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From the Selected Works of Joel M. Halpern

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Peasant Culture and Urbanization in Yugoslavia

Joel M Halpern

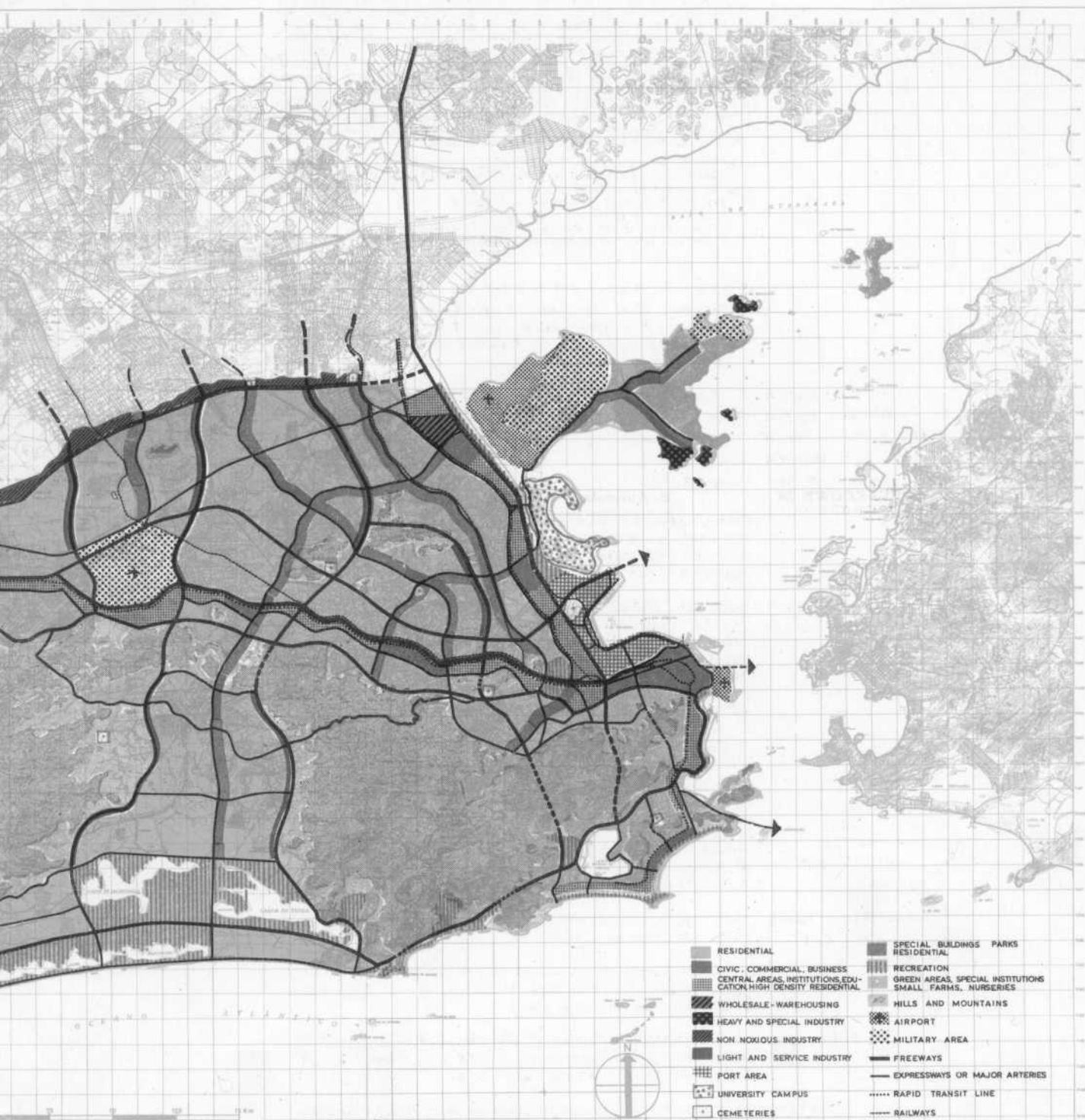


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GUANABARA - MASTER PLAN FOR THE YEAR 2000

Ekistics is the science of human settlements. The term is derived from the Greek verb *OIKO* meaning settling down. Ekistics demonstrates the existence of an overall science of human settlements conditioned by man and influenced by economics, social, political, administrative and technical sciences and the disciplines related to art.

Contrasted to architecture which is confined to the design of buildings, or to town planning which, by its own definition, is confined to towns (that is, one category of human settlements), or to geography, which describes only phenomena of terrestrial space or to several other disciplines whose scale is limited to parts, categories or types of settlements, Ekistics is a science whose task is to examine all human settlements from every possible point of view in order to develop skills for the solution of the problems involved.

As such, Ekistics studies the field of human settlements with three different ideas in mind: the geographic dimensions, where we move from the single room (the smallest ekistic unit) to the house, the plot, the block, the neighborhood, the community, the small town, large city, metropolis, etc.; the nature of related disciplines, that is the economic and social aspects of the settlements, etc.; the sequence of procedure from analysis to the formulation of policies, to subsequent synthesis, programs, and plans.

In order to study human settlements, the science of Ekistics has had to use a wide range of space and time. It has to start by studying human settlements from their most primitive stage to understand the evolution which has led to forming towns, and is now leading to the metropolis and megalopolis; and to understand the type of settlements to come. Furthermore, Ekistics also has to study settlements of several sizes. It has to cover the whole earth and to study all types of settlements in all types of surroundings, in all types of cultures and civilizations, and in all periods. To achieve this end, namely the studying of human settlements in their entire evolution, and to develop this science to the point of being prescriptive and not just descriptive, Ekistics has a long and difficult road to follow. We must work hard for many generations to come.

EKISTICS, as a magazine, by presenting reviews and original articles in this general field, tries to assist in the formulation of this science. It does this by publishing material in four categories:

- * The overall concept of Ekistics as a science.
- * Relationship of Ekistics to other sciences.
- * Subjects showing the evolution of human settlements.
- * Different aspects of human settlements in different parts of the world.

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EDITORIAL

The different, scholarly authors of articles in this issue of EKISTICS make it clear that we can expect no let-up from the inexorable and growing pressures of urbanization. In other words, more and more people are going to have to be provided for in and around our present major urban settlements, or—in ekistic parlance—the move toward megalopolis and ecumenopolis is becoming increasingly apparent.

The term «urbanization» has now become almost as widely used—and abused—as the erstwhile fashionable term of «community development», but Kingsley Davis makes quite clear the context in which he is employing it: «the proportion of the total population concentrated in urban settlements, or else a rise in this proportion...Accordingly, cities can grow without any urbanization, provided that the rural population grows at an equal or a greater rate». Thus, in his use of the term, most of the «advanced» countries are now fully urbanized and the process has been continually speeding up. For instance, the urbanization of Britain took 79 years to complete, the USA 66 years, Germany 48 years and Japan 36 years and the developing countries are now urbanizing at rates much higher than at peak periods of the advanced countries. Kingsley Davis adds that, contrary to popular belief, though rural immigration is very great, the main increase in urban populations is from births (natural increase of the resident population). Thus, although he realizes the diffi-

An implication of contemporary change which has wide tacit recognition but which to date has not been studied extensively is the degree to which we are in the process of approaching a uniform world culture. The total actualization of this assumption, particularly in the ideological sense, does not appear likely in the foreseeable future; however, in scientific and associated technological fields aspects of universality are already a reality. Forms of organization are increasingly evident which doubtless derive from shared values about the instrumental utility of science and derivative technology for the maintenance of contemporary society.

PEASANT SUB-CULTURES

EKISTIC GRID		W49	W20	SHILLING	SHILLING GROUP	HOUSE-SMALL ACCOMMODATION	LOCAL VILLAGE ACCOMMODATION	SMALL TOWN	TOWN	LARGE CITY	METROPOLIS	CONGESTION	METROPOLIS	DEVELOPED REGION	URBANIZED COUNTRY	FOREMANSHIP
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION										1						
RAIL CLASSIFICATION										3						
PERIOD										3						
NATURE																
WATER																
SOIL																
ROCK																
INFRASTRUCTURE										3						
WELL																
ACADEMIC APPROACH																
ARTISTIC STYLE										2						
STATE										3						

The author is in the Department of Anthropology, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. This abstract is from the introductory portion of a longer article entitled «Peasant Culture and Urbanization in Yugoslavia» in *Human Organization*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 1965, pp. 162-174.

In developing nations it seems that although peasant traditions may be drawn on to provide certain aspects of distinctive national flavor found in costumes, dances, art and folk heroes, the emphasis as seen either explicitly or implicitly by the governing elites is to accommodate the peasant to industrialization and its accompanying institutional forms, with stress on the modification of peasant culture to meet these requirements. Since Gandhi's time no national leader of prominence has stressed a village or handicraft orientation as a central point of departure for national planning. Quite the contrary, a problem of the elites of most new nations has been to retain meaningful ties with their villages. With the exception of communist countries most states have not seriously considered formally terminating peasant cultures as a key objective in national development policy although the effects of the low status of rural

people are all too apparent.

When the problem is considered it is almost always the villager as opposed to the urbanite who is typically pictured in need of developing. The peasant is felt by the government, its officials, experts both domestic and foreign, and urbanites in general to need more and better education, improved crops and agricultural techniques, easier access to towns, better health and sanitation standards and, in addition, political consciousness. The peasant agrees to a good many of these goals, at least in the abstract. In fact, if he is young, ambitious, and not overly prosperous he frequently wants to change his way of life as completely as possible by getting some education and a job in a town. The village may serve as a nice place to come back to later, after the frustrations of the town, but given an alternative a village-centered life would not seem to be first choice for most youths. Of course, this is qualitatively an old phenomenon, but its enormously accelerated growth is something new in world history. Today's cities have more room than ever before but not nearly enough to satisfy the increasing demand.

Is it not possible that much of the conservative behavior often associated with contemporary village life and the resistance to various forms of innovation result from the fact that a concrete, fully conceptualized, long-term alternative is not offered? On the other hand, the pressures for change and the changes themselves do often promote a need for security which certain aspects of the traditional patterns offer. This appears to be particularly true in programs of partial change, i.e., the reformulation of peasant culture is incompletely conceptualized often by both the innovators and the peasants. Future alternatives are pictured in the abstract while concrete possibilities are lacking. Given the potential for sweeping change in the countryside it may well be that what is seen as cultural stability is only the temporary but tenacious maintenance of a culture whose ultimate reformulation is inevitable. In certain ways much of the dynamic potential for social and political change resides in the world's peasant villages—if not with today's adults then with their children. Perhaps the long-term sources of cultural conservatism may lie in the urban areas whose subcultures have more opportunity for continuity.

Tractors, radios, hospitals are conceptually neutral in the ideological sense, but the ways in which they are used make them political, even if the assumptions are implicit. Technologically the peasant has become an anachronism in that his labor can be replaced to a large degree by machines, but the necessary and desired changes in organizational forms and value structures to bring about these developments evolve more slowly. Few doubt that there exists in the world today the

technological potential for effective birth control or the ability to achieve increased agricultural yields through mechanization, even granting maximum labor intensive methods, as in rice cultivation. A key problem, which is more difficult to solve, is the placement of excess population in urban areas. More realistically, assuming the retention of surplus population in rural areas, the immediate challenge is one of their useful employment. It is not surprising, then, that governments are now more concerned with peasants' minds than with their backs, since peasant labor is actually or potentially surplus. A major innovation needed and desired by modernizing states is the ability effectively to reformulate peasant value systems with as much cooperation as can possibly be obtained.

VILLAGE AND TOWN

To say that certain changes result from urban influences, or that peasants migrating to the town are being subjected to urbanization, is true only in the sense that the technological and organizational pressures are urban-derived. City dwellers have also been subject to change, so that the meaning of urbanization varies through time and space. Nor is the often cited decline of the extended family necessarily directly pertinent to the reformulation of peasant culture and migration of peasants to towns. In fact, kin ties may aid in migration to the towns, while the significance of extended kin ties among traditional urban groups is just beginning to be realized.

Secularization can also be misleading. In peasantized towns the most secular (at least in overt behavior) may be the children of peasants rather than the children of those who have lived in the town for generations. However, urbanization is a valid concept in that it implies the coexistence of numerous sub-cultures which may reciprocally influence each other to varying degrees. Peasant sub-culture is by its very nature homogeneous, not necessarily in religion or ethnicity but certainly in a primary orientation toward the land, continuous group interaction, and focus on the village. Alternate patterns may exist, with Moslem and Orthodox peasants sharing a village in Yugoslavia or Buddhist and Moslem in Thailand, but the variety is limited and the shared complex is paramount. In urban cultures many strongly differing value systems do coexist, and interaction may be minimal, a situation not possible in a village.

Urban life cannot be said to contrast with rural peasant culture in any duality such as magical-rational or literate-non-literate, for in many groups in urban culture are found practices such as faith healing and astrology, functional illiteracy, and a restricted world view. These practices and

problems are widely known, but the available information does not seem to have been integrated too well with studies of peasant societies. One reason has been that studies of peasants have usually focused on the village, with urban influences seen mainly as a generalized causative agent of change, most often as moderated through various national institutions whose representatives are in direct contact with the village, as well as those changes felt by the peasant himself on trips of the town.

The changes which are occurring in urban areas are, of course, important and far-reaching, but the basic assumptions of urban life are not being brought into question in the same way as is happening to the peasant in his village. But the transition is neither simple nor direct since there are also many examples of conservative forms being perpetuated in cities by migrant rural or immigrant groups.

During periods of development and change the subcultures of workers may be modified rather than reformulated and certainly not terminated. The workers may have to learn new skills and change jobs or neighborhoods, but the basic value of their way of life is not questioned. In many cases their kin ties may also be subject to less strain than those of the peasant. Their ac-

customed environment would appear by virtue of its greater diversity to be more adaptable to change.¹

Important, too, is the interpenetration of the town by rural influences and the village by urban influences, so that rural-urban differences in dress, speech, standard of living, values and ideology become less marked. The urban slum and the modern farm are parts of the same transformation (categories of change overlap, and an anthropology of the future must be able to conceptualize drastic change). Past patterns will play some role in shaping future change, but the viability of traditional patterns is related to a great degree to the extent of pressures applied, both political and economic, direct as well as indirect, although there are clearly limits. The foregoing is suggested in part by developments in Yugoslavia, which has had a political revolution and is undergoing a related social revolution.

1. To cite one case, it would seem that the adjustment of workers and their families moving into the suburbs, as described in Michael Young and Peter Willmott in *Family and Kinship in East London*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957, involved fewer social and cultural changes than for rural migrants, settling in a city, despite the preservation of certain culture traits in urban slums.