation is rejected, as is the idea that state policy in general has a necessary 'legitimation function'. In general, this chapter represents a valuable case study of the pressures arising out of the dynamics of modern commodity production, and their effects on urban and spatial development.

Chapter 11 The property sector in late capitalism: the case of Britain

In this chapter, Boddy focuses on the emergence of the autonomous 'property sector' in modern Britain, and on the changing scale and nature of investment of financial institutions in commercial and industrial property. An analytical framework based on the interlocking circuits of industrial, commercial, and interest-bearing capital is developed. This framework is applied at the empirical level to an examination of the particular (and historically determined) articulation of agents involved in the production and finance of property. The growing involvement of financial institutions in the property sector and the increasingly direct nature of this involvement are clarified. It is shown that as a result of various structural changes, the financial system is increasingly exposed to booms and slumps in the property sector. In addition, the form and feasibility of urban and inner-city redevelopment, regional policy, and industrial strategy will be determined by the investment criteria of financial institutions. Finally, it is suggested that strong contradictions remain between public planning and private land ownership (together with the private appropriation of ground rent), and that the widening ownership of land and property by financial institutions has strengthened and altered the structure of opposition to efforts intended to resolve these contradictions and to nationalize land.

Chapter 12 The new international division of labor, multinational corporations and urban hierarchy

In concluding Part IV, Cohen introduces a new and vital theme. His essay analyses how the development of the global system of cities has been linked to changes in the world economy since the Second World War. He focuses on the new international division of labour in the capitalist system and evaluates how changes in multinational corporations and spe-

cialized corporate services (banks, law firms, accounting firms, etc.) have contributed to the emergence of a hierarchy of world cities. The dimensions of this hierarchy are explored, with reference to the conflicts and contradictions inherent in it. Probable future trends in the international division of labour and the urban hierarchy are examined.

Part V Reproduction and the dynamics of urban life

Just as the chapters in Part IV of the book dealt with the specialized issue of commodity production and urban development, so Part V now deals with the particular problems of the reproduction of labour in capitalist cities and the dynamics of urban life. The six chapters that make up Part V address three major integrated themes. A first theme concerns the inter-relationships between housing and the accumulation process. A second theme concerns the emergence of individual communities and neighbourhoods within the urban environment and of the conflicts that coalesce around this phenomenon. A third theme concerns the ideological reflections and biases of urban life in terms of the psychology of homeownership, community life, and the containment of dysfunctional urban/social outcomes. Taken collectively, the chapters that make up this part of the book constitute a significant step forward in the theorization of those historical processes which govern the perpetuation of established social relations in capitalism at large and in capitalist cities in particular.

Chapter 13 Community and accumulation

In this chapter, Mollenkopf examines the fundamental concept of accumulation (as developed earlier by Edel and Harvey) within the context of 'community'. According to Mollenkopf, cities concentrate two types of relationships which have an asymmetrical, and sometimes conflicting, interdependency. On the one hand, cities concentrate the mechanisms by which wealth is produced and accumulated; on the other, they concentrate the social relations by which extra-economic communities are formed. While these two tendencies presume each other and can be reinforcing, they operate by distinct logics which can also come into conflict. The characteristically urban conflict is, therefore, not so much within the economic system as between the dictates of the economy and the forms and aspirations of communal groupings. Actors dominated by economic motives have often sought to undermine and dismantle communal patterns which impede their economic ends, and have sought to create new forms more to their liking. Community groupings have resisted these initiatives. Political institutions and alliances, and networks of social ties mediate the differences and conflicts between accumulation and community, and should be studied in this light.