

UNDERSTANDING METROPOLITAN DECONCENTRATION: A CLASH OF PARADIGMS

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Explanations for growth beyond central city borders are examined as a paradigmatic clash between conventional and critical urban theory. A general overview of this confrontation is presented which focuses on the analytical and theoretical issues involved. The conventional approach is conceptualized as underpinned by a form of technological determinism. The critical approach represents a progression of theory from monocausal, functionalist arguments to dialectical considerations of greater explanatory power.

The most significant aspect of contemporary urban change is the explosion of growth beyond central city borders. The classical center-periphery relation between the compact city and its functionally dependent hinterland has given way to a multi-sectorial metropolitan form containing many commercial, industrial, and administrative centers interspersed between sprawling areas of residential housing (Muller, 1981; Gottdiener, 1977). This areal pattern has been fueled by a centrifugal process of growth that has reached out to the furthest peripheral areas adjacent to urban centers and which is presently affecting rural places once thought immune from the onslaught of urbanization (Fuguitt and Beale, 1978; Fuguitt and Heaton, 1980; Berry and Dahman, 1977; Vining and Strauss, 1977). In the face of contemporary growth patterns, traditional concepts of urban analysis such as the "city," "country," "urban," "rural," and "the community," that were once the bread-and-butter units of ecological analysis have progressively lost their objective qualities of description. Most importantly, the need for more powerful tools of analysis required to understand the nature of massive regional development and its internal characteristics has opened the way for critical assessments of urban science and of urban sociology in particular (Castells, 1968, 1969; Pickvance, 1974). This, in turn, has promoted the introduction of a theoretical perspective deriving in the main from the Marxian tradition which challenges the authenticity of orthodox urban thought (Aiken and Castells, 1977; Walton, 1979, 1981; Smith, 1980), but which is not confined solely to subscribers of Marxism.

Currently, urban analysis can be characterized as the scene of a paradigmatic clash which is essentially a debate on urban theory. Alternate explanations have been proposed for a wide variety of phenomena including urbanism (Castells, 1977), urban politics (Castells, 1978; Smith, 1980), central city redevelopment (Mollenkopf, 1975; Gottdiener, forthcoming), and suburbanization (Walker, 1981). Because not all advocates of the new approach are Marxists it is necessary to use a more neutral term to characterize their work, and I have chosen to call the new paradigm the "critical" approach. By contrast, the challenged, mainstream perspective is referred to below as the "conventional" outlook, for want of a better term.

The following concerns the clash of paradigms between "conventional" and "critical" explanations for the specific phenomenon of deconcentration outside central city areas in the United States. In this way we leave aside other aspects of theoretical reexamination such as the regional question, uneven sociospatial development, and political conflict because they are beyond the scope of a single paper. According to Muller (1981), deconcentration is the absolute increase of population and social activities in the areas outside the central city along with a general leveling off of population density within metropolitan regions. Furthermore, deconcentration itself consists of two separate but related processes. The first involves a socioeconomic movement of people and jobs from the central city to outlying areas, or "decentralization." The second refers to the agglomeration processes that *restructure* both the central city and its hinterland into functionally specialized realms of greater social density and economic concentration, or "centralization." Deconcentration, therefore, captures the important notion that both central city and peripheral area development are interrelated, that is, the processes restructuring metropolitan form derive from the same origins and are located in aspects of social organization. The paradigmatic clash between rival explanations of deconcentration, therefore, involves basic theoretical differences regarding the structure of social organization and the ways in which social change is expressed in spatial form. In the interest of restricting the scope of this paper even further I have chosen to focus only on the first aspect of deconcentration or the decentralization of people and community development outside the central city.

The Conventional Theory of Deconcentration

Prior to the 1960s, mainstream urban analysis of deconcentration concerned itself for the most part with the suburban dislocation and the study of separate suburban communities. As the developed regions surrounding central cities began to mature, it was apparent that suburban stereotypes had to be abandoned in favor of a comparative analysis which considered the historical processes underpinning changes in metropolitan regional organization. Accordingly, emphasis

shifted from the suburban community to the urbanized region conceived of in areal terms and possessed of an internal complexity comparable to the society as a whole. The research focus of urban science shifted from ethnographic community analysis on "ways of life" to quantitative and largely descriptive statistical studies of aggregate census data on regional morphology. Accordingly, a picture of the metropolitan social order emerged by which suburban residents were considered on the whole to be more middle class, affluent, conservative politically, family-centered, white, professionally occupied, and voluntaristically active than central city residents. In turn, central city populations were comparatively characterized as comprising greater proportions of non-white minorities, ethnics, lower income workers, and liberals and as being involved in machine politics of the Democratic variety (Duncan and Reiss, 1950; Wood, 1959; Shevky and Bell, 1955; Schnore, 1965, 1972; Greer, 1960, 1962a, 1962b). Consequently, the metropolitan region as a whole came to be viewed as spatially, or "ecologically," segregated by income, race, and life-style. An ambitious research agenda continues to be carried out to this day which documents further this uneven development of metropolitan regions (Frey, 1978; Jiobu and Marshall, 1969; Kasarda and Redfearn, 1975; Schnore and Winsborough, 1972; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1964; Haar, 1972; Masotti and Hadden, 1973, 1974).

In general, conventional analysts have been content with describing the spatial patterns of stratified society rather than with theorizing about the growing sociospatial inequality that they represent. At the same time, however, the social problems of Late Capitalism have been progressively articulated in spatial terms, thus outstripping the ability of ecologically based explanations for social change to typify uneven spatial development as part of the ordinary processes of community adjustment. By the late 1960s and early 1970s a wide variety of studies were carried out, primarily by mainstream non-Marxists, that supported an emergent perspective with a growing sensitivity to the pervasiveness of uneven development, even though much of this work remained atheoretical and descriptive. Thus the issue of racial inequality was viewed as the mismatch between job opportunities and available housing for minority groups (Kain, 1968); this issue of educational quality was cast as a problem of community segregation (Coleman, 1976); the fiscal well-being of the city emerged as an issue of spatial differentiation (Hill, 1974); economic growth became viewed as increasingly organized around inter- and intrametropolitan locational processes (Sternlieb and Hughes, 1975); and the quality of community life was progressively viewed as an issue of regional income segregation (Logan and Schneider, 1981). Presently, therefore, research on deconcentration has grown into a global inquiry into the patterns and consequences of uneven spatial development, while the content of metropolitan life itself is expressed more and more as problems in spatial resource deployment seemingly without forthcoming alleviation.

The understanding which conventional urban theory has to offer for deconcentration is almost wholly ideological. In effect the fundamental independent variable for this process is the automobile, abstracted as transportation and communication technology which overcomes the "friction of space." That is, conventional theory asserts that technological change has produced the patterns of spatial deployment at the base of uneven regional development (Hawley, 1956, 1977, 1980; Berry and Kasarda, 1977; Kasarda, 1977, 1980). The central importance of transport technology, in particular, as the producer of spatial form draws upon a venerable ideological position developed by Hawley (1950:200) which lies at the very core of conventional urban sociology, economics, and geography. According to this unified explanatory perspective the spatial generating factor of complex modern social formations is the quality of "movement." Thus transport technology explains: massive regional deconcentration, as we have seen above, for urban sociology; the morphology of metropolitan development for urban geography (Borchert, 1967; Adams, 1970; Muller, 1976); and the dynamics of locational economics conceptualized as the minimization of transport costs (Alonso, 1964; Wingo, 1961; Perloff and Wingo, 1968) for urban economics.

In the above we have not affixed an ideological label upon mainstream analysis in the Castells (1977) sense, although we do not wish to preclude such a critique. Instead, we merely wish to focus on the technological determinism at the core of conventional thought in the few cases where it attempts to reach beyond description and develop explanations for metropolitan patterns. This view implies, quite simply, that regional sprawl and its problematic content are inevitable consequences of the proliferation of transport and communication technology and use. The massive deployment in space of a stratified society is viewed as the *inexorable* outcome of technological change within a competitive economic system that readily adapts innovation. In this way there is little if anything that could have been done to avoid the inevitable consequences of uneven regional development, short of imposing the kind of limitations on freedom of choice that are abhorrent to Americans. In fact, there is still much sentiment for the view that local and state government land use controls and planning efforts have interfered *too much* with what should be a completely laissez-faire process (Delafons, 1969; Siegan, 1972). In this regard, not all conventional urbanists share the same conservative view regarding the social significance of uneven development; however, by subscribing to the technological determinism of conventional theory, an apolitical posture is assumed that supports the status quo. In contradiction to this unified ideological front of urban sociology, geography, and economics, Marxian urban analysis has appeared as a response to an inadequate understanding of urban crises. The latter perspective has evolved over the years beginning with the 1960s to challenge conventional theory.

The Critical Analysis of Deconcentration

In contrast to the conventional paradigm which approaches the patterning of space theoretically as community adaption to the environment (Hawley, 1950; Berry and Kasarda, 1977:12), the critical approach focuses on a theory of social organization and its patterns of articulation with space. Although the role of transport technology is considered important as a force of production, critical analysts assert that it can hardly be the sole determining variable of metropolitan form. In particular, technological innovation provides the *means* but not the incentive for urban development. The latter can be discovered only by addressing the role of the "larger social, economic and political contexts" within which growth and change take place (Aiken and Castells, 1977:7). The essential theoretical position of the critical perspective was expressed by Marx himself by noting that the form of settlement space must be considered as tied to the mode of production which produced it (Marx, 1965:77-78).

My use of the term "critical" for this second perspective is meant to categorize a relatively large and amorphous group of urban analysts who share a rejection of the conventional paradigm, whether they are Marxists or not. Rather than reflecting the outlook of some single, well-defined approach, the critical perspective denotes a convergence of thought about urban environments since the 1960s that comes from several theoretical directions in Europe as well as the western hemisphere. Among its central characteristics, I have already noted two, namely, its rejection of conventional theory and its stress on the larger systemic forces of social organization in explaining urban morphological transformations. A final feature of the critical approach is that its development in the United States has been influenced directly by the importation of Marxian urban analysis (and analysts) from abroad. Most specifically the influx of Marxian theory has its origins in a debate in France on the theory of space between Lefebvre (1968, 1970) and Castells (1968, 1977). This confrontation in the 1960s between humanist dialectics (Lefebvre) and Althusserian structuralism (Castells) stimulated a prolific amount of research in other countries on the "urban question," if not the "urban revolution" (see Soja, 1980).

According to Labas (1982) there are two central aspects of Marxian theory that typify its approach to space: "The first relates to the movement of concentration and extension of capital over space and time, in the process 'annihilating space by time': this refers to the relations between the turnover of capital and the realization of value" (p. 37). This first aspect lends itself to traditional applications of Marxian political economy already familiar to radical analysts of social problems. For the most part, such efforts concentrate on the ways in which the processes of class conflict and capital accumulation explain economic agglomeration and uneven regional development (see, for exam-

ple, Topolov, 1973; Lojkin, 1977; Lefebvre, 1970; Harvey, 1973, 1975; Massey, 1978; *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 1978). The second aspect of Marxian urban theory concerns "the growing and fundamental contradictions in advanced capitalism between the forces of production and the relations of production, at the basis of which lies the exploitation of labor by capital" (Labas, 1982:38). Considerations of this nature are more recent topics of interest and are closely related to contemporary theoretical debates over the ways in which the capitalist system reproduces itself, especially with regard to the role of space (Lefebvre, 1973, 1974) or to the role of the state in this process, as in the theory of collective consumption (Castells, 1977, 1978; Saunders, 1981; Dunleavy, 1980).

The essence of the critical approach is its concern with theory and the need to explain urban form. Consequently urban analysis has been opened up into an arena where in competing claims of analytical profundity have been assessed. Although some of this intellectual production involves seemingly interminable debates over abstract issues and ideological name-calling, especially in the United Kingdom, it is clear that the Marxian approach continues to dominate the critical perspective. Nevertheless, recent years have produced alternative approaches within the critical camp in response to the inadequacy of Marxian theory to analyze effectively certain issues arising from the articulation between the features of complex social organization and space. Of these perhaps neo-Weberianism is the most important (Pahl, 1975; Saunders, 1981). Thus at the same time that Marxian analysis has been rejuvenated by the debate on the theory of space, this tradition may be reaching its limits once again in its ability to satisfy the explanatory need for all the issues arising from the critical analysis of space. Such an observation is important because, from the perspective of the outsider, conventional analysts may falsely believe that some monolithic or static Marxism is in control of the critical challenge. Rather than question the hegemony of Marxism, it is more important to view the critical approach as a historical phenomenon and to concentrate on the central theoretical issues emerging from its internal debates. In this way, we can grasp the genuine and ultimately long-lasting significance of critical urban theory's break with the conventional past. In what follows I am more concerned with highlighting this ongoing development of spatial theory than following the tedious debates within the critical tradition over matters of Marxian analysis.

As I have indicated above, brevity dictates a specific focus for the discussion of deconcentration, and I have chosen to concentrate on the phenomenon of decentralization. A critical analysis of decentralization would trace the ways in which social system processes deriving from the economy and the state worked in conjunction with specific local conditions to accelerate the dispersal of jobs, social services, office locations, and residential housing throughout the metropolitan region. It is not possible to assess each of these aspects because

the volume of literature is immense. Instead, I shall focus on critical explanations for the dispersal of community development from the central city, while noting that this aspect is related to other ones associated with deconcentration, such as the fragmentation of the local state infrastructure, the emergence of collective consumption as the state-space articulation, the dispersal of production to the urban periphery, uneven development in the realization of capital accumulation, and so on. The question which I wish to address below is: How can we assess the developing stages of critical urban theory by examining explanations for the decentralization of community development throughout the urban hinterland? There are three aspects of critical thought that represent developmental stages which I shall consider. The first and least sophisticated is the class conflict approach. The second emphasizes the processes of capital accumulation and by so doing develops an analysis of the needs of capital as well as the effects of labor's demands. The final approach attempts to overcome the limitations of the previous two stages and is described best as the action-structure dialectic.

Class Conflict Theory. Most urban political economists in the United States tend to emphasize the importance of class conflict before any other considerations (Edel, 1981). This orientation lends credence to the mainstream view of Marx that trivializes his significance by referring to him as a "conflict theorist." The analysis of class conflict has been applied to an explanation of deconcentration by Gordon (1977a, 1977b, 1978) and Ashton (1978), among others, although there are in fact few critical studies opposing conventional ideas that deal explicitly with community development in the metropolitan hinterland.

In the main, two explanatory themes of class conflict theory surface in the critical literature on decentralization. The first views industrial location decisions primarily as a response to labor unrest, and I shall discuss the work of Gordon (1977b) as illustrative of this approach. The second sees the massive subsidization of homeownership in the United States as a bribe by capitalists to the working class, and this argument is represented best by the early work of Harvey (1975, 1976), although it derives from Poulantzas (1973). According to Gordon, urban deconcentration was occurring in the United States as early as the 1880s when even commuter railroad line technology was relatively new. In the industrial city of that time the class struggle turned into open conflict of a volatile nature as unions were able to swell their ranks from the densely populated working class districts. As Gordon indicates, labor unrest was most frequent during the period between 1880 and 1920 as measured by the number of strikes nationwide, and this resulted in the disruption of the everyday work routine for the capitalist class. Consequently, many industrialists during this era of "family capitalism" responded by attempting to isolate their labor force

from collective agitation. They abandoned central city locations and began decentralizing industry by moving their factories to the suburbs. Many of these moves also involved the building of proprietary towns, such as Pullman, Illinois, because isolating the labor force required that workers live as well as work outside the dense central city. In Gordon's view such a trend created the necessary infrastructure that supported the beginnings of metropolitan deconcentration as urban growth spilled over into the satellite towns adjacent to the large industrial cities. Although the frequency and rapidity of moves to suburban locations increased to a mass level only after the 1920s, Gordon asserts that the need to control class conflict has been a constant influence causing the decentralizations of people and jobs that were required to sustain regional deconcentration. Furthermore, and following Taylor (1915), Gordon sees the penetration of capitalist industrial relations into satellite towns and peripheral villages as a direct consequence of the capitalist need to reduce worker residential density for the purposes of social control. These views can be contrasted with the conventional remarks of Kasarda (1977), for example, on the same subject: "In sum late 19th and early 20th century advances in transportation and communications not only were responsible for the spatial expansion of the metropolis, but also eliminated the semi-autonomy and heterogeneous work-residence-service structure of many outlying towns and villages" (pp. 32-33).

The main problem with Gordon's formulation, a quality he shares with other Marxian political economists who emphasize class conflict at the expense of a more global analysis, is that it reproduces the functionalist, monocausal argument of conventional analysis within the Marxian vein. Thus, in place of the single factor, technology, we have the causal factor class conflict, and in lieu of technological determinism we are confronted with reductionist Marxism. These limitations characterize the second way in which class conflict has been used to explain deconcentration, specifically suburban community development. Thus Harvey has made good use of the observation that the separation of home from work plays a functional role in social control of the working class. Although Harvey is often characterized as a capital accumulation theorist and not a class conflict one (Saunders, 1981), he does weave together both kinds of arguments in his early writings. He notes that labor has entered into a "Faustian bargain" with capital by acquiescing to the separation of quality of life considerations from basic work related demands (1976:288). This separation itself, however, cannot resolve the contradiction of class conflict as long as workers rent shelter. According to Harvey, renter-landlord conflict potentially can call the entire structure of private property into question. Thus the extension of homeownership to the bulk of the working class became a *functional* way of diffusing the community conflict over the use values of the built environment. By this means clashes over the community quality of life among homeowners would

not develop to challenge the basic premise of property expropriation at the heart of the capitalist system.

Such arguments, although appealing, suffer from the limitations of all Marxian social control theory by confusing causes for effects (Boulay, 1979). Clearly both the isolation of the industrial labor force and the extension of homeownership to the majority of the working class play significant roles in the reduction of working class militancy in the United States. However, such needs of capitalism as a system requiring reproduction of its social relations, or, alternatively, of the capitalist class as a global interest seeking societal hegemony, cannot explain why structural growth of the U.S. social formation proceeded along certain lines and not others. Because specific features of development prove useful to the reproduction of capitalism, this does not demonstrate that capitalism is endowed with a teleological impulse nor that the capitalist class operates with a prescience that, according to Boulay, exceeds the bounds of credulity. As Giddens (1979:211) observes, "The decisive error in functionalism is to regard the identification of the unintended or unanticipated consequences of action as an explanation of the existence (and the persistence) of that action." The development of suburban communities involves a complex convergence of several factors along with structural forces which have intersected over time to support massive decentralized growth. Critical analysis has strained against the reductionist functionalism of class conflict theory in order to grasp this complexity. Walker (1978, 1981), for example, has identified at least six factors responsible for decentralization including: the separation of home from work; the progressive deterioration in the quality of life at the city center due to congestion, poor sanitation, crime, poverty, disease, and housing blight; the accelerated increase in urban land values at the center; rising property taxes levied by the consolidating power of municipal governments; and, lastly, the anti-urban bias of Americans. Some of these causes have already been discussed. Others, however, derive from the *unanticipated* consequences of rapid urban growth that testify more to the uncoordinated quality of capitalist development (Marx's anarchy of production articulating in space) than to any innate conspiratorial policy of isolating, splitting, or buying off the working class. Walker's argument is a historical one, and his six causes represent demand-side, push factors which may have set the stage for a mass movement to the urban periphery but which nevertheless require additional insights to explain fully why massive hinterland development occurred. Consequently in order to transcend the functionalist Marxian argument it is necessary to analyze the supply-side aspect of suburban growth which can isolate those processes that channeled development into its contemporary form of regional sprawl. Such a task requires a more developed version of Marxian political economy which specifies the process of capital accumulation and its relationship to space. This work has been carried out by Walker specifically for the case of

suburban decentralization, and his argument represents the second stage of critical approaches to deconcentration.

Suburbanization and Capital Accumulation. According to Walker an understanding of decentralization can only come from a close look at the way in which capital itself is structured as a system of surplus value *circulation*. Clearly the class struggle plays an important role in this process, especially as it affects the organic composition of capital, but it is only one part of a global action by which the capitalist system reproduces itself as a form of social organization. Walker's (1981) analysis focuses on three organizing processes by which capital operates in contemporary society: "(i) diminishing restraints on location of all kinds (generalization of capital); (ii) push-pull factors between uses at the center and periphery, with capital working at both ends; and (iii) the way the property circuit propels the whole process" (p. 395).

It is the last feature which is most important for a Marxian theory of space and which is recognizable as Lefebvre's secondary circuit of capital investment in real estate (1970:211-12). Characteristically, Lefebvre himself refrained from developing a concrete analysis of the intriguing implications of the "parallel circuit" of capital investment. This work was left to others, but not without certain problems. In particular, Lefebvre seemed to suggest that the second circuit was actually not only a place of capital circulation but also of capital *formation* alongside industrial production, a view in violation of Marxist thought on the subject of surplus value creation. As Lipietz (1980:71) has indicated there is *no* "law of value in space" unless we approach space as a social product, something which Lefebvre (1974) has done in another context. Harvey (1973, 1981), however, focused on Lefebvre's original formulation (i.e., from 1970) and worked through its implications for the role of the real estate circuit in the accumulation of capital. According to Harvey, the flow of capital into the secondary circuit occurs whenever capital has over accumulated in the primary circuit of production. In fact, the second circuit was required by capital to avoid crises of over accumulation. In order for such flow to occur, however, capital also required as well an interventionist state and a freely functioning capital "money" market. As Harvey (1981:97) suggests, "At times of over accumulation, a switch of flows from the primary to the secondary circuit can be accomplished only if the various manifestations of over accumulation can be transformed into money-capital which can move freely and unhindered into those forms of investment." According to Harvey the interventionist state and the institutions of finance capital, all important structural features of Late Capitalism in general, are conceptualized as mediating features in the articulation of the mode of production with space. In this way Harvey locates the production of the built environment, which is a creation of secondary circuit activity, within a global analysis of capital accumulation running through as many as three separate circuits.

Walker (1981:406) has utilized Harvey's analysis of the functional role of the real estate circuit. By connecting the over accumulation cycles in capitalism with the use of investment in the built environment to alleviate crises of accumulation, it is possible to divide urban history into "roughly fifty-year stages." There is the mercantilist period (1780–1840), the national industrial period (1840–90), early corporate growth (1890–1940), and the advanced corporate era (1940–present). The production of the built environment and the changes in urban form over the years are *direct* products of capital accumulation cycles. The existence of such cycles with regard to the dynamics of capitalism has been widely observed for some time, and the "Kondratieff" long waves, in particular, are based upon solid empirical evidence (Day, 1976; Schumpeter, 1939; Kuznets, 1960; Hoyt, 1933; Kalecki, 1968; Mandel, 1975). What is important about Walker's analysis is the way he follows Gottlieb (1976) and ties the cyclical nature of capital accumulation to the stages in the production of the built environment. At the apogee of each upswing in the long wave an overaccumulation crisis is produced within the primary circuit of capital so that a voluminous surge occurs in real estate investment and a rash of speculation is touched off, thus averting the crisis temporarily. As Lefebvre (1974) has indicated, however, such real estate investment in great volumes is "unhealthy" and eventually leads to the undercapitalization of the primary circuit, because money dumped into real estate is not then available for production in the next period. Consequently undercapitalization of industry sets in and along with the rising organic composition of capital effects a downswing in the long wave of economic activity.

The discovery of the connection between real estate investment and the accumulation cycle helps specifically to explain the supply-side aspect of peripheral metropolitan growth. Whenever large sums of money were available in the upswings of the Kondratieff's, these were shunted into land development across the metropolitan continuum. The cheapest form of this land is almost always located at the urban-rural interface near the fringe of development which has not already been infused with the fixed capital of the past. Consequently the expansion of the periphery occurred as a cyclical phenomenon, with the postwar boom of suburbanization only the most recent example of this periodic change. We have already seen that demand-side push factors were in place in metropolitan areas since at least the 1880s. What makes the recent postwar period so unique is the presence of an actively interventionist state and entirely restructured financial capital infrastructure as a consequence of depression recovery policies. These represent the necessary mediating conduits for effective switching to the secondary circuit, as Harvey has indicated above. Consequently the post-World War II years witnessed a phenomenal growth of community development with over one million units of residential housing being built each year since 1949. Between 1950 and 1970, 30.5 million housing units were constructed in the United States—over

10 million units greater than the net increase in households for that same period (Clawson and Hall, 1973). By 1974, 64 percent of all housing units were owner occupied (Agnew, 1981:465).

In the United States today it is safe to say that deconcentration will dominate the urban form in the years to come despite the current recession/depression. If the scale of postwar suburban development dwarfs previous periods in metropolitan expansion, this merely means, according to Walker, that on the one hand, a qualitatively greater amount of capital was available after the war to be invested outside the primary circuit, and, on the other, that the required institutional machinery was finally in place so that the state and finance capital markets were capable of efficient mediation for progressively larger sums of money to be invested in real estate over an extended period of time. Hence, it is quite possible for another real estate boom in development to occur once we achieve economic recovery. Quite conceivably, however, if Walker's analysis is correct, we may have spun out of an ascendant long wave and are presently at the downturn of another fifty-year cycle. In this latter case Walker and Harvey would predict that hard times would cut severely secondary circuit activity, while Lefebvre believes that the principal effect of recession would be to alter the form that investment takes because real estate always can attract profit-seeking capital from the primary circuit, even in hard times. At present there is a depression in the home construction industry, tending to support the former's view; however, since this same downturn, much construction has occurred through shifts into the production of high-rise office buildings located especially in the central business districts of large cities. Consequently there is some evidence that investment in real estate prevails at all stages of the accumulation cycle. The real issue of Lefebvre's argument, which is not resolved by this discussion, involves his claim that such investment actually is an increasingly central source of capital formation.

The capital accumulation approach, although more developed than class conflict theory, nevertheless begs certain questions of spatial analysis which need to be addressed. The most important limitation is that it explains the means by which capital accumulation results in cyclical phases of community development, but the approach of Walker does not explain urban form. Capital accumulation theory provides a picture of the structural mechanisms by which the system operates, but it cannot explain the actions of groups in response to these systemic forces except by reverting to functionalist arguments. In the next section I shall take up this limitation.

Urban Land and Social Interests. The past few years have witnessed a fragmentation of the hegemonic hold once enjoyed by the structuralist reading of Marx. In response, greater interest has most recently been paid to developing a theory of "action and structure" for modern society (Lukes, 1977; Giddens, 1979). In essence, Marxian

analysis now recognizes the need to go beyond structuralism to a theory capturing the action-structure dialectic. This means that while structural approaches have provided us with detailed explanations for the ways in which the system itself operates, it remains a static analysis as long as class or group behavior is not specified. Such a need requires a theory of interests to supplement that of structure, because class behavior is more complex than the class conflict approach would lead us to suppose. It is not possible to treat the question of social interests as they articulate with space in this paper with any degree of comprehension, as it involves a debate between neo-Weberians and Marxian structuralists over the nature of collective consumption and the existence of real estate classes (Saunders, 1978, 1981; Dunleavy, 1979, 1980). However, it is possible to sketch out briefly certain analytical elements of this topic as they are related to conflict in (over, on) space itself, and, specifically, with regard to suburban decentralization. In this way we move toward specifying an integrated look at class conflict and capital accumulation in space.

First, since Marx's remarks on land in *Capital* known as the "Trinity Formula" (1967:814-31), we know that the ownership of property is a separate means of acquiring wealth alongside the other means of production—capital and labor—and that these means are all united in actuality in the production of surplus value. Second, and in distinction to the belief of Marx, we know that there is no separate class of landowners that exists today (Massey and Catalano, 1978:186; Scott, 1980:10). This, however, does not mean that separate fractions of classes and distinct consumption or "distributive groupings" cannot exist organized around landed interests. In fact, the analysis of the built environment requires specifically a detailed look at just such considerations. According to our view, the production of spatial forms can be explained only by analyzing the articulation between, on the one hand, the capital accumulation process, and on the other, the separate interests which have come to be organized around the use of land to acquire wealth, status, and the use values of everyday community life.

Recent empirical analyses of suburban land use conversion in the United States, for example, have thrown considerable light on this relationship within the specific context of deconcentration (Brown and Roberts, 1978; Coughlin, 1979; Feagin, 1982; Clawson, 1971; Gottdiener, 1977). These studies and others undertaken to understand the interests operating in real estate development all indicate that a taxonomic analysis of users and uses of land is required. While the entire supply of land is fixed, its use, in particular, is almost infinitely mutable and is a function of the social context of space within which any single piece of land is located. The variety of uses and sources of exchange value enables a complex array of interests to form around land investment activity. This in turn creates the basis for a number of alternative property markets to spring up linking in complex fashion

to a veritable chaos of financial conduits and state-supported schemes that can overwhelm the expert as well as the average citizen with their intricacies. As Scott (1980:29) has remarked, the "functional array" of different land investors, developers, and users, "is probably a better indicator of social fractions organized around land—finance companies, construction firms, middle class homeowners—than is rent in and of itself." In fact, there appear to be five broad categories of land holders, each comprised further of separate fractions and interests, involved in metropolitan growth and the structuring of spatial forms including: owners of undeveloped land, speculators, developers, builders, and owners of developed land. As Agnew (1981:470) has observed, even homeowners can be subdivided between those interests that are concerned primarily about equity and those that are interested in rapid turnover for a profit. Thus within each of these categories there are several distinct types, and the *same* individual can participate in all five categories or be, instead, a specialist in only one. While some of these individuals are interested in rapid exchange value turnover, as, for example, are builders, others are content to wait ten years or more before an investment in land is realized. Finally, these separate interests form the basis of political constituencies that are often in conflict with each other over fiscal policies. For example, while builders and speculators usually prefer rapid growth, homeowners may not and may push instead for growth controls.

The conclusion which can be reached from the above is that there are an incredible variety of ways to invest in land and a good many separate interests which can arise due to the form that investment takes. In one study of suburban land use conversion, for example, it was revealed that land use decision making involved clashes between a fair number of separate interests. These included politicians who utilized government control over land to acquire wealth in a select number of decisions; professional planners uninterested in money but committed to rational planning and, therefore, aligning themselves as a separate interest in decisions; long-term residents wishing to stop new growth; local booster groups wishing to promote growth; social advocates wanting to increase the local supply of low-income housing; and a wide assortment of developers and builders possessed of different plans for the conversion of space into a built environment (Gottdiener, 1977). consequently, the articulation between stratified social interests organized around land and the social growth process has become a confrontation that globalizes political conflict (Castells, 1978; Gottdiener and Neiman, 1981), as these various groups and interests clash over the desirable attributes that future development of the built environment should assume as well as over who will pay the costs of previous uncoordinated growth. Furthermore, such case studies of land development reveal that the actual form which settlement space assumes under the pressure of the action-structure

dialectic is a function of the complex interaction between the wide variety of interests arrayed around the use and exchange of land. It is this process which ultimately explains the form that settlement space assumes. Most importantly, that form is the product of political negotiations between separate interests and is the result of neither rational planning nor the conspiratorial efforts of the capitalist class.

Conclusion

In summation, the search for a full explanation of deconcentration uncovers a paradigmatic conflict between "conventional" and "critical" approaches. The former, upon examination, is revealed to embody a form of technological reductionism and a monocausal analysis for what in reality is a complex development process. In the latter case we have seen that the critical approach represents a tradition in the process of theoretical development. Early class conflict approaches to deconcentration, while instructive, have been refined further by perspectives that are better able to conceptualize the complex way in which modern social organization articulates with space. This theoretical progression culminates presently in the search for an action-structure dialectic that can supplant the Althusserian influence in Marxism. It is asserted that the interaction between accumulation cycles and the capital-state market infrastructure, on the one hand, and the complex fractions of separate interests organized around the use and exchange of land, on the other, produce the forms of settlement space that can be observed in the built environment.

The thoroughness with which critical urban theory approaches the problem of deconcentration clearly compels us to reject the conventional approach. There is, however, an even more compelling reason to reject it once we acknowledge the ideologically overburdened public policy prescriptions of conventional urban thought. Because mainstream analysis perceives spatial patterns as arising organically, the social organization of space is always accepted as a natural occurrence whatever its form or pattern of internal differentiation. In this way conventional urbanists support the status quo land use patterns, whatever they may look like and however they may change over time (Kasarda, 1980). Against such views there are numerous critics of the status quo, most of whom are non-Marxists, who see the particular state of urban sprawl and regional deconcentration as being inefficient, unproductive, racist, anti-working class and politically impossible for local governmental coordination (Goodman, 1971; Friedmann, 1973; Smith, 1980). From a critical perspective there is nothing inevitable about deconcentration. Such patterns are not the inexorable outcome of technological development, but the product of a particular mode of production and its social formation. The form of the built environment represents the product of conscious choice made by people and not machines, who are enmeshed in the relations of production and

reproduction which are characteristic of modern society and which have developed over time. Understanding deconcentration, therefore, requires that we focus on this process which is characterized by the needs of the capitalist class, the demands of labor, the structure of capital accumulation circuits and their mediating infrastructures, and, finally, by the taxonomic array of interests organized around the use and exchange of land. In this sense, if the material form of the built environment is considered problematical, then urban public policy must call into question the process by which it has been produced. In effect, then, we can separate conservatives from progressives among urban analysts by inquiring after their respective willingness to examine the special interests lying at the core of the development process producing the built environment within which we all must live. SSQ

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