PART
ONE

A Theoretical Approach to the City in Advanced Capitalism

ONE

Urbanization

(1972)

EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

This book [*The Urban Question*] was born out of astonishment.

At a time when the waves of the anti-imperialist struggle are sweeping across the world, when movements of revolt are bursting out at the very heart of advanced capitalism, when the revival of working-class action is creating a new political situation in Europe, "urban problems" are becoming an essential element in the policies of governments, in the concerns of the mass media and, consequently, in the everyday life of a large section of the population.

At first sight, the ideological character of such a profound shift of interest – expressing in the terms of an imbalance between technology and environment certain consequences of the existing social contradictions – leaves little doubt as to the need to emerge, theoretically and politically, from this labyrinth of mirrors. But, although it is easy enough to agree as to the broad outlines of such a situation (unless politico-ideological interests are working in the opposite direction), this does not solve the difficulties encountered in social practice. On the contrary, all the problems begin at this point, that is to say, at the point where an attempt is made to *supersede* (and not to *ignore*) the ideology that underlies the "urban question."

For, although it is true that "urbanistic thinking" in its different versions, of which the ideology of the environment seems to be the most advanced, is above all the prerogative of the technocracy and of the ruling strata in general, its effects are to be felt in the working-class movement and, still more, in the currents of cultural and political revolt that are developing in the industrial capitalist societies. Thus, in addition to the hold the various state organs have over the problems associated with the environment, we are witnessing increasing political intervention in the urban neighbourhoods, in public amenities, transport, etc. and, at the same time, the charging of the spheres of

"consumption" and "everyday life" with political action and ideological confrontation. Now, very often, this shift of objectives and practices takes place without any change in the thematic register – that is to say, while remaining within the "urban" problematic. It follows that an elucidation of the "urban question" is becoming urgent, not only as a means of demystifying the ideology of the dominant classes, but as a tool of reflection for the political tendencies which, confronted by new social problems, oscillate between the dogmatism of general formulations and the apprehension of these questions in the (inverted) terms of the dominant ideology.

Indeed, it is not simply a question of exposing this ideology, for it is the symptom of a certain intensely experienced, but still inadequately identified, problematic; and if it proves to be socially effective, it is because it is offered as the interpretation of phenomena that have acquired an ever greater importance in advanced capitalism and because Marxist theory, which only poses the problems raised by social and political practice, has not yet proved capable of analysing them in a sufficiently specific way.

In fact, the two aspects of the problem are one. For, once the contours of the ideological discourse on "the urban" have been established, the supersession of this discourse cannot proceed simply by means of a denunciation; it requires a theoretical analysis of the questions of the social practice it connotes. Or, in other words, an ideological misunderstanding/recognition can be superseded, and therefore interpreted, only by a theoretical analysis; this is the only way of avoiding the twin dangers encountered by any theoretical practice:

1 A right-wing (but apparently left-wing) deviation, which consists in recognizing these new problems, but doing so in the terms of the urbanistic ideology, moving away from a Marxist analysis and giving them a theoretical – and political – priority over economic determination and the class struggle.
2 A left-wing deviation, which denies the emergence of new forms of social contradiction in the capitalist societies, confining all discussion of the urban to a purely ideological sphere, while exhausting itself in intellectual acrobatics to reduce the increasing diversity of the forms of class opposition to a direct opposition between capital and labour.

Such an undertaking requires the use of certain theoretical tools in order to transform, through a process of labour, a raw material, both theoretical and ideological, and to obtain a product (which always remains provisional), in which the theoretico-ideological field is modified in the direction of a development of its theoretical elements. The process becomes more complicated in so far as, for us, there is production of knowledge, in the strict sense of the term, only in connection with the analysis of a concrete situation. This means that the product of research is, at least, twofold: there is the effect of specific

knowledge of the situation studied, and there is the knowledge of this situation, obtained with the help of more theoretical tools, linked with the general context of historical materialism. The fact that they make a given situation intelligible is demonstrated by the material realization (or experimentation) of the theoretical laws advanced; in becoming more specific, these laws develop, at the same time, the theoretical field of Marxism and, by the same token, increase its efficacy in social practice.

If this seems to be the general schema of theoretical work, its application to the "urban question" comes up against certain particular difficulties. Indeed, "the raw material" of this work, which is made up of three elements (ideological representations, knowledge already acquired, the specificity of the concrete situations studied), is characterized by the almost total predominance of the ideological elements, a very great difficulty in the precise empirical mapping of "urban problems" (precisely because it is a question of an ideological delimitation) and the virtual non-existence of elements of already acquired knowledge in this field, in so far as Marxism has approached it only marginally (Engels on housing) or in a historicist perspective (Marx in *The German Ideology*), or has seen in it no more than a mere transcription of political relations. The "social sciences" for their part, owing to their close links with the explicative ideologies of social evolution, are particularly poor in analyses of the question and of the strategic role played by these ideologies in the mechanisms of social integration.

This situation explains the slow and difficult work that has to be undertaken in matching the general concepts of historical materialism with situations and processes very different from those that were the basis for the production of these concepts. However, we are trying to extend their scope without any change of perspective, for the production of new concepts must take place in the development of fundamental theses, without which there can be no deployment of a theoretical structure, but merely a juxtaposition of "intermediary hypotheses." There is nothing dogmatic about this method of work, in so far as attachment to a particular perspective does not derive from some sort of fidelity to principles, but from the "nature of things" (that is to say, from the objective laws of human history).

Having said this, the paucity of properly theoretical work on the problems connoted by urban ideology obliges us to take as fundamental raw material, on the one hand, the mass of "research" accumulated by "urban sociology" and, on the other hand, a whole series of situations and processes identified as "urban" in social practice.

As far as urban sociology is concerned, it, in fact, constitutes the "scientific foundation" (not the social source) of a great number of ideological discourses that merely enlarge, combine and adapt theses and data accumulated by researchers. Furthermore, even though this field is heavily dominated by ideology, there appear here and there analyses, descriptions, observations of

concrete situations that can help us to track down in a specific way themes dealt with in this tradition, and questions perceived as urban in the spontaneous sociology of subjects.

This sociology, like all "specific" sociologies, is, above all, quantitatively and qualitatively, Anglo-Saxon and, more precisely, American. This is the reason, and the only one, why the American and British references in this work are so important. This is reinforced by the fact that, very often "French," "Italian," "Latin American," even "Polish" or "Soviet" sociologies are little more than bad copies of the empirical research and "theoretical" themes of American sociology.

On the other hand, I have tried to diversify, as far as my own limitations allowed me, the historical situations that serve as a concrete mapping for the emergence of this problematic, in order to circumscribe more completely the various types of urban ideology and to locate the different regions of the underlying social structure.

It goes without saying that I do not claim to have arrived at a reformulation of the ideological problematic from which I set out and, still less, therefore, to have carried out true concrete analyses leading to knowledge. This book [*The Urban Question*] merely communicates certain experiences of work in this direction, with the aim of producing a dynamic of research rather than establishing a demonstration, which is in any case unrealizable at the present theoretical conjuncture. The point at which I have arrived is quite simply the belief that any new theoretical position that is not anchored in concrete analyses is redundant. In trying to escape formalism and theoreticism, I have tried to systematize my experiences, so that they may be superseded in the only way in which they can be: in theoretical *and* political practice.

Such an attempt has come up against very serious problems of communication. How is one to express a theoretical *intention* on the basis of material that is above all ideological and which bears on inadequately identified social processes? I have tried to limit the difficulties in two ways: on the one hand, by systematically envisaging the possible effect on research practice of taking these analyses and propositions as a starting point, rather than by aiming at the coherence and correctness of the text itself; on the other hand, by using as the means of expressing a theoretical content, sketches of concrete analyses that are not in fact concrete analyses. Thus this is indeed, then, a properly theoretical work, that is to say, one bearing on the production of tools of knowledge, and not on the production of knowledge relative to concrete situations. But the way of expressing the mediations necessary in order to arrive at the theoretical experiences proposed has consisted in examining this or that historical situation while trying to transform our understanding of it with the help of advanced theoretical instruments or, too, in showing the contradiction between the observations at one's disposal and the ideological discourses that were juxtaposed with them.

This procedure has the advantage of making the problematic concrete, but it involves two serious drawbacks that I would like to point out:

1   It might be thought that the present book is a collection of concrete researches, whereas, apart from a few exceptions, it offers only the beginnings of a theoretical transformation of empirical raw material, the necessary minimum to indicate the direction the work might take; indeed, how could we claim to analyse so rapidly so great a number of theoretical problems and historical situations? The only possible point of the effort expended is to reveal, through a diversity of themes and situations, the emergence of the same problematic throughout its articulations.
2   One might also see here the concrete illustration of a theoretical system, complete and offered as a model, whereas the production of knowledge does not proceed from the establishment of a system, but through the creation of a series of theoretical tools that are never validated by their coherence, but by their fruitfulness in the analysis of concrete situations.

This, then, is the difficulty inherent in this project: on the one hand, it aims at deducing theoretical tools of observation from concrete situations (situations that I have observed myself, or that have been dealt with by sociological ideology), and, on the other hand, it is only one moment in a process that must, at another conjuncture, reverse the approach, setting out from these theoretical tools to know situations.

The importance accorded to the tactical problems of theoretical work (essential, if one wishes to struggle at one and the same time against both formalism and empiricism, while avoiding the voluntarist project of establishing "the foundation of science") is directly reflected in the organization of the work. The first part recognizes the historical terrain, in order to give a relatively precise content to the theme approached. I then try to establish the contours of ideological discourse on "the urban," which is supposed to be a delimitation of a field of "theoretical knowledge" and social practice. In trying to break open this ideological envelope and to reinterpret the concrete questions it contains, the analyses of the structure of urban space offer a first theoretical formulation of the question as a whole, but they show, at the same time, the impossibility of a theory that is not centred on the articulation of the "urban question" with political processes, that is to say, relative to the state apparatus and the class struggle. This book opens, therefore, with a discussion, theoretical and historical, of "urban politics." An illustration of the interaction between urban structure and urban politics is shown through the study of the process of the urban crisis in the US.

Such a conclusion makes it necessary to introduce a remark whose

concrete consequences are enormous: there is no purely theoretical possibility of resolving (or superseding) the contradictions that are at the base of the urban question; this supersession can come only from social practice, that is to say, from political practice. But, in order for such practice to be correct and not blind, it is necessary to make explicit theoretically the questions thus approached, developing and specifying the perspectives of historical material-ism. The social conditions for the emergence of such a reformulation are extremely complex, but, in any case, one may be sure that they require a point of departure that is historically bound up with the working-class move-ment and its practice. This excludes all the "avant-gardist" claims of any "individual theory"; but it does not deny the usefulness of certain work of reflection, documentation and inquiry, in as much as such work forms part of a theoretico-practical approach to the urban question, so urgent today in political practice.

THE HISTORICAL PROCESS OF URBANIZATION

Every form of matter has a history or, rather, it is its history. This proposi-tion does not solve the problem of the knowledge of a given reality; on the contrary, it poses that problem. For, to read this history, to discover the laws of its structuring and transformation, one must break down, by theoretical analysis, what is given in a practical synthesis. However, it is useful to fix the historical contours of a phenomenon before undertaking an investigation of it. Or, in other words, it seems more prudent to undertake this search on the basis of a false theoretical innocence, taking a look, in order to discover the conceptual problems that arise whenever one tries – in vain – to apprehend the "concrete." It is in this sense that a study of the history of the process of urbanization would seem to be the best approach to the urban question, for it brings us to the heart of the problematic of the development of societies, and shows us, at the same time, an ideologically determined conceptual imprecision.

But, although it is clear that the process of the formation of cities is the basis of the urban networks and conditions the social organization of space, one remains too often at the level of an over-all presentation, without any specification of a rate of demographic increase, linking in the same ideological discourse the evolution of the spatial forms of a society and the diffusion of a cultural model on the basis of a political domination.

Analyses of the process of urbanization are situated, generally speaking, in an evolutionist theoretical perspective, according to which each social forma-tion is produced, without break, by a duplication of the elements of the preceding social formation. The forms of spatial settlement are therefore one of the most visible expressions of these modifications (Lampard, 1955: 90–

104; Wooley, 1957; Handlin and Burchard, 1963). This evolution of spatial forms has even been used to classify the stages of universal history (Mumford, 1956, 1961). In fact, rather than establishing the criteria of periodization, it is absolutely necessary to study the production of spatial forms on the basis of the underlying social structure.

To explain the social process that underlies the organization of space is not simply a matter of situating the urban phenomenon in its context. A socio-logical problematic of urbanization must regard it as a process of organization and development and, consequently, set out from the relation between pro-ductive forces, social classes and cultural forms (including space). Such a research project cannot proceed solely in the abstract; it must, with the help of its conceptual tools, explain particular historical situations, in sufficient number to reveal the lines of force of the phenomenon studied, the organiza-tion of space.

However, the ideologico-theoretical confusion existing in this field forces us to make an initial mapping of our object, both in conceptual terms and in terms of historical reality. This work is in no sense academic and is presented, on the contrary, as a technically indispensable operation if we are to avoid evolutionist connotations and approach, in all clarity, a particular field of our experience.

[. . .]

The Urban Phenomenon

In the jungle of subtle definitions that sociologists have provided us with, it is possible to distinguish very clearly two extremely distinct senses of the term *urbanization* (Eldridge, 1956; Popenoe, 1963).

1   The spatial concentration of a population on the basis of certain limits of dimension and density (Bogue and Hauser, 1963; Davis, 1965).
2   The diffusion of the system of values, attitudes and behaviour called "urban culture" (Friedmann, 1953; Bergel, 1955; Anderson, 1959: 68; Sirjamaki, 1961; Boskoff, 1962; Gist and Fava, 1964).

For a discussion of the problematic of "urban culture," the reader is re-ferred to Part II [of *The Urban Question*; see chapter 2 of this volume] (see Wirth, 1938). But the essence of my conclusion is the following: we are con-cerned here with the cultural system characteristic of capitalist industrial soci-ety.

Furthermore, and following the same line of thought, one assimilates ur-banization and industrialization, making an equivalence of the two processes at the level of the choice of the indicators used (Meadows, 1967), in order to

construct the corresponding dichotomies, rural/urban and agricultural/in-dustrial employment (Sorokin and Zimmerman, 1929).

In fact, the culturalist tendency in the analysis of urbanization presupposes the correspondence between a certain technical type of production (essentially defined by industrial activity), a system of values ("modernism") and a specific form of spatial organization, the city, whose distinctive features are a certain size and a certain density.

That this correspondence is not obvious may be seen in a simple analytical account of the great pre-industrial urban centres such as that carried out by Sjoberg (1960). Some authors (e.g. Reissman, 1964) remain consistent by refusing to use the term "city" to designate those forms of settlement, thus making explicit the confusion of the "urban" problematic and a given socio-cultural organization.

This link between spatial form and cultural content may possibly serve as a hypothesis (which I shall examine in detail in the following pages), but it cannot constitute an element in the definition of urbanization, for the theo-retical response would be already contained in the terms in which the prob-lem was posed.

If one is to keep to this distinction, leaving until later the establishment of the theoretical and empirical relations between the two forms, spatial and cultural, one may take, to begin with, the definition of H. T. Eldridge (1956: 338), who characterizes urbanization as a process of population concentration at two levels: (1) the proliferation of points of concentration; (2) the increase in size of each of these points.

Urban would then designate a particular form of the occupation of space by a population, namely, the urban centre resulting from a high concentration and relatively high density, with, as its predictable correlate, greater func-tional and social differentiation. Granted, but when one wishes to use this "theoretical" definition directly in a concrete analysis, the difficulties begin. On the basis of which levels of dimension and density can a spatial unit be regarded as urban? What, in practice, are the theoretical and empirical foun-dations of each of the criteria?

Pierre George (George and Randet, 1964: 7–20) has exposed clearly enough the insurmountable contradictions of statistical empiricism in the delimitation of the concept of the urban. Indeed, if the number of inhabitants, corrected by the structure of the active population and administrative divisions, seems to be the most common criterion, the thresholds used vary enormously, the indicators of the different activities are dependent on the individual type of society and, lastly, the same quantities take on an entirely different meaning according to the productive and social structures that determine the organiza-tion of space (Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot, 1963: 35). Thus the United States Census (1961) takes the threshold of 2,500 inhabitants as the criterion of an urban district, but also adds the urban areas strongly linked to a re-

gional metropolitan centre. On the other hand, the European Conference of Statistics at Prague takes 10,000 inhabitants as its criterion, correcting it by the distribution of the active population in the different sectors.

In fact, the most flexible formula consists in classifying the spatial units of each country according to several dimensions and several levels and in establishing between them theoretically significant empirical relations. More concretely, one might distinguish the quantitative importance of the urban areas (10,000 inhabitants, 20,000, 100,000, 1,000,000 etc.), their functional hierarchy (nature of activities, situation in the chain of interdependences), their administrative importance, then, combining several of these characteristics, one might arrive at different types of spatial occupation.

The rural/urban dichotomy then loses all meaning, for one might equally well distinguish between urban and metropolitan, and, above all, cease to think in terms of a continuous movement from one pole to the other and establish a system of relations between the different historically given spatial forms (Ledrut, 1967).

What emerges from these observations is that it is not by seeking academic definitions or criteria of administrative practice that one will achieve a valid delimitation of one's concepts; on the contrary, it is the rapid analysis of a number of historically established relations between space and society that will enable us to give an objective basis to our study.

Archaeological research has shown that the first settled urban areas with a high density of population (Mesopotamia, about 3500 BC; Egypt, 3000 BC; China and India, 3000–2500 BC) (Mumford, 1961; McAdams, 1966; Lampard, 1965) appeared at the end of the Neolithic Age, where the state of technology and the social and natural conditions of labour enabled cultivators to produce more than they needed to subsist. From that time onwards, a system of division and distribution of the product developed, as the expression and deployment of a technical capacity and of a level of social organization. The cities were the residential form adopted by those members of society whose direct presence at the places of agricultural production was not necessary. That is to say, these cities could exist only on the basis of the surplus produced by working the land. They were religious, administrative and political centres, the spatial expression of a social complexity determined by the process of appropriation and reinvestment of the product of labour. It is thus, then, a new social system but one that is not separate from the rural one, nor posterior to it, for they are both closely linked at the heart of the same process of production of social forms, even if, from the point of view of these forms themselves, we are presented with two different situations (Sjoberg, 1960: 27–31; Braidwood and Willey, 1962).

Let us take, for example, V. Gordon Childe's (1960) synthesis of the criteria which, according to existing empirical knowledge, characterized the first urban areas: the existence of non-productive specialists working full time (priests, functionaries, "service workers"); a population of sufficient size and density; a

specific art; the use of writing and arithmetical figures; scientific work; a system of taxation that concentrates the surplus of production; a state apparatus; public architecture; external trade; the existence of social classes.

These observations, based on abundant documentation, are of manifest interest, despite a classificatory procedure reminiscent of that of Borges's celebrated Chinese encyclopedia. But reading these data in terms of theory, it becomes clear enough that the city is the geographical locus in which is established the politico-administrative superstructure of a society that has reached that point of technical and social development (natural and cultural) at which there is a differentiation of the product in the simple and the extended reproduction of labour power, culminating in a system of distribution and exchange, which presupposes the existence of: (1) a system of social classes; (2) a political system permitting both the functioning of the social ensemble and the domination of one class; (3) an institutional system of investment, in particular with regard to culture and technology; (4) a system of external exchange (Mumford, 1956).

Even this cursory analysis shows the "urban phenomenon" articulated with the structure of a society. The same approach may be taken up (and lead to a different result in terms of content) in relation to the various historical forms of spatial organization. Although it is not possible in a few sentences to sum up the human history of space, we can, for analytical purposes, make a few remarks on the possible reading of certain significant urban types.

Thus the imperial cities of the earliest historical times, in particular Rome, combined the characteristics mentioned above with commercial and administrative functions deriving from the concentration, in the same urban area, of a power exercised, by conquest, over a vast territory. Similarly, the Roman penetration of other civilizations took the form of urban colonization – a support both for the administrative functions and for mercantile exploitation. The city is not, therefore, a locus of production, but of administration and domination, bound up with the social primacy of the political–administrative apparatus (Mumford, 1961).

It is logical, therefore, that the fall of the Roman Empire in the West brought with it the almost total disappearance of the socio-spatial forms of the city for, the central politico-administrative functions having been replaced by the local domination of the feudal lords, there was no other social reason for maintaining the cities other than the divisions of the ecclesiastical administration or the colonization and defence of the frontier regions (for example, in Catalonia or East Prussia) (Pirenne, 1927).

The medieval city revived as a consequence of a new social dynamic within the preceding social structure. More concretely, it was created by the union of a pre-existing fortress, around which a nucleus of living quarters and services had been organized, and a market, especially after the opening up of the new commercial routes by the Crusades. On this foundation were organized the

politico-administrative institutions proper to the city, which gave it an internal coherence and greater autonomy. It is this political specificity of the city that makes it a world in itself and defines its frontiers as a social system. The best analysis of this phenomenon is that of Max Weber (1905). The ideology of belonging to the city, which lasted into advanced industrial society, finds its historical foundation in this kind of situation.

Although this politico-administrative autonomy was common to most of the cities that developed in the early Middle Ages, the concrete social and spatial forms of these cities were strictly dependent on the conjuncture of the new social relations that had appeared as a result of transformations in the system of distribution of the product. In opposition to the feudal power, a mercantile class had formed which, breaking up the vertical system of distribution of the product, established horizontal links by acting as an intermediary, superseded the subsistence economy and accumulated sufficient autonomy to be capable of investing in manufactures (see the extraordinary account in Pizzorno, 1962).

Since the medieval city represents the emancipation of the mercantile bourgeoisie in its struggle to free itself from feudalism and the central power, its evolution will vary greatly according to the links forged between the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Thus, where these links were close, relations between the city and the surrounding territory, dependent on the feudal lords, was organized in a complementary way. Conversely, the conflict of these classes led to urban isolation.

From a different standpoint, the contiguity or geographical separation between the two classes affected the culture of the cities, especially in the spheres of consumption and investment: the integration of the nobility into the bourgeoisie enabled the former to organize the urban system of values according to the aristocratic model, whereas, when the bourgeoisie was left to itself, exposed to the hostility of the surrounding territory, the community of citizens created new values, in particular those relating to thrift and investment; socially isolated and cut off from supplies from the near-by countryside, their survival depended on their financial and manufacturing capacity.

One might also analyse the evolution of the urban system of each country in terms of the triangular relations between bourgeoisie, nobility and monarchy. For example, the underdevelopment of the Spanish commercial cities compared with the Italian or German cities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can be explained by their role as "transmission belt" between the crown and the American trade, contrasting with the role played by the Italian and German cities, which were highly autonomous in relation to the emperor and princes, with whom they formed only temporary alliances.

The development of industrial capitalism, contrary to an all too widespread naïve view, did not bring about a strengthening of the city, but its virtual disappearance as an institutional and relatively autonomous social system, organized around specific objectives. In fact, the constitution of commodities

Table 1.1   Situation and projections of the urban phenomenon in the world (1920–1960 and 1960–1980) in millions (estimation)

Geographical regions and occupation of space	1920 (est.)	1940 (est.)	1960 (est.)	1980 (proj.)	Absolute growth	
					1920–60	1960–80
World total						
Total population	1860	2298	2994	4269	1134	1275
Rural and small towns	1607	1871	2242	2909	635	667
Urban	253	427	752	1360	499	608
(Large towns)	(96)	(175)	(351)	(725)	(255)	(374)
Europe (without USSR)						
Total population	324	379	425	479	101	54
Rural and small towns	220	239	251	244	31	7
Urban	104	140	174	235	70	61
(Large towns)	(44)	(61)	(73)	(99)	(29)	(26)
North America						
Total population	116	144	198	262	82	64
Rural and small towns	72	80	86	101	14	15
Urban	44	64	112	161	68	49
(Large towns)	(22)	(30)	(72)	(111)	(50)	(39)
East Asia						
Total population	553	636	794	1038	241	244
Rural and small towns	514	554	634	742	120	108
Urban	39	82	160	296	121	136
(Large towns)	(15)	(34)	(86)	(155)	(71)	(69)
South Asia						
Total population	470	610	858	1366	388	508
Rural and small towns	443	560	742	1079	299	337
Urban	27	50	116	287	89	171
(Large towns)	(5)	(13)	(42)	(149)	(37)	(107)
Soviet Union						
Total population	155	195	214	278	59	64
Rural and small towns	139	148	136	150	3	14
Urban	16	47	78	128	62	50
(Large towns)	(2)	(14)	(27)	(56)	(25)	(29)

Latin America						
Total population	*90*	*130*	*213*	*374*	*123*	*161*
Rural and small towns	77	105	145	222	68	77
Urban	13	25	68	152	55	84
(Large towns)	(5)	(12)	(35)	(100)	(30)	(65)
Africa						
Total population	*143*	*192*	*276*	*449*	*133*	*173*
Rural and small towns	136	178	240	360	104	120
Urban	7	14	36	89	29	54
(Large towns)	(1)	(3)	(11)	(47)	(10)	(36)
Oceania						
Total population	*9*	*12*	*16*	*23*	*7*	*7*
Rural and small towns	6	7	8	11	2	3
Urban	3	5	8	11	5	3
(Large towns)	(2)	(2)	(5)	(8)	(3)	(3)

Source: Population Division, United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs

as a basic cog of the economic system, the technical and social division of labour, the diversification of economic and social interests over a larger space, the homogenization of the institutional system, brought about an explosion of the conjunction of a spatial form, the city, with a sphere of social domination by a specific class, the bourgeoisie. Urban diffusion is precisely balanced by the loss of the city's ecological and cultural particularism. The process of urbanization and the autonomy of the "urban" cultural model are thus revealed as paradoxically contradictory processes (Lefebvre, 1968, 1970a, b).

The urbanization bound up with the first industrial revolution, and accompanying the development of the capitalist mode of production, is a process of organizing space based on two sets of fundamental facts (Labasse, 1966).

1 The *prior* decomposition of the agrarian social structures and the emigration of the population towards the already existing urban areas, providing the labour force essential to industrialization.
2. The passage from a domestic economy to a small-scale manufacturing economy, then to a large-scale manufacturing economy, which meant, at the same time, a concentration of manpower, the creation of a market and the constitution of an industrial mileu.

The towns attracted industry because of these two essential factors (manpower and market) and industry, in its turn, developed new kinds of employment and gave rise to the need for services.

But the reverse process is also important: where functional elements were present, in particular raw materials and means of transport, industry colonized and gave rise to urbanization.

In both cases, the dominant element was industry, which entirely organized the urban landscape. Yet this domination was not a technological fact; it was the expression of the capitalistic logic that lay at the base of industrialization. "Urban disorder" was not in fact disorder at all; it represented the spatial organization created by the market, and derived from the absence of social control of the industrial activity. Technological rationality and the primacy of profit led, on the one hand, to the effacement of any essential difference between the towns and to fusion of cultural types in the overall characteristics of capitalist industrial civilization and, on the other hand, to the development of functional specialization and the social division of labour in space, with a hierarchy between the different urban areas and a process of cumulative growth deriving from the play of external economies (see George, 1950).

Lastly, the present problematic of urbanization revolves around three fundamental facts and one burning question:

1 The acceleration of the rhythm of urbanization throughout the world (see table 1.1).
2 The concentration of this urban growth in the so-called "under-developed" regions, without the corresponding economic growth that had accompanied the first urbanization in the industrialized capitalist countries (see table 1.2).
3 The appearance of new urban forms and, in particular, the great metropolises (see table 1.3).
4 The relation between the urban phenomenon and new forms of social articulation springing from the capitalist mode of production and tending to supersede it.

These problems are clearly posed, though no clearly defined research methods are indicated, in Greer et al. (1968). My research is an attempt to pose these problems theoretically, on the basis of certain definitions that can now be proposed and on the basis of the few historical remarks that I have just made.

1 The term *urbanization* refers both to the constitution of specific spatial forms of human societies characterized by the significant concentration of activities and populations in a limited space and to the existence and diffusion of a particular cultural system, the urban culture. This confusion is ideological and is intended: (a) to establish a correspondence between ecological forms and a cultural content; (b) to suggest an ideology of the production of social values on the basis of a "natural"

Table 1.2 Evolution of urbanization according to levels of development (in millions)

Occupation of space	1920 (est.)	1940 (est.)	1960 (est.)	1980 (proj.)	Absolute growth 1920–60	Absolute growth 1960–80
World total						
Total population	1860	2298	2994	4269	1134	1275
Rural and small towns	1607	1871	2242	2909	635	667
Urban	253	427	752	1360	499	608
(Large towns)	(96)	(175)	(351)	(725)	(255)	(374)
Developed regions						
Total population	672	821	977	1189	305	212
Rural and small towns	487	530	544	566	57	22
Urban	185	291	433	623	248	190
(Large towns)	(80)	(134)	(212)	(327)	(132)	(115)
Underdeveloped regions						
Total population	1188	1476	2017	3080	829	1063
Rural and small towns	1120	1341	1698	2343	578	645
Urban	68	135	319	737	251	418
(Large towns)	(16)	(41)	(139)	(398)	(123)	(259)
Underdeveloped regions as percentage of whole world						
Total population	64	64	67	72	73	83
Rural and small towns	70	72	76	81	91	97
Urban	27	32	42	54	50	69
(Large towns)	(16)	(24)	(40)	(55)	(48)	(69)

Source: Population Division, United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs

      phenomenon of social densification and heterogeneity (see chapter 2 [of *The Urban Question*]).

2   The notion of *urban* (as opposed to *rural*) belongs to the ideological dichotomy of traditional society/modern society and refers to a certain social and functional heterogeneity, without being able to define it in any other way than by its relative distance from modern society. However, the distinction between town and country poses the problem of the differentiation of the spatial forms of social organization. But this differentiation may be reduced neither to a dichotomy nor to a continuous evolution, as natural evolutionism, incapable of understanding

Table 1.3　Growth of large urban areas in the world, 1920–1960 (general estimates of population, in thousands)

City	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
World total	30 294	48 660	66 364	84 923	141 156
Europe (total)	*16 051*	*18 337*	*18 675*	*18 016*	*18 605*
London	7 236	8 127	8 275	8 366	8 190
Paris	4 965	5 885	6 050	6 300	7 140
Berlin	3 850	4 325	4 350	3 350	3 275
North America (total)	*10 075*	*13 300*	*17 300*	*26 950*	*33 875*
New York	7 125	9 350	10 600	12 350	14 150
Los Angeles	(750)[a]	(1 800)[a]	2 500	4 025	6 525
Chicago	2 950	3 950	4 200	4 950	6 000
Philadelphia	(2 025)[a]	(2 350)[a]	(2 475)[a]	2 950	3 650
Detroit	(1 100)[a]	(1 825)[a]	(2 050)[a]	2 675	3 550
East Asia (total)	*4 168*	*11 773*	*15 789*	*16 487*	*40 806*
Tokyo	4 168	6 064	8 558	8 182	13 534
Shanghai	(2 000)[a]	3 100	3 750	5 250	8 500
Osaka	(1 889)[a]	2 609	3 481	3 055	5 158
Peking	(1 000)[a]	(1 350)[a]	(1 750)[a]	(2 100)[a]	5 000
Tientsin	(800)[a]	(1 000)[a]	(1 500)[a]	(1 900)[a]	3 500
Hong Kong	(550)[a]	(700)[a]	(1 500)[a]	(1 925)[a]	2 614
Shenyang	– [b]	(700)[a]	(1 150)[a]	(1 700)[a]	2 500
South Asia (total)	*–*	*–*	*3 400*	*7 220*	*12 700*
Calcutta	(1 820)[a]	(2 055)[a]	3 400	4 490	5 810
Bombay	(1 275)[a]	(1 300)[a]	(1 660)[a]	2 730	4 040
Djakarta	– [b]	(525)[a]	(1 000)[a]	(1 750)[a]	2 850
Soviet Union (total)	*–*	*2 500*	*7 700*	*4 250*	*9 550*
Moscow	(1 120)[a]	2 500	4 350	4 250	6 150
Leningrad	(740)[a]	(2 000)[a]	3 350	(2 250)[a]	3 400
Latin America (total)	*–*	*2 750*	*3 500*	*12 000*	*22 300*
Buenos Aires	(2 275)[a]	2 750	3 500	5 150	6 775
Mexico City	(835)[a]	(1 435)[a]	(2 175)[a]	3 800	6 450
Rio de Janeiro	(1 325)[a]	(1 675)[a]	(2 150)[a]	3 050	4 700
São Paulo	(600)[a]	(900)[a]	(1 425)[a]	(2 450)[a]	4 375
Africa (total)	*–*	*–*	*–*	*–*	*3 320*
Cairo	(875)[a]	(1 150)[a]	(1 525)[a]	(2 350)[a]	3 320

[a]　Towns below 2 500 000 are not included in the totals.
[b]　Smaller than 500 000.
Source: Population Division, United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs

these spatial forms as products of a structure and of social processes, supposes. Indeed, the impossibility of finding an empirical criterion for the definition of the urban is merely the expression of theoretical imprecision. This imprecision is ideologically necessary in order to connote, through a material organization, the myth of modernity.

3   Consequently, in anticipation of a properly theoretical discussion of this problem, I shall discuss the theme of the *social production of spatial forms* rather than speak of urbanization. Within this problematic, the ideological notion of urbanization refers to a process by which a significantly large proportion of the population of a society is concentrated on a certain space, in which are constituted urban areas that are functionally and socially independent from an internal point of view and are in a relation of hierarchized articulation (urban network).

4   The analysis of urbanization is closely liked with the problematic of *development*, which is also a term that we ought to define. The notion of development creates the same confusion by referring both to a level (technological, economic) and to a process (qualitative transformation of social structures, permitting an increase of the potential of the productive forces). This confusion corresponds to an ideological function, namely, the function that presents structural transformations as simply an accumulative movement of the technological and material resources of a society. From this point of view, therefore, there would seem to exist different levels and a slow but inevitable evolution that organizes the passage, when there is an excess of resources, to the higher level.

5   The problem evoked by the notion of development is that of the transformation of the social structure on which a society is based in such a way as to free a capacity for gradual accumulation (the investment/consumption ratio).

6   If the notion of development is situated in relation to the articulation of the structures of a given social formation, it cannot be analysed without reference to the articulation of a set of social formations (on the so-called "international" scale). For this, we need a second concept: that of dependence, characterizing asymmetrical relations between social formations of such a kind that the structural organization of one of them has no logic outside its position in the general system.

7   These points enable us to substitute for the ideological problematic (which connotes the relation between national technological evolution and the evolution towards the culture of modern societies) the following theoretical questions: *what is the process of social production of the spatial forms of a society* and, conversely, *what are the relations between the space constituted and the structural transformations of a society, within an intersocietal ensemble characterized by relations of dependence?*

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