

Stresses, Strains From a High Population Density

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ONE HUNDRED MILLION more people in these United States by the turn of the century is a possibility, according to some population forecasts. Three people where there are two today!

What are some of the stresses and strains we can anticipate from vastly increased population density in a country where 74 percent of the population already is crowded onto some 2 percent of the land?

One-half of our least densely populated counties lost population from 1960-70. The nonmetropolitan population is growing at less than half its natural growth rate.

At the same time we now have 33 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's), each with over a million population. And the SMSA's are increasing in population not just through natural growth but through immigration, migration from rural to urban areas.

Within these units of increased population, however, there is a less well-known movement from city centers to the suburbs. Thus, the densities of the city centers are declining while those in the suburbs are increasing.

This distinction in migration patterns and the change in population densities is important, as is recognition of the age composition of the migrants. Those coming from rural to urban areas tend to be younger than the general population, while the movement from city center to suburbs tends to consist of family groups in which the head of the household is advancing in job status and income.

Migrants to suburbia are likely to

be well educated, to hold white collar jobs, and to earn incomes considerably above the median for the total SMSA's. They choose to reside in single dwelling units in neighborhoods containing persons very much like themselves.

The resulting homogeneous suburban communities exemplify a type of socio-economic segregation that may have serious future consequences as yet not identified.

Outmigration leaves behind people who are older, are members of small-size households, are less well educated, and earn lower incomes than the suburbanites.

The immigrant, in contrast, is likely to be a young adult who comes to enjoy the social, cultural, and economic environment of the big city.

Yet another distinction becomes important in considering the central city—the concentration of low-income minority groups in areas of high density and of low environmental quality.

This heterogeneity in the makeup of the central cities increases the complexity of their problems and makes solution more difficult.

Subtleties of changing composition of population within generally increasing densities are very important in assessing impacts.

Many of the impacts of population concentration are readily discernible. Examples include the decline of the natural visual environment, congestion, noise, and pollution of water and air.

Less obvious is the tendency of people to emphasize the individual (themselves) and the private family unit to the exclusion of the larger social group. This occurs even within the environment of decreasing personal privacy and freedom of movement, and increasing social impacts of personal actions. It is manifested by lack of a

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sense of "community" and general unwillingness to "get involved."

Such alienation of the private family from the surrounding group tends to rationalize antisocial behavior such as juvenile delinquency, crimes against persons, and crimes against property.

The tendency toward distinction between place of work and place of residence also causes problems. While much employment is located in the central cities, many of those employed there live in adjacent suburban areas. A person who works in one area but lives in another may lack the feeling of "community" for the city. Active interest and participation is likely to be concentrated in concern for his residential community. Thus, he contributes little financial help or talent toward solving problems of the central city which provides jobs.

This results in many suburbanites living in a kind of fantasy world in which the bad (the problems of the central city) is ignored and the good (the environment in which they live) becomes their only conscious world.

Thus the importance of adjusting government institutions to meet the changing needs of expanding population concentrations is emphasized. As growth "spills over" political boundaries, the boundaries must become flexible.

Further, new institutional forms may be required to perform needed services efficiently.

A governmental structure designed to service an urban center of 25,000 may prove completely inadequate for a population concentration of 250,000. While the New England town meeting may have been effective for small, rural communities, it is not doing the job of solving the environmental problems arising from growing population densities.

Institutions for collection and expenditure of funds for public purposes also must undergo rather drastic revisions to meet new needs.

As institutional structures change, participation by individuals in the

governing process will likely be quite different. Since the tendency will be toward aggregation, access within the political process will become more limited to the individual. Also, organizing in response to functional needs may include only one segment of society in particular decisions. This can result in further alienation of the individual.

Increased concentration of population also creates strains on many services provided via the public sector. Transportation systems not designed to bear the heavy demands of increased population become clogged and congested. Public safety systems are often found to be inadequately structured and manned. Schools become overcrowded and the quality of education tends to decline.

Urban recreational facilities become overcrowded and deteriorate under intensive use.

Only massive inputs of planning and investment can prevent or correct these situations.

To plan, an explicit definition of goals is required—goals relative to public and private use of our resources, quality of our environment, and provision of public services.

Then too, planning is a group approach to a problem and naturally requires the subjugating of some individual desires.

Tradeoffs among values held by an individual and between the individual and the larger community are required. Certain goals may be mutually exclusive or at least conflicting. Thus identification of the "gainers" and "losers" and the relationship of the gains and losses is important.

As total population density increases, decisions on the use of limited resources, particularly nonrenewable resources, become more critical. Competition between public and private, single and multiple, existing and new, productive and nonproductive use of resources intensifies.

Tradeoffs among spatial arrangements and resultant ecological, social, psychological, political, and economic

impacts grow increasingly complex. The illusive criterion of "quality of life" becomes ever more difficult to measure.

Finally, there is some indication that tradeoffs may have to be made among alternative levels of living, technologies, the rate of population growth, and environmental quality goals. If we do realize a population of 300 million by the year 2000, we must begin now to specify these types of tradeoffs.

However, I am unable to accept the general pessimism of some of my colleagues. Perhaps we will develop a spatial arrangement for our population, as yet unspecified, which will minimize antisocial behavior and the negative ecological impacts while maximizing the general quality of the environment and the overall quality of human life.

Perhaps new forms of government will arise to handle the various public functions in a specialized, efficient way not as yet experienced. New technology may make cultural and recreational experience accessible to everyone. Likewise, a social organization may be forthcoming which will reestablish in high density areas the feeling of community which exists in smalltown America—a sense of civic duty.

The complexity of problems associated with population growth and increased density precludes simple dogmatic solutions. Yet, this very complexity provides a tremendous opportunity for innovative and creative thinking relative to new institutional structures, and to organization for development, organization for administration, and methods for obtaining resident involvement.

Assisting residents in recognizing their interdependencies with each other and the natural environment may be a key to accepting necessary changes and to reducing the stresses and strains of increasing population density. Who knows, we may even succeed in reestablishing a "sense of community". Why not?

Planning for a New Life Style

FREDERIC O. SARGENT

AS OUR population increases and the area of the earth's surface remains fixed, the role of planning becomes critical. In the sixties urbanization, population, income, and motorization increased at an accelerated rate and intensified our problems of living together.

The purpose of planning is to reshape the institutional arrangements that organize our life so our expanding population can live together more efficiently and harmoniously on a given area of the earth's surface. We must design our governmental institutions to promote most of the goals of most of the people—the esthetic and recreational goals as well as economic and development ones.

In the seventies planning must become the most important political activity for all concerned citizens and set the framework for managing, allocating, and controlling our natural resources.

To discuss planning in the future we need to recognize two types—the old *conventional* planning and the new *quality environment* planning.

Conventional planning, with which we are all acquainted, is based on a narrow concept of the public interest.

It consists of drawing up utility networks and zoning plans for urban areas and making token efforts to carry them out without a concept of, or commitment to, the long-range general public interest.

Under conventional planning an industrial concern, because it employs a large number of people, pollutes a river and destroys it for recreation, wildlife, and drinking water. A high-