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Cities under Socialism – and After

Ivan Szelenyi

POSING THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how much difference socialism made to urban development in Eastern Europe and how urbanization is affected by post-communist transformation. The question about whether cities under socialism developed differently from those in the West has been the subject of scholarly controversy over the last two decades, some researchers answering the above question in the affirmative, and others disagreeing. So this analysis begins with a review of alternative theoretical positions, and the rest of the chapter sides with those who give the affirmative answer. The attempt is to show that urban development in the socialist epoch in Eastern Europe was quite different from urban development in Western countries at a similar stage of economic growth. Or to use 'counter-factual' reasoning: the argument is that urbanization in socialist Eastern Europe followed a different path from what one might anticipate if this region had followed a Western trajectory of development after World War II. The chapter also analyses the changes of the post-communist epoch in order to test to what extent the unique features of socialist urban development may disappear following the collapse of the socialist socio-economic order. The aim is to show that qualitatively new trends seem now to be emerging with the post-communist transformation in the urban scene.

Before we proceed any further, it is important to clarify that no value judgement is intended: the point is not that socialist urban development was better or worse than Western urbanization; the only claim is that it was different. Also these cities are here called socialist not because they necessarily looked the way socialist planners or ideologues wanted them to look, but because they were cities of industrial societies which had abolished private ownership of the means of production. The chapter also tries to demonstrate that what are identified as socialist features were often unintended by socialist planners, and were often even regarded as undesirable by the ideologues of socialism. Nevertheless, they were the consequences of the abolition of private property, of the monopoly of state ownership of the means of production, and of the redistributive, centrally planned character of the economic system.

This final chapter offers an overview of some of the theoretical questions raised by the cities created by a historically unique social formation, and speculates on their future trajectory. It will highlight three uniquely socialist features of urbanization in Eastern Europe. First, in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, post-World War II industrialization has been achieved with *less urban population growth* and less spatial concentration of the population than in market capitalist societies at the same stage of economic development. The socialist societies of Eastern Europe became 'under-urbanized' during extensive socialist industrialization. Second, we suggest that there was *less 'urbanism'* during the socialist epoch in cities like Budapest, Prague, East Berlin, Warsaw and Bucharest than in comparable cities in Western Europe. These cities may even have lost some of their 'urbanism' with socialist transformations of their societies. The best test case, of course, was East Berlin. Arguably East Berlin became 'less of an urban place' while it was the capital city of the GDR, West Berlin being contemporaneously more 'urban' (as, indeed, was Berlin as a whole at the turn of the twentieth century). Finally, the suggestion is made that it is possible to identify *uniquely socialist 'urban forms'* in these cities. In the socialist cities of Eastern Europe, one could identify an ecological structure which was different from their pre-socialist structure or the ecological structure of Western cities during the same historic period. Rich and poor and ethnic minorities may have been almost as highly segregated in the socialist cities of Eastern Europe as in capitalist cities, but the main point is that their segregation was produced by new, different mechanisms. Slums, for example, were formed at spots which are not typical locations for slums in a West European or a North American city.

From the mid-1970s in some countries of Eastern Europe, there

was a significant shift away from the classical model of Soviet-style socialism. Hungary in particular, and to some extent Yugoslavia and Poland, began to move cautiously towards a mixed economy. In 1989, these trends accelerated significantly. At the end of this chapter, there is a review of the effects that post-communism appears to be having so far on the three uniquely socialist features of the East European urban system. The character of urbanization has so far not changed. There has been no exodus from rural areas, but urban-rural tension is building up, and the forecast is for an acceleration of urbanization as soon as the crisis of post-communist transformation comes to an end. However, urbanism has changed radically, so that East European cities now exemplify features of both Third World and West European cities; they could develop in either direction. Urban social geography is also changing. The most characteristically socialist phenomenon in these cities, namely the mass housing developments built during the socialist phase, are experiencing a deep crisis. These formerly privileged zones are losing their social status, many inner urban areas are stagnating, and there are strong trends towards suburbanization for the neo-bourgeoisie.

So in the mid-1990s, East European urban systems are at a crossroads: their socialist features are fading, but it is not yet clear whether they are heading towards dependent urbanization or will evolve urban forms akin to those found in the West. It is somewhat too early to assess the full impact of the post-communist transformation. However, this chapter will try to demonstrate that many features of socialist urban development are now decaying rapidly, and those that still survive are increasingly in contradiction with the emergent socio-economic reality of the region. This is perfectly compatible with the central hypothesis of this chapter: the greater the role of markets (the private sector) in these societies, the less different their cities will be from those in the West, or, to be more precise, from capitalist cities of societies in analogous locations in the world system.

SOCIALIST CITIES: THE THEORETICAL PUZZLE

The two different traditions of urban sociology – the ecological and the historical approaches – give two different answers to our key theoretical question: how much difference did socialism make to urban development?

The ecological approach emphasizes the importance of the im-

peratives of industrialization in the urbanization process.¹ Economic growth in general, and industrialization in particular, require an optimal spatial concentration of the population.² This optimum is, by and large, independent of the socio-political organization or cultural heritage of a society. Or to be more precise, socio-political organization or intervention by planners may deviate from this optimum for some time, but there will be a tendency to correct such deviations. Figure 10.1 expresses the relationships.

The ecological approach was challenged during the late 1960s and early 1970s by the then emergent neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian urban sociology, both of which were more sensitive to the historical and institutional specificities of urban development.

The neo-Marxists argued that the mode of production plays a fundamental role in shaping the process of urbanization (Castells, 1977: 7, 64; Harvey, 1973: 203–6). There is no history of cities; only modes of production have their history. Therefore, cities, urban problems and contradictions have to be analysed as spatial expressions of the contradictions of the mode of production. More specifically, the neo-Marxist urban sociology of the last two decades established an impressive new research agenda for the study of contemporary cities in the Western and Third World capitalist countries by interpreting these as 'capitalist cities', and by explaining their contradictions as contradictions of modern capitalism. Neo-Marxists, in studying urban places, looked at class contradiction, problems of capital accumulation, and the fiscal crisis of the state (see, for example, Harvey, 1985: 1–61; Alcaly and Mermelstein, 1977). Using these tools, they also tried to explain problems of regional restructuring, such as the decline of the Snow Belt and the rise of the Sun Belt (see, for example, Bluestone and Harrison, 1982), and the decay of old urban centres and their consequent revitalization/gentrification (see N. Smith and Palen, 1984). They interpreted the problems of Third World urbanization as expressions of dependent capitalist

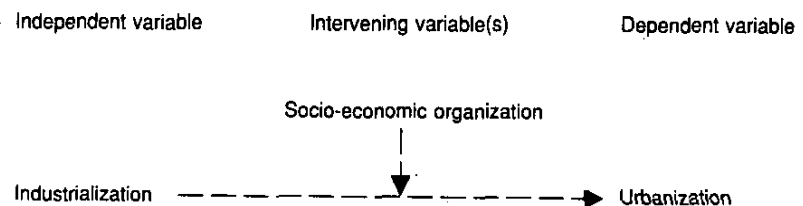


Figure 10.1 The ecological explanations of the process of urbanization

development, not as 'over-urbanization' but as 'dependent urbanization' (Castells, 1977: 43–63; Timberlake and Kantor, 1983; Roberts, 1978: 36–87).

The neo-Weberian wing of modern urban sociology approved of the Marxist attempt to 'historicize' the object of urban sociological investigation, but objected to what it believed to be an ideological component in the neo-Marxist research project. According to the neo-Weberians, the Marxist claim that urban problems could be blamed on capitalism would only be believable if the Marxists could show that socialism did not produce the same or analogous contradictions (see Pahl, 1977a: 154, 163–6; Harloe, 1981: 185–6; Pickvance, 1986). The Marxists were criticized not for having a critical theory of the capitalist city, but for having only an ideology of urban development under socialism. The neo-Weberian position calls for an historical and comparative analysis of the process of urbanization, which does not presume that socialism is the solution to the problem of capitalist cities. Instead, in the tradition of interpretative sociology, analysis begins with the hypothesis that societies with different socio-economic orders will produce qualitatively different urban contradictions.

Despite these fundamental and important disagreements, when confronted with the ecological tradition, neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians have tended to close ranks and advocate the necessity of an historical approach, which explains urban phenomena in connection with the historically specific and concrete circumstances in which the cities under investigation exist. Both neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians doubted the determining influence of the imperative of industrialization, or stage of economic growth, on urbanization. Instead, they used social organization (Weberians) or the mode of production (Marxists) as the most important independent variable (see figure 10.2).

These differences between the ecological and historical traditions are far from trivial. They identify, in my view, the most important

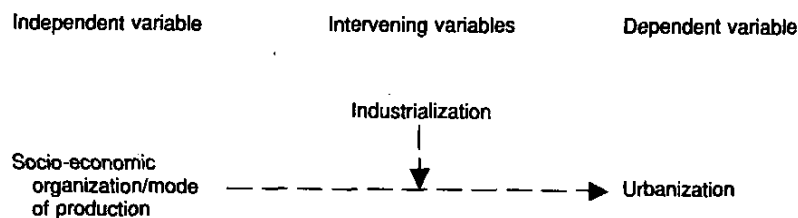


Figure 10.2 The historical explanations of the process of urbanization

issues which urban social research in our times should address. They also have far-reaching policy implications. Let me illustrate the essence of this controversy with a few simple examples.

Those who come from the ecological tradition will argue as follows:

Look at the problems of urban transportation or issues of environmental protection. If you compared from this point of view what used to be socialist Moscow and capitalist New York you of course found certain differences, but you could have explained these almost exclusively by the differences in economic and technological development between the two societies. As the USSR was becoming wealthier and technically more developed, the density of cars also increased and the planning of the transportation system faced problems very similar to those which urban planners were struggling with in New York at the same stage of economic growth. True, Soviet planners for a while may have suppressed some of the objective forces at work; thus, for a while, they may have pressed for too much public transportation and intentionally restricted the use of private cars, but at one point in time the imperatives of economic growth gained the upper hand and these temporary deviations began to disappear. The post-communist epoch can be understood as such a readjustment from a temporary deviation to the normal state of affairs.

Those who share the basic assumptions of the historical approach will reject this reasoning and may argue this way:

If you have any doubt that cities under socialism were any different from cities under capitalism, you should have compared socialist East Berlin and capitalist West Berlin. East and West Berlin were strikingly different from each other, and their difference could not be described in terms of one being wealthier and technologically more advanced than the other. East Berlin adapted to ecological challenges differently from West Berlin, and these differences could have been explained more in terms of the organization of their political and economic system than in terms of the differences in their economic growth. Thus, strict limits on private enterprise in East Berlin, with the virtual non-existence of market allocation of land and housing, were the most important factors explaining the kind of housing that was built and where or which social strata had access to certain types of housing or public facilities. The post-communist transformation of East Berlin offers further proof. As the GDR was absorbed into the Federal Republic, East Berlin did not 'take off' as the ecological approach would have expected – on the contrary, it collapsed. East Berlin may not have been an attractive city for many during the GDR times, but it was a viable place, with its own dynamics. Today it is like a dinosaur during the Ice Age – it is dying, or it is already dead.

This chapter adopts a neo-Weberian variant of the historical position and will explain why socialism made a lot of difference to urban development, and why the urban experience of people living under socialism was significantly different from that of those who lived in a similar stage of economic development in capitalist cities.

But before doing this, it is necessary to refine the dependent variable in figures 10.1 and 10.2. 'Urbanization' is a rather broad and somewhat vague notion and, in order to explore our problem in an empirical way, it has to be further specified. There are at least three different ways in which the term 'urbanization' can be operationalized. Or to put it another way, there are three aspects of the urban phenomenon, in each of which socialist and capitalist countries differed.

Urbanization can first be understood as the *growth of urban population*. Here, of course, what 'urban' means still remains undefined. The category is interpreted differently in different countries and at different times. In many countries, settlements with 2,000–3,000 inhabitants are regarded as urban. Elsewhere, for instance in some East European countries, no settlement is classified as urban unless it gains the legal status of city, which rarely happens to villages with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants (sometimes even settlements with 20,000 inhabitants are regarded as 'villages' or as 'rural' places of residence). Despite these definitional problems, it is quite obvious that 'urbanization' means, among other things, a trend towards population concentration in space, that is, the growth of population in larger settlements. Measures such as proportion of population living in settlements with 2,000 or 10,000 or 20,000 inhabitants capture something about such concentration. The question posed here is whether the trend towards population concentration in space under socialism has been identical or similar to capitalist development, if one controls for stage of economic growth. Did industrialization require the same degree of concentration of population in space under socialism as is required under capitalism?

However, large settlements do not always 'look' urban. There are indeed 'large villages' with tens of thousands of inhabitants and 'small cities' with a few thousand inhabitants. Beyond the largely quantitatively measurable tendency of population to concentrate in space, urbanization also implies a *certain quality of social relationships*, or way of life, which is best captured by the term 'urbanism'. Classical authors of urban sociology from Ferdinand Tönnies (1887/1974) and Georg Simmel (1964, first published 1902–3) to Louis Wirth

(1938) caught this element of urban life by defining urbanism in terms of the density and diversity of human interaction (and institutions), anonymity, the breakdown of traditional community and its replacement by 'society', and the tendency of the urbanite to be marginal, detached and creative. While Louis Wirth, inspired by the ecological tradition, tried to explain the emergence of 'urbanism as a way of life' as a consequence of increasing 'size, density and heterogeneity' – as a result of non-historical, ecological factors – those who follow the historical tradition of urban research would anticipate that socio-political organization, class, or ethnic divisions within a society are primarily responsible for shaping the ways in which people live (Gans, 1962). Following in this historical tradition, this chapter will suggest that the socialist societies produced a different kind, and arguably a more limited urbanism than the one we are familiar with in capitalist societies at the same stage of economic growth.

Finally, the ecological approach assumes that '*urban forms*' – the way in which sub-populations or certain institutions are distributed in space within cities or within regions – change in a 'unilinear', evolutionary way. The classical example was of course Burgess's (1925) concentric zone model, which described how the location of the rich and poor, the slums, the suburbs, and certain industrial, commercial and business institutions changes with the growth of the city. Burgess developed his model from empirical studies conducted in Chicago, but he assumed that all cities, if they grow, will produce similar arrangements of spatial structures over time. The urban forms or zonal patterns found in Chicago will tell us how other cities will look as they proceed with industrialization and urbanization. The spatial structure of Rio de Janeiro, Vienna or Shanghai are only different because they are at a lower level of urban-industrial development, and they will follow suit in due course. While the Burgess model was dismissed by geographers and sociologists a long time ago, the logic of his analysis is very much alive. The historical approach – be it Marxist or Weberian – challenges the evolutionism of ecology. It assumes that diverse urban forms are possible; the urban forms of European or Latin American cities are and will remain different from those in North America, for specifically institutional, cultural, conjunctural reasons.

In what follows there is presented evidence – mainly preliminary, in need of further systematic empirical investigation – about the uniqueness of socialist urbanization with respect to the three dimensions discussed above.

URBAN POPULATION GROWTH UNDER SOCIALISM

In an article first published in 1971, this author argued that East European countries during the epoch of socialist extensive industrialization became 'under-urbanized' (Konrad and Szelenyi, 1977; see also Golachowski, 1967). The term 'under-urbanization' was coined as the twin of the concept of 'over-urbanization'. The latter was used widely during the 1950s and 1960s to describe what appeared to be a unique feature of urbanization in many Third World countries (Davis and Golden, 1954–5). According to the theory of over-urbanization in the Third World, there is a tendency for urban populations to grow faster than urban job opportunities. Pressures within rural areas are too strong, and people leave their villages even when there are no job prospects in cities. The result is the 'excessive' growth of cities, with a high level of unemployment or under-employment, acute housing shortages, a large urban homeless population, and the growth of shanty towns. Thus, the most general theoretical proposition is that peripheral capitalist countries often produce faster urbanization than industrialization.

By comparing the growth trends of urban industrial jobs to the growth of the permanent urban residents in Hungary, the current author concluded that socialist industrialization in that country, and probably in most other East European socialist countries, followed a very different trajectory from Western capitalist countries in their stage of extensive industrialization. Under socialism, the growth of urban industrial jobs seems to have been much faster than the growth of the permanent urban population. Thus these countries became 'under-urbanized'.

The intention was to use the term 'over-urbanization' and to propose the concept of 'under-urbanization' in a value-neutral way. It is important to note this, since the theory of over-urbanization has been primarily criticized for its real or assumed ideological implications (see Sovani, 1964; and for a defence of the concept of over-urbanization, see Gugler, 1982). The theory of over-urbanization was rejected, particularly by dependency theorists, since it apparently presupposes that: (1) the urbanization pattern followed by the core Western capitalist countries is the 'normal' one, which will eventually be replicated by countries in the Third World; and (2) that over-urbanization is largely, if not exclusively, a result of policy errors and that if those are corrected over-urbanization will be overcome. Such critics of 'over-urbanization' wished to replace it with the notion of

'dependent urbanization'. The theory of dependent urbanization was inspired by the idea of the 'development of underdevelopment', which claimed that peripheral countries are locked into a self-reproducing cycle of backwardness from which no 'proper' government policy can release them. Accelerated destruction of agriculture and village communities and excessive growth of cities are, among other phenomena, expressions of this vicious circle of underdevelopment.

In my view, the notion of 'over-urbanization' can be used in a value-neutral way. In this case the 'over-urbanization' versus 'dependent urbanization' controversy largely disappears. Those who subscribe to the idea of 'dependent urbanization' usually also accept that dependency results in excessive growth of the urban population and the inability of dependent capitalist economies to produce jobs, housing and proper infrastructure for the large mass of rural – urban migrants. At this level both 'dependent-urbanization' and 'over-urbanization' theorists agree on what the unique pattern of urbanization in dependent, peripheral capitalist countries typically is, though they may have opposing hypotheses about what causes this pattern and how it can be managed effectively by state policies.

The concept of 'under-urbanization' was coined in a similarly value-neutral sense. 'Under-urbanization' simply means that under this pattern of industrialization and urbanization, the growth of the urban population falls behind the growth of urban industrial and tertiary sector jobs. It does not imply that this was the result of policy errors, or even that this was an undesirable pattern of urbanization which will be surpassed as policy errors are corrected, or as socialist countries further proceed with their economic growth. One could even argue that the core Western capitalist countries produced an over-concentration of population in space during their industrial epoch and, as they enter the post-industrial stage and the demographic turnaround, a certain degree of deurbanization corrects this mistake. From this perspective one could present under-urbanization as a desirable and rational pattern which avoids such a costly and, in the long run, unsustainable over-concentration of the population.

But, while no value-judgement was intended with the theory of under-urbanization, the attempt was to prove that under-urbanization was a consequence of a socialist-type social and economic structure. It was the result of the elimination of private property and the centrally planned or redistributive nature of the economic system.

A longitudinal analysis of urban population growth before and after the socialist transformation seemed to support this claim. If one

looks at the growth of the urban population over the last century in Hungary, for instance, one will note a virtually steady increase in the number and proportion of urban residents per decade. But if one looks at the growth of urban industrial jobs, then the picture is quite different. While from the late nineteenth century until the late 1940s there was a parallel growth in urban industrial employment and urban population, from the late 1940s the growth of industrial employment in cities suddenly exploded. As these two curves departed from each other during the 1950s and 1960s, the commuter population rose sharply. The 'gap' between these two curves, and the proportion of working-class commuters (living in villages and working in cities), measured the degree of under-urbanization. In other words, under-urbanization appeared at that time of history when socialist industrialization began.

But this could be a sheer coincidence. In order to substantiate further a causal link between the socialist character of the economy and under-urbanization, one should be able to identify the mechanism by which socialist extensive industrialization produced a delayed urban growth. It is not difficult to find such a 'smoking gun'. Under-urbanization was the direct consequence of the policy of socialist extensive industrialization, which economized on 'non-productive' investments – such as those in housing, or other non-productive infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and even shops – and maximized the volume of investments in industry. The drastic rechanneling of resources away from personal and collective consumption to industrial, and particularly heavy industrial, development was only possible in an economic regime which eliminated private property and in which central planners could effectively redistribute the surplus. In market economies – that is, economic systems based on private property – extensive industrialization occurred with less or no retardation of infrastructural development. Under-urbanization was thus a spatial expression of distinctively socialist economic growth. Since, during the phase of socialist extensive industrialization, urban housing and infrastructure grew slowly, it made sense to try to keep the workforce, which was freed from agriculture and redirected into the newly established industry, in its old place of residence. In this way the existing housing and public infrastructure, no matter how inadequate, could still serve the new industrial working class.

This theory of under-urbanization captured a unique and important feature of urban growth under state socialism. It is indeed quite safe to say that socialist redistributive economies achieved the task of urbanization with significantly less spatial concentration of urban population than market capitalism.

The theory of under-urbanization can be extended, and therefore somewhat modified, in two ways. First, the comparative study of urban growth of different socialist countries, and in particular the comparison of East European experiences with those of 'socialist developing countries' (especially in Asia), proved that under-urbanization was only one of the possible socialist patterns of urbanization (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984; Forbes and Thrift, 1987). All socialist countries, in virtually all historic epochs, seem to have produced relatively little urban growth. But the extent and explanation of this difference varied across countries in different epochs. In the case of post-war Vietnam or Kampuchea, the term 'under-urbanization' is not sufficient to describe the massive decline in urban population which resulted from the attempt of communist elites to consolidate their power and to break the back of, or even eliminate, the urban bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie. Vietnam and Kampuchea for a few years thus experienced a significant decline in urban population, or *deurbanization*. This *deurbanization* was intimately linked to the transformation of class and property relations in these countries, as the victorious communist elite removed the bourgeoisie from the cities in order to consolidate its political power and the hegemony of public ownership and central planning. In China from the early 1960s until the mid-1970s, or in Cuba in the late 1960s, however, the urban population did not decline, but the proportion of the population which lived in towns remained basically unaltered. In China, this was the result of an industrialization strategy which created a significant proportion of the new industrial jobs within the communes in the countryside. During this epoch China and Cuba were not *deurbanized*, although they followed a strategy of economic growth which could produce an even slower urban population growth than the one identified in under-urbanized Eastern Europe. In one paper, the term 'zero-urban population growth' was used to describe this third pattern of socialist industrialization (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984). In other words, the comparative study of socialist urbanization among different socialist countries demonstrated that under-urbanization was the characteristic only of those East European countries which entered socialism and began the task of socialist industrialization as relatively developed countries. The economically more backward countries were likely to produce even slower urban growth rates, as socialist developing countries spectacularly avoided the pitfalls of over-urbanization.

Second, during the 1980s some of the East European countries – East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – entered the 'post-industrial' age. This had far-reaching consequences for the character of their urbanization. The following is a brief summary of the expe-

riences of Hungary during the 1980s and a discussion of the novel features of socialist urbanization in this last stage of state socialism. The argument is that, even after the process of industrialization was completed, socialist urban development did not converge with the Western pattern but entered a qualitatively new trajectory, which was as different from socialist under-urbanization as it was from Western post-industrial regional structures.

After the late 1970s in Hungary, the industrial population ceased to increase. Actually, the proportion of blue-collar industrial workers began to decline. So could one expect a 'correction' of under-urbanization under these circumstances? During the extensive industrialization period, planners argued that one should not eat the 'goose which lays the golden egg'. In other words, the low level of public investment in urban housing and in the means of collective consumption was promised to be only temporary, and would be compensated for after the productive capacities of the economy were properly developed. Interestingly, nothing like this compensation happened in socialist urban and regional development in the last, post-industrial epoch of state socialism. Public investment in urban housing declined rather than increased, and the population, which during the epoch of under-urbanization retained its rural residence, did not now move into cities. On the contrary, during the 1980s the decline of the rural population, rather than accelerating, slowed down (Enyedi, 1984).

Still, Enyedi (1984) argued that such a slow-down of urban population indicates convergence. He believed that this proved that socialist societies follow in the footsteps of Western urbanization and, after an epoch of urban population explosion, by the 1970s-1980s they had entered the stage of suburbanization (see also Enyedi, chapter 4, this volume). This author disagrees, for two reasons. First, in the light of what has been shown above, it is difficult to accept that during the extensive industrialization epoch a real urban explosion took place. Certainly the urban population grew, but its rate of growth fell significantly behind that of the urban industrial workforce. Socialism produced industrialization with exceptionally small urban, and large rural, populations. Additionally, the stabilization of rural communities in Hungary during the 1980s was a very different phenomenon, in terms of its social content, from suburbanization in the United States during the 1950s. The Hungarian villages, in which 40 per cent of the population lived by 1990, were quite *rural* places. About 90 per cent of the residents of these settlements produced agricultural goods, and about half of the rural residents even produced food for markets, significantly complementing their industrial incomes with

incomes from part-time family farming (Szelenyi, 1988: 28-32). These settlements were strikingly different places from the suburbs of Long Island during the 1950s and 1960s. Socialist countries, in a quite extraordinary way, entered the post-industrial stage with large and apparently, for the time being, stable rural populations, heavily involved in part-time family farming. This feature of their development was closely linked to the socialist character of the social and economic order. It reflected the inability of the collectivized sector of agriculture to feed the population. It was also a result of a decades-long struggle by the rural new working class to carve out for itself some autonomy in the 'second economy', which was an emergent private sector.

Let me summarize the ways in which the theory of under-urbanization has to be reformulated in the light of evidence from cross-national research and developments during the late socialist period in the economically more advanced countries of Eastern Europe. In different socialist countries, including socialist developing countries, one can find not one but several patterns of urbanization; that is, several different ways in which urban and industrial growth are matched with each other. But all these patterns are different from those which were followed by market capitalist economies at similar stages of growth or which characterize post-communist urban development. All socialist societies industrialized with less spatial concentration of population than market capitalist economies. Furthermore, as this phase of industrialization was completed, socialist societies - as long as they retained the hegemony of public ownership and redistributive or central planning - did not 'catch up' in urban population growth. They did not converge with the trajectory followed by Western societies during the 1950s and 1960s. While in their post-industrial phase, as one can anticipate from figure 10.2, socialist societies produced new types of regional arrangement (after all, economic growth or stage of industrialization is an intervening variable!), these arrangements were qualitatively different from those observable in the West in the early stages of post-industrialism.

SOCIALISM AND URBANISM

The notion of urbanism is more vague and therefore its measurement is even more problematic than that of urban population growth. But, despite such measurement problems, scholars such as Simmel and Wirth did indeed capture something important about

human experience in cities with the notion of urbanism, in their attempt to define urban social relations as qualitatively different phenomena from non-urban social existence.

With little systematic empirical evidence to support the claims, the following argument rests basically on personal observation. The intention is to show that there was less urbanism in socialist cities than in similar capitalist cities in at least three senses of the term: there was less urban diversity; there was less economizing with space and consequently lower inner-city urban density, including the density of social interaction in inner urban public places; and there was less urban marginality. Let me elaborate and try to indicate that these indicators of less urbanism were consequences of socialist urban socio-economic and political organization.

Less diversity

One of the most striking differences found when crossing the Berlin Wall before it fell was less diversity in the eastern part of the city. To put it more generally, a somewhat mundane but obvious indicator of such a limited diversity was the relative scarcity of urban services, such as shops, restaurants, advertisements and street vendors in socialist cities. The cities of Eastern Europe are, of course, quite different from each other from this point of view, and some of them have also changed quite radically over time. Budapest, or even Prague, demonstrated more of this indicator of urbanism from this point of view than East Berlin or Warsaw (largely rebuilt under socialism), and the least urban places were, of course, the new towns, the so called 'socialist towns' such as Nowa Huta or Dunaujvaros. During the last 20 years of socialism Budapest also altered greatly, but these changes mainly reflected adaptation to the needs of tourists from the West and the emergence of small private business in the retail trade. But even if one takes Budapest, the East European socialist city which probably demonstrated the highest degree of urbanism during the socialist epoch, one could argue that it was a more vibrant place before World War II, or even at the turn of the century, offering a greater variety of shops, restaurants and other services than it did at the peak of its socialist period of development. For a much smaller population, Budapest during the 1930s, or at the turn of the century, had a larger number of retail trade institutions and was more of a 'market place' than it was even by the end of state socialism.

Less economizing with space

Inner urban land was exclusively or overwhelmingly publicly owned in all socialist cities. While land markets operated with relative freedom in rural areas or on the peripheries of the cities, markets could only be 'simulated' in the downtown area during socialism. For some time after socialist transformation, the dominant philosophy was that urban land does not have a value under socialism. Thus, urban planners could operate without the constraints of land prices. After a long time, the absurdity of such a position was realized and attempts were made to install a mechanism which would measure the value of land, simulating its market price if competing owners determined, on self-regulating markets, the prices of inner urban locations. But since the monopoly of public ownership was retained, this remained a somewhat fictitious activity. Thus, urban planners in socialist cities had a significantly greater degree of freedom in finding space for their plans than did those in capitalist cities.

As a result, urban planners in socialist cities typically could be more generous in using space and could pay more attention to aesthetic rather than to narrow economic considerations in their urban design. One good example was Alexander Platz in East Berlin, indeed an impressive development, which expressed some kind of imperial grandeur and responded to certain ceremonial needs of a socialist society. Such a rather luxurious use of inner urban space is not unheard of in a capitalist city either, but the creation of such a public place in a market economy is very exceptional, while it appeared quite normal and functional in a socialist non-market economy.

Another example of the planners' priorities was the debate among Budapest city planners during the early 1970s about high-rise developments in the city. Many of these planners were vehemently opposed to such development in the central business district (CBD) in Pest, basically on aesthetic grounds. Their argument was that one should preserve the beauty of the urban vista one gets of Pest from the Buda Hills, and therefore high-rise buildings should only be constructed around the line of the outer boulevard, to close this vista, rather than to disturb it. Most of the high-rise development in Budapest indeed has been outside the CBD and along the line of the outer boulevard.

It may be a reasonable hypothesis that urban planners in a socialist society were in a much better position than planners in a capitalist

society to use urban space in a more aesthetic manner, for the purposes of symbolic, political needs. They were less constrained by narrowly economic considerations. This more generous use of urban space had implications for the degree of urbanism and inner urban density, which, particularly in public places (all other conditions being equal), was likely to be lower in socialist cities.

Less marginality

Robert Park (1928), under the influence of Georg Simmel, argued that one of the most important features of urbanism is the existence of urban marginality, both in its 'positive' and in its 'negative' senses. People living in cities are more likely to be marginal, thus less rigidly controlled by existing norms, and thus more creative. In this sense, urban marginality explains why cities are dynamic and innovative places. Urban tolerance of marginality is also demonstrated in tolerance of innovation. But urban marginality inevitably has side effects too. There is also more deviance, such as crime, prostitution and homelessness, in urban places.

While Park's interesting ideas about the link between urbanism and marginality, and in particular about cities and deviance, have been challenged, it seems quite certain that there is indeed more marginality in capitalist cities than there ever was in socialist ones. Other conditions being equal, the cities of socialist Eastern Europe were relatively safe from crime. There were relatively few of the extreme expressions of poverty, such as beggars or homeless people on the streets, in railway stations and under bridges. And one had to search far longer than in similar cities of Western Europe to find prostitutes or drug dealers.

One can evaluate the relative lack of marginality in different ways. These phenomena can be cited as proof of the success of socialist welfare policies. The societies of Eastern Europe, so much poorer than the United States, could operate with virtually no homelessness. But they can also be evaluated more negatively, attributing them more to the strictness of police control than to the success of the welfare state. In the socialist cities of Eastern Europe, it was illegal to be homeless (or unemployed); thus the police 'took care' of those who tried to sleep in parks, or under bridges, or who just hung around without the address of an employer on their ID card. But irrespective of the evaluation, by and large socialism – with a commitment to provide at least some housing for all, with a stricter system of police surveillance, with the almost inevitable trend towards full

employment of a dominantly redistributive economy – produced relatively little marginality in its cities.

However, during the 1980s there were signs of 'convergence' with Western urban development; urban marginality increased, although this was not always greeted with much enthusiasm. By the end of the 1980s, there was more open prostitution on the streets of Budapest, there were people sleeping in the parks and on the railway stations, and there may have been some permanently homeless people. There was also more 'bohemian' marginality, such as street musicians, artists who, for a few dollars, drew your picture, punks and probably also a drug trade. This 'convergence' was a response to Western tourism, the decay of the redistributive economy, and the market gaining ground even in the allocation of labour and housing, thus generating unemployment, for instance. Importantly, this was an indication that Eastern Europe was moving towards its transition to post-communism, in which the totalitarian system of political and police control began to break down and civil society gained at least a relative autonomy from the political state. Thus the convergence in urban marginality coincided with some trend towards convergence with the Western economic and political system.

DID THE URBAN FORMS DIFFER IN SOCIALIST SOCIETIES?

Sufficient evidence has been provided, by ecological research, to establish that the socialist cities of Eastern Europe demonstrated a fair degree of segregation by occupation and ethnicity. While there may be disagreement among researchers about the degree, with some arguing that there was less segregation under socialism than under capitalism, and with others contesting this view, there is not much controversy about the fact that segregation did exist and that it could not just all be blamed on the 'capitalist past'.³ In the light of the research evidence available, one can conclude that socialist cities, as they operated in their socialist ways, by restricting markets and by regulating regional processes, primarily through central planning, did produce and reproduce the asymmetrical allocation of social classes, occupational and ethnic groups in space.

But was there any difference in terms of the forms this segregation took? Could one identify a spatial structure, zonal or sectoral or some other sort of model, or patterns of segregation which could be linked to the socialist character of these systems? Or were these urban forms universal, the same in former socialist Eastern and in the capitalist

Western Europe? While most research on the spatial structure of East European cities under communism either did not explore this question or, at least implicitly, assumed urban forms were not different under capitalism and socialism, the hypothesis here is that the redistributive character of a socialist economy had consequences – precisely what they were may require further systematic research – for the inner urban spatial distribution of social classes, occupational and ethnic groups, and economic, social and cultural institutions.⁴

Here the analysis again starts with the classical or pure model of state socialism and the practices of urban planning from the late 1940s until the early or mid-1970s. The changes which then occurred until the collapse of state socialism in 1989 were the result of the increasing role being played by markets and private incentives. But first it is necessary to establish whether one can identify any uniquely socialist features of the 'pure model'.

There were two important elements of the urban economy which affected inner urban growth in the classical communist epoch: the prominent role of the state in financing, building and allocating new urban housing, and the highly restricted nature of land markets in inner cities. During the first decades of socialism, private housing construction was tolerated only in villages; all new housing in cities was to be built by the state, with state funding. Moreover, the existing inner-city housing stock, particularly housing in apartments, was nationalized. As mentioned above, there were no functioning urban land markets. Inner urban land could not be bought or sold by private individuals, although, in transactions between state agencies, some market-simulated prices were charged. But these transactions happened within the state sector among firms with soft budget constraints.

Such a dominant role for public ownership in inner-city housing had certain important ecological consequences (see also Haussermann, chapter 7, this volume). The quality of the existing housing stock deteriorated, leading to a physical, and even the social, decay of established neighbourhoods. Furthermore, almost all new building was concentrated in large new developments, typically at a significant distance from the decaying city centres. The nationalization of existing urban housing has led without exception, in all socialist countries, to a neglect of the stock. Housing authorities were under tremendous pressure to keep rents low in order to match the low wages, and to build as much new housing as possible. This policy, with low rent revenues and pressure to use funds for new construction, meant that the existing housing stock was not adequately maintained, and by the late 1960s it began to deteriorate seriously. Signs

of physical decay could be seen in inner cities in the few old neighbourhoods which survived World War II in East Berlin, Warsaw, the old city of Prague and most of inner Pest.

The laws which regulated the character and location of new housing construction reinforced this effect. First, there was a trend towards concentrating all new housing in larger developments, rather than spreading it around the urban space. There were several reasons for this. Most importantly, the new housing was built by large state construction firms and designed by large state planning agencies. Construction firms and planning agencies preferred large building projects consisting of 5,000–15,000 dwelling units rather than smaller housing projects of low-rise, detached buildings, in order to reap (supposed) economies of scale. Development by the early 1970s of construction technologies, especially the introduction of 'house-factories' (that is, large-scale plants for the production of prefabricated units), which were justified more by the organization of the construction industry than by economic criteria, further reinforced this trend towards large-scale construction. When the 'house-factories' were established, the construction industry was suffering from labour shortages. But instead of increasing wages and attracting labour by market means, it was decided to build these factories, reducing on-site construction work to the mere assemblage of these elements. In this way, the construction industry in the East European socialist countries 'economized', by replacing cheap though scarce labour with expensive technology, while resisting market pressure for wage increases. This new technology reinforced the attraction of construction firms and planners to large-scale, new housing development. It appeared to be more rational to prepare land for development, build roads, unload large quantities of prefabricated elements, and operate cranes capable of handling these heavy elements if the construction site was extensive.

The restricted nature of land markets also contributed to the deterioration of old, centrally located neighbourhoods and helped to rationalize the concentration of most new construction of large housing developments on the outskirts of cities. Since rents were below the replacement costs, they did not reflect market prices in any way (and this was as true for industrial and commercial land use in inner cities as for residential buildings). There was little pressure on the city landlord to improve land use in central locations. Thus, as far as the owner/municipal authority was concerned, there were no economic limits on the deterioration of old neighbourhoods. By contrast, the municipality was greatly interested in building new housing where the least possible urban renewal was necessary. Urban

renewal appeared to have only costs (one had to find new housing for every apartment which was bulldozed) and no economic benefits. Under these circumstances, the new housing estates were built on the first available unoccupied land.

Physically deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods, with new housing estates leapfrogging them and forming a new zone around them, were the major changes in the inner urban structure of East European socialist cities between the 1950s and mid-1970s. This had something to do with population succession as well. For two decades, before the re-emergence of private housing, the urban middle class was overwhelmingly served by the public sector. It had little choice but to move into the new housing estates if it had no previous housing, or if it wanted to escape the increasingly deteriorating inner neighbourhoods. Many such households did so. So until the mid-1970s, the new housing estates had a distinctively middle-class character and the inner-city neighbourhoods began to lose social status. The inner city kept the old and poorer families and began to attract the lower-class immigrants such as immigrant Gypsies, as in the case of several Budapest inner-city neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were becoming slums.

This, in many ways, was a fundamental change from the pre-socialist ecological pattern of these cities. Prior to World War II, the East European cities were quite similar to many West European cities, such as Paris. This is certainly very true for Berlin, Prague and Budapest. A significant proportion of the urban bourgeoisie lived in prestigious inner-city neighbourhoods and the immigrant proletariat often had to settle on the outskirts, in the 'banlieux'. As public ownership of the existing housing stock led to the decay of inner-city neighbourhoods and the pressure to avoid urban renewal, all new housing became located in large housing estates on undeveloped land, creating a middle-class or even upper middle-class zone where these working-class 'banlieux' used to be. The ecological structure of these cities has changed significantly.

A mid-1980s study of the ecological structure of Budapest questioned whether the deteriorating inner neighbourhoods created large, geographically identifiable areas, and challenged the view that the new housing developments form a merged zone which encircles these deteriorating areas (Csanádi and Ladányi, 1985). Still, it is likely that no matter how large-scale or how small-scale the process described above was, it did lead to a novel rearrangement of the population, and of high- and low-quality, desirable and undesirable housing in urban space. This new rearrangement was caused, the claim here is, by uniquely socialist characteristics of the urban

economy. Thus they presented a socialist urban form, which is distinctively different from the forms we knew in these countries before socialist transformation and equally different from the forms which would be likely to evolve without a socialist reconstruction.

During the last decade, some of these processes were significantly altered, and in Hungary probably more so than elsewhere. The most important change was a major expansion of private housing. Already during the last decade of socialism, some of the old housing was privatized. Also, private housing construction in cities was encouraged from the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the housing market gained ground, public housing contracted. After the 1970s, the urban middle class was more likely to build condominiums (cooperatives) for themselves or their children. They tried to move away from the previously quite desirable housing developments and towards the ecologically most attractive locations, such as in the surrounding hills or along the riverside in Budapest. These developments fundamentally altered, the social status of housing development. As unbuilt-on land nearer to the city centre was all occupied, the newest housing development began to move further out, at excessive commuting distances. These developments were less and less attractive for the middle class, which now had an alternative in condominium development in the previously bourgeois quarters. They disliked the poor location of the housing estates and were increasingly sensitive to living near working-class residents and ethnic minorities, particularly Gypsies, in these developments. Thus the fifth decade of state socialism saw a new trend in population succession, the zone of new housing estates began to lose social status, there was a re-bourgeoisification of traditional bourgeois neighbourhoods, and even the first signs of gentrification of inner-city areas were under way.

CITIES AFTER SOCIALISM

The phenomenon discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter – the 'socialist city' – is about to disappear. In 1989, Eastern Europe began to enter a post-communist phase. These concluding remarks present the most accurate diagnosis so far achievable concerning the current social characteristics of East European societies, together with some speculations about the possible future trends of development, in particular the prospects for urban social change in the region. Since the effects of post-communist transformation are very recent and this author's knowledge of all parts of the region is quite limited, these

comments on post-communist urban processes will be mainly restricted to the situation in Hungary.

Eastern Europe in post-communist transition

In the whole region, the three major constituents of the state socialist socio-economic and political order were dismantled:

- 1 The state monopoly ownership of major means of production was abolished, at least in legal terms. Property laws were introduced, according to which private property is treated as equal to public property (for an extended analysis see Marcuse, chapter 5, this volume). In economic policy, the key slogan is privatization: the aim of the political elites in power is to remove the state from the productive sphere, leaving it as the exclusive domain of private entrepreneurs.
- 2 The system of one-party rule came to an end. The ruling parties, which had legitimated themselves under the banners of revolutionary socialism and Marxism-Leninism, accepted a multi-party parliamentary democracy, changed their political colours and re-labelled themselves as social democratic, socialist or democratic socialist parties. Multi-party elections were held, which in some countries could be called 'free'.
- 3 The social structure is also undergoing a sharp change. The classical stratification system of state socialism could have been described as a single-rank hierarchy, with the cadre elite on the top and the working or popular classes at the bottom. Now the cadre elite has been unseated and replaced by a new political class, composed of technocrats, literati, academics and other members of the intelligensia (many of whom played a key role in politics in 1989–90). A new class is also in the making: the class of the neo-bourgeoisie. These societies are in the process of transition from a 'socialist rank order' to a stratification system based on class cleavages.⁵

The description above of structural changes in Eastern Europe specified those three key characteristics that are used to distinguish state socialism, or Soviet-type societies from Western capitalism: state monopoly of ownership of the means of production, the one-party state, and the absence of capitalist class relations. All that is claimed here is that, as these features have disappeared, Eastern Europe is now beyond socialism, or communism. These are deep-seated, far-reaching structural alterations, which are not altered significantly by changes in political fortunes. Thus the electoral victories of the socialist parties in some of these countries (in September 1993 in Poland or in May 1994 in Hungary) do not indicate a return to state socialism. As the Hungarian socialist prime minister, Gyula Horn, put it so eloquently in an interview given to an Austrian

newspaper shortly after he won the elections: 'now in Hungary the socialists will build capitalism.' It is, however, also obvious that these countries are not modern capitalist formations, at least not as yet. A number of interesting and provoking theses have been advanced to describe and explain the system which is emerging. Although these cannot be discussed here, two deserve to be mentioned. The first is David Stark's (1990) formulation that in Eastern Europe the transition is from 'plan' to 'clan' (rather than to 'market'). Stark (1992b) has also pointed out that privatization implies a path-dependent transformation of property rights rather than a simple transition from public to private ownership. The second is Michael Burawoy and Pavel Krotov's characterization of the post-communist Russian economic system as 'merchant capitalism' (1992; see also Burawoy, 1992).

Post-communism is hardly a stable formation, capable of self-reproduction; eventually it will move in one direction or another. In 1989–90, modernization theory was again placed on the social science agenda; the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was commonly accepted, indicated the 'end of history'. By the mid-1990s, the final convergence of the whole world under the model of liberal capitalism was thought to be under way. However, many commentators remain sceptical. The first five years of post-communism showed that the evolutionary, path-dependent character of change is strong and the costs of transition to capitalism are higher than expected by most analysts.

After 1989, the whole region entered what Janos Kornai (1990) described as the 'crisis of post-communist transformation'.⁶ This refers to one of the most if not the most severe economic crisis in modern history (for further details see Andrusz, chapter 2, this volume). The crisis of post-communist transformation is certainly both deeper and wider than the Great Depression was. By 1994, GNP in the region had fallen by some 30 per cent and industrial production by some 40 per cent. Unemployment had increased from virtually zero to 15–30 per cent, the inflation rate was well above 20 per cent, and in some countries it reached up to double this proportion. By 1993–4, however, the more successful economies – the Polish, the Czech and the Hungarian – were bottoming out and showed signs of growth, but even they were not likely to surpass their 1988 levels of economic performance much earlier than the turn of the century. It is quite possible that Michael Burawoy (1992: 784) will prove to be correct: the post-Soviet and East European states, rather than moving towards modern capitalism and catching up with the core of the capitalist world system, may follow the laws 'of a merchant capitalism,

or some might say of feudal capitalism – ploughing a third road to the Third World'. For the time being, it is not possible to predict with any precision where post-communist societies will be inserted in the capitalist world economy: how close they can get to the core or how far they go towards the periphery.

The spatial consequences of post-communist transformation

East European cities are already experiencing far-reaching changes in all the three dimensions of urban development where it was possible to detect 'socialist characteristics': the urban-rural relationship which evolved under state socialism is at breaking point and major dislocations of the population may be expected as the crisis of post-communist transformation evolves; the 'urbanism' of post-communist cities has already undergone spectacular changes; changes can also be detected in urban forms and in patterns of social segregation.

An end to under-urbanization?

It is possible that, with capitalist restructuring of the economy, a sharp decline in the size of the rural population will occur. The countries of Eastern Europe reached post-communism with a high rural population: a third or more of their population still lived in rural settlements and was involved in one way or another with food production. One important source of under-urbanization was the inability of the socialist collective farm sector to produce sufficient food to meet the needs of the people living in the towns. So the rural population supplemented the supply from their own smallholdings, which in all countries, but especially in the more liberal ones such as Hungary, generated substantial incomes. These incomes enabled the rural population to achieve respectable living standards and in particular to build good-quality rural housing.

During the post-communist epoch, the state socialist agrarian system has begun to disintegrate rapidly. As the national economies opened up to world market competition and price subsidies were eliminated, the rural economy went into serious decline and, in some instances, total collapse. In Hungary, for instance, if gross agricultural production in 1988 was 100, it decreased to 90 in 1990, 84 in 1991, 66 in 1992, and a devastating 50 in 1993, before stabilizing in 1994 at the 1993 level (Harcza and Kovach, forthcoming). The decline of agricultural production can be attributed in part to the

decline of the domestic market – domestic meat consumption in Hungary, for instance, declined by some 20 per cent by 1992 in comparison with 1988 (ibid.) – to the importation of subsidized West European agricultural goods without tariff protection to East European markets, and to the virtual disappearance of the former COMECON market.

Under these macro-economic conditions, both the former collective farm sector and the small-scale private farm economy crumbled. By the mid-1990s, the decollectivization of agriculture had not resulted in any substantial growth of private farming; it had only led to a restructuring of the (collective) latifundia and a sharp fall in the number of employees of large agricultural enterprises. Thus, for instance, in Hungary in 1994 over 70 per cent of arable land was being cultivated by successor organizations of the former cooperatives – quasi-private large estates; but while in 1988 the cooperatives employed over 1 million people, by 1994 the number of agricultural wage labourers had fallen to 200,000. Small family enterprises were in no better shape, and the rural industry supported by the agricultural cooperatives during the last period of state socialism had also virtually disappeared.

The result is massive rural unemployment. Those regions which are not within commuting distance of urban industrial centres are particularly heavily affected; here the unemployment rate can be two or three times higher than the national average. In Hungary, this is the case in the north and north-east (Borsod and Szabolcs-Szatmar counties) and in the south-west (Vas county), where unemployment can reach 40–50 per cent, or even higher levels in isolated villages.

So far, though, there is little sign of a post-communist *Landflucht* (flight from the land) – under-urbanization continues to be reproduced, even though its socio-economic and political basis has been undermined. The reasons for this are: first, a weak push from the rural communities and, second, an even weaker pull from the urban centres. As a result of the crisis of post-communist transformation, there is a limited supply of jobs in urban centres; industries which are expanding or the growing tertiary sector offer employment to young and better-trained people, not the unskilled and semi-skilled working class which was kept in rural residences as a result of under-urbanization. Cities thus have little attraction for the population which is trapped in the villages; at the same time, rural living, while becoming difficult, still appears to be the better alternative. Rural housing is a major consideration. In the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Hungary but to some extent also in Poland and the former Czechoslovakia, good-quality rural housing was built. Although in

terms of the distribution of work places and other economic opportunities this housing may not be located in the 'right places', none the less it remains the best-quality housing available for this population. Furthermore, while the agricultural second economy no longer offers the opportunities it did when it had to compete only with the inefficient socialist sector, for the rural unemployed access to a garden and the ability to produce food are still a method of survival at the present time.

In fact, it is not inevitable that a *Landflucht* should occur. With some luck, and good social policies, the transformation may be manageable. Enyedi's predictions about suburbanization as the next stage of urban change may be more on target by the turn of the century than they were during the 1970s and 1980s. Villages which are within commuting distance of urban industrial centres may be transformed into dormitory working-class suburbs. In small countries such as Hungary and Bohemia, a substantial proportion of villages are close enough to cities for them to become 'rurbanized'. Furthermore, although most new job creation has so far been centred in cities, rural industrialization, the development of a rural tertiary sector and tourism may soften the pains of rural post-communist reconstruction. This author's key hypothesis, however, is that the mismatch between rural infrastructure, developed according to the logic of state socialism, and economic – typically urban – opportunities, created by 'merchant capitalism', will find no easy solution and sooner or later may result in major geographic shifts of the population.

Urbanism

Urbanism already shows significant changes. The transformation of former socialist cities is the most spectacular in this respect. The number of small shops, restaurants and street vendors is rapidly increasing. While GNP, industrial and agricultural production have declined, the tertiary sector has expanded even during the transformational crisis.

There is an increasing ethnic diversity in most East European metropolitan centres. The centre of Budapest bustles with Hungarian peasants from Transylvania, Polish black-marketeers, Vietnamese and Chinese smugglers, all offering their goods to tourists. Arab money changers dominate the currency black market, which the police no longer tries to control. The city has become almost as colourful as a Third World metropolis. More generally, Eastern Europe is becoming a demographic buffer zone between the Third World and Western Europe. Since the early 1990s, Germany and

Austria have tightened their immigration policies, so now Poland and Hungary have become the destination of a great deal of immigration from the former Soviet states, from other East European communist countries and from the Third World. Just a decade ago, countries like Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were ethnically quite homogeneous – only Gypsies represented some ethnic diversity. This has rapidly changed: now Turks, Arabs, Russians, Chinese, Vietnamese live in substantial numbers in these countries, diversifying their culture, and even their cuisine.

The increase in urban marginality is also striking. Just as it did in the late nineteenth century, Budapest now supplies young women for the West European sex industries (as do Poland, Russia and other Eastern European countries). Prostitutes are now easy to find in East European cities, or even along international highways. As one drives from Vienna to Budapest, if passport control does not alert you to the fact that you have passed the border, you will notice it from the sight of young, and not so young, women offering their bodies for sale along the highway. Pornography is a major business; the Italian pornography industry is well supplied with Hungarian young women, for example.

Homeless people appeared in the parks and streets of Budapest well before the fall of communism. During the 1980s, homelessness was attributed to the easing of police control. Some of the homeless were people who found the city street a more attractive choice than a repressive home environment, and since the police did not bother them they stayed on the streets. However, post-communism has accelerated the process: now people who do not pay rent can be and occasionally are removed from their homes by police and left in the streets.

There is a sharp increase in crime and deviance. Inner-city streets are crowded with Gypsy beggars and pick-pockets, and you have to watch your wallet as closely as in the busiest streets of New York or Mexico City. It is not clear whether it is the privatization or the criminalization of the economy which proceeds faster. Car theft is so common and carried out so professionally that the police do not really want to be bothered with it. International gangs operate; the car stolen in the streets of Budapest is within hours smuggled to the Ukraine or Romania.

Criminalization is helped by the confusion and the legitimacy problem of law enforcement agencies. The police are so concerned to avoid accusations of harassment that they are reluctant even to perform their crime-prevention functions. Border controls, including those by the customs authorities, are lax for the same reasons.

Nuclear materials, drugs and armaments are easily smuggled. Measured by these standards, there is little doubt where post-communist Eastern Europe is heading; it appears to be moving more in the direction of the Near East than that of Western Europe. The boredom of the socialist cities is gone, but so is their safety.

Suburbanization and inner urban decay

Urban forms change more slowly than urban diversity. It is obvious, though, that social inequalities are increasing sharply, and this is beginning to affect patterns of urban social segregation as well.

So far the new rich have tended to move into the traditional middle-class districts, where they have bought up the villas of the old bourgeoisie and renovated them, or built luxurious though often tasteless condominiums or town houses, and in some cases even new villas in their place. As the existing stock of properties in the old middle-class suburbs is gradually bought up, the expanding new bourgeoisie and the professional class – whose living standards are rapidly increasing – are beginning to look for new locations. This may lead to suburbanization or may result in the gentrification of inner-city areas. At present, suburbanization is the dominant trend: not only is the air in the inner-cities too polluted, but with poverty, crime and prostitution flourishing in downtown areas, the rich find it healthier, safer and more pleasant to move into formerly rural villages around the metropolitan centres. There are, for example, signs of this happening around Buda, where areas such as Szentendre and Solymar are beginning to look like Western-style suburbs.

If Eastern Europe successfully closes the gap with Western Europe and local governments can solve the problems of air pollution and ensure inner-city safety, then gentrification of inner-city areas may at least complement the suburbanization of peripheral (formerly rural) villages. While inner-city neighbourhoods in cities like Budapest and Prague deteriorated both physically and socially during the decades of state socialism, they are eminently 'gentrifiable'. There is substantial reasonable inner-city housing, built around the turn of the century, which, like inner-city housing in American cities with histories reaching back to the nineteenth century, could become attractive for Yuppies and the nouveau riche.⁷

The formerly new housing developments are now in sharp physical and social decline. Those built (during the 1960s and early 1970s) closer to the city centre initially attracted the professional class, but this began to change during the last decade of state socialism. Soviet

'house-building factories' flooded most East European cities with low-quality housing. The lack of vacant building plots in the inner areas forced construction organizations towards the periphery. As this happened, the social status of new housing areas began to decline. The process is now being accelerated by the post-communist transformation. Now local governments try to relinquish control over this housing. However, this low-quality housing, located in undesirable neighbourhoods, and poorly served by public transportation and other services, cannot easily be privatized. Only those who are trapped in it would buy it, and, if they do, they will have no resources to pay for the maintenance or renovation (the physical structure of these buildings began to deteriorate within 10–20 years of their date of construction). Those who can afford to move are beginning to escape from them, leaving the poor and ethnic minorities to concentrate in them (a process of residualization familiar in the similar estates on the periphery of many Western European cities). As a result, the whole belt of 'new housing estates' is likely to become the slums of the early twenty-first century. One of the major challenges facing urban planners is how to eliminate these slums. However, if Eastern Europe remains on the periphery of the world system, then their decay may continue and the new rich will escape these cities to their luxurious suburbs, defended by their private police forces and served by high-quality private schools, hospitals and shopping malls.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

If we now ask our initial question again – did socialism make any difference to urban development in Eastern Europe? – we can answer in the affirmative. The East European societies achieved industrialization under socialism with less population concentration in space than they would have had if they had followed a market capitalist path of development. The East European cities lost some of their 'urbanism' during their socialist epoch: they offered less diversity and choice in urban services, less urban stimuli in public places, and less marginality than they had before World War II. And, finally, particularly during the first two or three decades of socialism, the prominence of the state in providing urban housing, especially new housing construction in the cities and the restriction on the functioning of the urban land market, resulted in the concentration of new housing in large housing estates, built a fair distance from the city centres. These developments attracted mainly the middle class and

were, at least in part, responsible for the physical and social decay of the traditionally quite prestigious inner-city neighbourhoods. The resulting new social geography of the East European cities was undoubtedly the product of socialist urban planning and a socialist urban management system.

Today it appears that state socialism just proved to be 'the longest and most painful way from capitalism to capitalism' – as a bitter East European joke puts it. But though socialism eventually fell, while the socialist experiment lasted it did produce historically unique patterns of urbanization. Socialism, by eliminating or drastically reducing the role of private ownership of the means of production and private property in urban land and housing, for better or worse, broke the correlation between industrial and urban growth that we knew from the history of Western capitalist development, and created cities which were different from their capitalist counterparts both in the character of their urbanism and in their urban forms.

Now urban research on Eastern Europe has a fascinating research agenda. The dismantling of the inherited socialist patterns of urbanization and urban forms is a historically unprecedented process. How it unfolds will enrich our knowledge of capitalist urban development. Most importantly, the immediate future of Eastern Europe will help us understand whether dependent capitalist development, with its urban consequences, is avoidable or not; which urban policies may prevent such a development; and which policies may lock these societies into the 'development of under-development'. The years to come, just like the decades we left behind, may not be that cheerful for those who live in the cities of Eastern Europe, but they will undoubtedly be very instructive for the scholars of urban processes.

NOTES

This is a significantly expanded and revised version of an earlier paper, written before the fall of communism and published as 'East European cities – how different are they?' in Greg Gudin and Aiden Southall (eds), *Urban anthropology in China*, Leiden and New York, E.J. Brill, 41–64.

- 1 For the most comprehensive and sophisticated elaboration of the ecological position and for an overview of the current literature see Wilson, 1983.
- 2 Ecologists often believe in an 'equilibrium state of population concentration', which reflects the level of technology and economic growth (Wilson, 1983: 17; Hawley, 1971; Wardwell 1980).
- 3 For the most comprehensive analysis of urban ecological structure under socialism see French and Hamilton (1979). For a recent analysis of occupational segregation under socialism see Dangschat (1987).

- 4 For earlier publications on this topic see Szelenyi (1983, 1987).
- 5 What is the character of the social formation, which emerged as a result of these changes? The best term I can come up with is 'post-communism'. The concept of post-communism was first coined by Brzezinski (1989), who foreshadowed the fall of state socialism and used the concept of post-communism to describe what he believed to be an evolutionary step between communist totalitarianism and Western-style democracy. I have borrowed the term from Brzezinski, but I apply it in a value-neutral, descriptive way, without subscribing to modernization theory, which underlines Brzezinski's use of the term. The notion of post-communism tells us what Eastern Europe is leaving behind, without specifying where it is heading towards. Like the concepts of post-Marxism, post-structuralism, or post-modernism, that of post-communism defines our subject matter as what it is *not* without implying much about what it is.
- 6 In 1993, Kornai coined the term 'transformational recession'. In my view the depth of the economic decline is so severe that the term 'recession' is an understatement and the use of the term 'crisis' is in order.
- 7 For the time being, there is little sign of this happening. Budapest's city planners, for instance, created an enclave around Klauzal Square, a run-down inner-city area with a rapidly increasing Gypsy population. They rebuilt and modernized two blocks of housing (doing a good job of gentrification) and expected that its effect would spread. It did not. The Yuppies, or members of the upper middle class, the gentrifiers in other countries, here still prefer to move to the newly forming suburbs.

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