

# The Balanced Community

## Homogeneity or Heterogeneity in Residential Areas?

*The discussion of the relation between population homogeneity and social-life values, begun in an earlier article, is here extended to the larger question of the desirability of the balanced, or heterogeneous, community. A number of planners have advocated population heterogeneity as a means for achieving four sets of cultural, political, and educational ends or values. This article discusses each of the means-ends relationships, concluding that population heterogeneity contributes relatively little toward the achievement of these values. Nevertheless, heterogeneity is desirable, because as long as local taxation is the main support of community services, it will help to prevent undesirable inequalities in the level of community services. It is not, however, the best means of alleviating the glaring social and economic inequality now rampant in most metropolitan areas, and planners are therefore urged to place greater emphasis on policies that will reduce this inequality. The increased opportunity for all sectors of the population to make social and cultural choices in a more equalitarian society may also bring about greater heterogeneity in residential areas in the future.*

IN "PLANNING AND SOCIAL LIFE," which appeared in the May 1961 issue of the JOURNAL, I discussed the influence of propinquity and homogeneity on social relations. I tried to show that architectural and site plans can encourage or discourage social contact between neighbors, but that homogeneity of background or of interests or values was necessary for this contact to develop into anything more than a polite exchange of greetings. Without such homogeneity, more intensive social relations are not likely to develop, and excessive heterogeneity can lead to coolness between neighbors, regardless of their propinquity. Homogeneity is even

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*This is the second of two articles exploring the relationships between homogeneity, heterogeneity, and propinquity in social relations. The first, entitled "Planning and Social Life: Friendship and Neighbor Relations in Suburban Communities," appeared in the May 1961 issue of the JOURNAL.*

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more fundamental in friendship formation, and its presence allows people to find friends near by, whereas its absence requires them to look farther afield for friends.

These observations can be combined with a variety of value judgments, each resulting in alternative planning recommendations. I argued that positive, although not necessarily close, relations among neighbors and maximal opportunity for the free choice of friends both near and far from home were desirable values, and concluded that a moderate degree of homogeneity among neighbors would therefore be required.

The advocacy of moderate homogeneity was based on a single set of values, those concerning the quality of social life. Communities have many other functions besides sociability, however, and planning must therefore concern itself with other values as well. With such values in mind, many influential planners have advocated the balanced residential area, containing a typical cross section of dwelling-unit types and population characteristics, notably age groups and socio-economic levels.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Catherine Bauer, "Social Questions in Housing and Community Planning," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 7 (1951), p. 23; Lewis Mumford, "The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood

Population heterogeneity has generally been advocated for at least four reasons:<sup>2</sup>

1. It adds variety as well as demographic "balance" to an area and thus enriches the inhabitants' lives. Conversely, homogeneity is said to stultify, as well as to deprive people of important social resources, such as the wisdom of the older generation in the suburbs.

2. It promotes tolerance of social and cultural differences, thus reducing political conflict and encouraging democratic practices. Homogeneity increases the isolation between area residents and the rest of society.

3. It provides a broadening educational influence on children, by teaching them about the existence of diverse types of people and by creating the opportunity for them to learn to get along with these people. Homogeneity is thought to limit children's knowledge of diverse classes, ages, and races, and to make them less capable of association with others in later years.

4. It encourages exposure to alternative ways of life, for example, by providing intellectually inclined neighbors for the child from a bookless household, or by offering the mobile working-class family an opportunity to learn middle-class ways. Homogeneity freezes people in present ways of life.

These are actually ends to be achieved through population heterogeneity, and should be discussed as such. Two questions must then be answered:

1. Are the ends themselves desirable?
2. Is the balanced community a proper means for achieving them; that is, is it a logically and empirically verifiable means, free of undesirable by-products or consequences?

No one can quarrel with the ends. A society of diverse people taking pride in their diversity, enriching their own and their children's lives by it, and cooperating to achieve democracy and to alleviate useless social conflict is a delightful and desirable vision. I believe that the achievement of this vision is a legitimate planning goal, and the means to achieve it should be explored.

Whether or not the goal can be achieved simply by requiring diverse people to live together is debatable, however. Even if the planning or legislating of population heterogeneity could be implemented—which is doubtful at present—it is questionable whether a heterogeneous and balanced community would result in the envisaged way of life. Many other societal conditions would have to be altered before such a way of life is possible, notably the present degree of economic and

social inequality that now exists in the typical metropolitan area's population.

The data needed to determine the ends-means relationships I have suggested are not yet available, so that only tentative conclusions can be reached. The discussion will be limited to heterogeneity of age, class, and race—these being the most important criteria affecting and differentiating community life.<sup>3</sup>

## II

### *Heterogeneity and Social Relations*

The belief in the efficacy of heterogeneity is based on the assumption that if diverse people live together, they will inevitably become good neighbors or even friends and, as a result, learn to respect their differences. The comments about the importance of homogeneity in social relations in my previous article suggest that this assumption is not valid. A mixing of all age and class groups is likely to produce at best a polite but cool social climate, lacking the consensus and intensity of relations that is necessary for mutual enrichment. Instances of conflict are as probable as those of cooperation. For example, some old people who live in a community of young couples may vicariously enjoy their neighbors' children—and vice versa—but others will resent the youngsters' noise and the destruction they wreak on flowerbeds. Likewise, some older residents may be founts of wisdom for their younger neighbors, but others are insistent advocates of anachronistic ideas. In a rapidly changing society, the knowledge that the older generation has gathered by virtue of its experience is outdated more quickly than in the past, when social change was less rapid.

Class differences also result in a mixture of good and bad consequences. I noted in the earlier article that most neighbor disputes arise about the children and that they stem from differences in child-rearing norms

Unit," *Town Planning Review*, Vol. 24 (1954), pp. 267-268; Howard Hallman, "Citizens and Professionals Reconsider the Neighborhood," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 25 (1959) pp. 123-124; Elizabeth Wood, *A New Look at the Balanced Neighborhood* (New York: Citizen's Housing and Planning Council, December 1960). Reginald Isaacs' critique of the neighborhood plan is based on a similar point of view. See e.g., "The Neighborhood Theory," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 14 (1948), pp. 15-23.

<sup>2</sup> A fifth reason, the contribution of heterogeneity to aesthetic values is discussed at the end of the article. I shall not deal at all with economic reasons, for example, with the desirability of age heterogeneity in order to prevent tax burdens resulting from the flood of school-age children in suburban communities.

<sup>3</sup> Comments made in the May 1961 article about race as a symbol of class differences (especially on page 137 and in footnote 12) apply here also.

among the classes and among parents of different educational backgrounds. People who want to bring their children up one way do not long remain tolerant of the parents of a playmate who is being reared by diametrically opposed methods. People with higher incomes and more education may feel that they or their children are being harmed by living among less advantaged neighbors. The latter are likely to feel equally negative about the "airs" being put on by the former, although some may want to keep up, especially in matters concerning the children. This can wreck family budgets and, occasionally, family stability as well. Social and cultural mobility is difficult enough when it is desired, but it may become a burden to families who are forced into it involuntarily.

The negative consequences of heterogeneity are not inevitable, but they occur with regularity, even among the most well-intentioned people. As a result, a markedly heterogeneous community that spells enrichment to the planner—especially to the one who sees it only through maps, census reports, and windshield surveys—may mean endless bickering and unsettled feuds to the people who actually live in it.

Indeed, the virtues ascribed to heterogeneity are more often associated with the degree and type of population homogeneity found in the typical new suburb. Much has been written about the alleged dangers of homogeneity, but, frequently, these allegations are based on the false assumption that, because the suburbs as a whole are statistically more homogeneous than cities as a whole, suburbanites are all *alike*. Even if they were alike in age and income—which is not true—they would still be different in occupation, educational level, ethnic and religious background, and regional origin, as well as temperament.

In actual fact, many suburban subdivisions are more heterogeneous than the urban neighborhoods from which some of their residents came. For example, in Levittown, New Jersey, many people felt that they were encountering a greater mixture of backgrounds than where they had lived before.<sup>4</sup> The fact that most people were similar enough in age and, to a lesser extent, income, enabled them to become friendly with people of different occupations, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or regional origins for the first time in their lives. Many felt that they had been enriched by experiencing this diversity. This would not have been possible if marked differences in age and income had also been present. It would seem, therefore, that in the large "brand name" suburbs, at least, the relatively greater homogeneity of age and income provides the cultural and social prerequisites which allow people

to enjoy their neighbors' heterogeneity with respect to other, less basic characteristics.

### *Heterogeneity and Democracy*

Heterogeneity is also thought to engender the tolerance necessary for the achievement of local democracy and for the reduction of social and political conflict. When differences between people are small, residents of an area can develop tolerance toward each other; they can even agree to ignore some important differences that stand in the way of consensus. More extreme population heterogeneity is not likely to have the same result.

Sizable differences, especially with regard to fundamental social and economic interests, are not erased or set aside by the mere fact of living together. For example, many suburban communities today are split over the question of school expenditures. Upper-middle- and middle-class residents, for whom high-quality schooling is important regardless of price, cannot often find a common meeting ground with lower-middle-class residents, who may have different definitions of quality and who place less urgent priority on getting their children into a "good" college, or with working-class residents for whom tax economy is often—and of sheer necessity—the most important consideration.<sup>5</sup> Under such conditions, heterogeneity is not likely to encourage greater tolerance, and the struggle between competing points of view may be so intense that the relatively fragile norms of democratic procedure sometimes fall by the wayside. Homogeneity facilitates the workings of the democratic process, but this is no solution for a pluralist society such as ours. Nevertheless, heterogeneity itself does not facilitate the achievement of the democratic norms of community decision-making.

### *Heterogeneity and the Children*

The value of population heterogeneity for children is based on the assumption that they discover other age-groups and classes through visual contact, and that they learn how to live with them through the resulting

<sup>4</sup> Communities like Park Forest and Levittown may be more heterogeneous in class than smaller and higher-priced subdivisions. The low house-price attracts two types of owners: mobile young couples who will eventually buy more expensive houses as the husband advances in his career; and somewhat older families in which the husband has reached the peak of his earning power and who are buying their first, and probably last, house. These communities are also more likely than smaller subdivisions to attract newcomers to the metropolitan area, which creates a greater diversity of regional origins.

<sup>5</sup> In some suburbs, this conflict is complicated by religious differences. Moreover, Catholic families, who may have to support two school systems, often have lower family incomes than do the members of other religious groups.

social contact. In actual fact, however, children develop their conceptions of society and the ability to get along with diverse types from the actions and attitudes of the persons with whom they come into close and continual social contact—especially parents, playmates, and teachers. Mere visual contact does not, however, result in close contact. Although a city child may see all segments of society, he is not likely to come into close contact with them. Even if he does, there is no guarantee that he will learn to be tolerant of differences, especially if he has learned to evaluate these differences negatively at home or elsewhere. Parental attitudes or direct prohibitions can thus discourage a child from playing with other children whom he sees everyday. Conversely, a suburban child, who may not see diverse people in his community, is still likely to learn about them—and to evaluate them—from comments made by his parents. If these parents are well-educated, the child may even learn to become tolerant of people he has never seen. (In reality, city children get out of their own neighborhoods much less often than is sometimes imagined, and they may not see people of other ages, classes, and races unless they happen to live in particularly heterogeneous or changing residential areas.)

This issue may be illustrated by the relationship between the races. White city children probably see more nonwhites, at least from a distance, than do suburban children, although even in suburbs like Levittown and Park Forest, enough families hire domestic help to insure some visual contact with nonwhites. If community heterogeneity had the positive effects attributed to it, we should expect that city children, who do see more nonwhites, would exhibit greater racial tolerance than suburban ones. This has not happened, however.

In fact, the opposite is probably true. Children exhibit little or no racial intolerance until they are old enough to understand the attitudes and behavior patterns of their parents and other adults. These reactions reflect the current economic and social inequality of the white and nonwhite populations. If children could be isolated from such reactions, they might grow up with more tolerance than they now do. This is, of course, not possible. Consequently, until the inequality between the races is removed, there is little hope for a pervasive change in interracial understanding, either in the city or in the suburb.

The older city child differs from his suburban peer in that he is more likely to have close contact with children of diverse background, for example, of class and race, because urban schools usually draw from a wider variety of residential areas than suburban ones. Although researchers are still undecided whether

close contact will increase tolerance and understanding—or under what conditions it is likely to have more positive than negative effects—such contacts should be encouraged wherever possible.<sup>6</sup> This would suggest the desirability of heterogeneous schools, in the suburbs as well as in the city.

### *Heterogeneity and Exposure to Alternatives*

Heterogeneity is also valued for the opportunity it provides for exposure to alternative and, by implication, better ways of life. Elizabeth Wood's recent argument for the balanced neighborhood stresses this value. She is concerned primarily with public housing and argues that middle-class people have generally provided working-class ones with organizational leadership and with models to inspire them to accept middle-class standards. If public housing projects and the neighborhoods in which they are located are homogeneously working class or lower class, the population is deprived of the two functions supposedly performed by the middle class.<sup>7</sup>

Middle-class people have traditionally supplied leadership in settlement houses and similar institutions located in working-class neighborhoods; however, these institutions have not attracted large working-class clientele except from among the socially mobile and from children.<sup>8</sup> The latter tend to use the facilities, while ignoring the middle-class values being propagated by the staff. Middle-class people are also likely to be more active in voluntary associations, such as clubs, civic groups, and tenant organizations, than working-class people, but their activity is usually limited to organizations with middle-class goals, and these are shunned by working-class people. Such organizations do, however, provide leadership to the latter, by offering guidance to the socially mobile, and by pursuing activities which may benefit every class in the area. Occasionally, a middle-class person may also function as a leader of a predominantly working-class organization, although this is rare.

Instances of middle-class leadership abounded in the

<sup>6</sup> For an interesting study of the attitudes which young children bring to an interracial nursery school, and of the role of close contact in affecting the interracial relationship, see Mary E. Goodman, *Race Awareness in Young Children* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Press, 1952). The general problem is discussed in George E. Simpson and J. Milton Yinger, "The Sociology of Race and Ethnic Relations"; in Robert K. Merton, Leonard Broom, and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr. (eds.), *Sociology Today* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), pp. 397–398.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–21.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the working-class client's view of the settlement house, see Albert K. Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955), pp. 116–117.

annals of public housing during the 1930's and the 1940's. Today, however, public housing attracts or accepts mainly the deprived lower-class population, which stays away from middle-class institutions and does not often join voluntary associations of any kind. The deprived population needs and wants help, but so far, it has not often accepted leadership from the types of middle-class institutions and persons who offer it.

No one knows what motivates working-class people to adopt middle-class standards, or whether the presence of middle-class neighbors is likely to do so.<sup>9</sup> The new suburban communities could be studied advantageously from this viewpoint. My own impression is that heterogeneity enables those already motivated toward social mobility to learn from their middle-class neighbors and that, in some instances, the exposure to such neighbors can inspire previously unmotivated individuals to change their ways. As previously noted, close contact can have negative as well as positive consequences, for working-class people are as likely to resent the "uppity" behavior of middle-class residents as they are to adopt it. Success in teaching alternative ways of life seems to be dependent on three conditions. *First*, the people involved must have the necessary economic wherewithal and the social skills required for the new way. *Second*, sociologists of social stratification have found that ideas and values are diffused from one class to the one immediately "above" or "below" it, rather than between classes that diverge sharply in income, education, and other background characteristics. Consequently, positive effects are more likely to be achieved under conditions of moderate population heterogeneity. Extreme heterogeneity is likely to inhibit communication and to encourage mutual resentment, whereas moderate heterogeneity provides enough compatibility of interests and skills to enable communication—and therefore learning—to take place. *Third*, the "teachers" must be sympathetic to the needs and backgrounds of their students, and must have sufficient empathy to understand their point of view.

Wood suggests that heterogeneity be implemented through community facilities and neighborhood institutions, and that these be used to encourage the exposure to alternative ways, since the mixture of classes can be accomplished more easily than in residential arrangements. (A similar use of community facilities has recently been proposed by some planners and community organization officials concerned with the social aspects of urban renewal, in order to aid slum dwellers to adapt to life in nonslum urban surroundings).

I have already noted, however, that such agencies have had little success so far in converting working-

class clients to middle-class points of view. Although the lack of success can be explained on the basis of cultural differences between the classes, the existing research has not yet led to policy suggestions as to how these differences may be bridged. My impression is that much of the emphasis—and hope—placed on community facilities and professionally trained staff is naïve. These two elements are important, but success is likely only if the persons chosen to work in such facilities have empathy for their clients' culture and needs. This quality may be more important than professional training, but it is not easily learned, for it entails much more than sympathy and good intentions. Unfortunately, empathic personalities are rare. Consequently, the encouragement of heterogeneity in community facilities is desirable, but it cannot by itself motivate people to expose themselves to new alternatives.

### III

#### *Implications for Planning*

I have tried to show that the advantages of heterogeneity and the disadvantages of homogeneity have both been exaggerated and that neither is unqualifiedly good or bad. Extreme forms of either are undesirable. Complete, or near-complete homogeneity, as in a company town where everyone has the same kind of job, is clearly objectionable. Total heterogeneity is likely to be so uncomfortable that only those who want no social contact with neighbors would wish to live under such conditions. Even then, it would be tolerable only in apartment buildings in which visual contact between residents is minimal. Both extremes are rarely found in actual communities. In considering planning implications, we need concern ourselves primarily with more moderate forms.

Specific implications for planning policy are best discussed in two steps, at the level of block life, and at the level of area-wide community life. At the block level, the arguments of this and the earlier article suggest that the degree of heterogeneity advocated in the balanced community concept—which comes close to total heterogeneity—is unlikely to produce social

<sup>9</sup> There is some evidence that students react positively to the exposure to alternatives. Alan B. Wilson found that some working-class high school students adopt middle-class standards if they attend a predominantly middle-class school, and that some middle-class students adopt working-class standards if they attend a predominantly working-class school. See his "Class Segregation and Aspirations of Youth," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 24 (1959) pp. 836-845. Students are socially more impressionable than adults, however, and the school is a more persuasive social environment than a residential area or a voluntarily attended neighborhood institution.

relationships of sufficient intensity to achieve either a positive social life or the cultural, political, and educational values sought through the balanced community. The ideal solution is sufficient homogeneity with respect to those characteristics that will assure:

1. Enough consensus between neighbors to prevent conflict;
2. Positive although not necessarily intensive relationships between neighbors with respect to common needs and obligations;
3. The possibility for some mutual visiting and friendship formation for those who want it in the immediate vicinity.

This should provide sufficient heterogeneity to create some diversity as well. At the present time, no one knows how this solution could be defined operationally, that is, what mixture of specific characteristics would be likely to provide the kind of homogeneity suggested above. Consequently, existing subdivisions with differing degrees of homogeneity and heterogeneity should be studied, and adventurous builders should be encouraged to experiment with mixing people and housetypes. Planners and students of urban life could observe the results systematically and provide the evidence needed for more specific guides for planning. These guides would not spell out detailed dwelling-unit or population mixtures but would indicate only the types of population compositions which should be avoided because they bring about the undesirable effects of too much homogeneity or heterogeneity.

At the community level, and especially at the level of the politically defined community, population heterogeneity is desirable.<sup>10</sup> It is not a proper means to the ends for which it has been advocated, although a moderate degree of heterogeneity may aid in the achievement of the educational and exposure values. Rather, its desirability must be argued in relation to two other values. *First*, ours is a pluralistic society, and local communities should reflect this pluralism. *Second*, and more important as long as local taxation is the main support for community services, homogeneity at the community level encourages undesirable inequalities. The high-income suburb can build modern schools with all the latest features; the low-income suburb is forced to treat even minimal educational progress as a luxury. Such inequity is eliminated more efficiently by federal and state subsidy than by community heterogeneity, but the latter is essential as long as such subsidies are so small.

The ideal amount and type of heterogeneity can only be guessed at, since so little is known about the impact of population characteristics within various

sectors of community life. Two general statements can be made, however.

*First*, enough homogeneity must be present to allow institutions to function and interest groups to reach workable compromises. In areas with a wide range of population types, the balanced community—that is, a local cross section of the entire area—would probably experience intense political and cultural conflict. Since local institutions, including government, have little power to affect—and to ameliorate—the basic causes of such conflict, they would be unable to handle it constructively. Conflict itself is not unhealthy, but irreconcilable conflict is socially destructive, and nothing would be gained by instituting population heterogeneity within political units which cannot deal with the negative consequences of conflict.

*Second*, enough heterogeneity must be provided in the community so that important facilities and services can be financed and enabled to find sufficient clients to allow them to function. Economic or social ghettos, either of the very rich or the very poor, are thus not desirable. (Cultural ghettos, such as those of ethnic groups, are not a problem, as long as they are voluntary ones and are able to provide nonethnic facilities for those who want to get out of the group.)

The generality of these proposals illustrates clearly how little is known about the consequences of homogeneity and heterogeneity. More specific planning guides require a thoroughgoing research program that would explore the consequences of different types and degrees of population mixture for a variety of planning values. No one can now predict the conclusions of such research. For example, I have suggested that schools with heterogeneous student bodies are desirable. Systematic studies may show, however, that children learn better among homogeneous peers. The tracking system that exists in many high schools, and even in elementary schools, suggests this possibility. Moreover, such studies might also show that the heterogeneous elements of the student body come into visual contact, but do not achieve any real social contact. If the learning benefits resulting from homogeneity are greater than the social benefits of a mixed student body, a more homogeneous school system might be desirable. Such a system would, however, conflict with yet another value, that of the school as a symbol and an institution of democratic pluralism. Needless to say, comparison of

<sup>10</sup> The planner has traditionally concerned himself more with the neighborhood than with either the block or the political community. The neighborhood is not a meaningful social unit, however, since the significant face-to-face relationships occur on the block. Moreover, it is not a political unit and thus cannot make decisions about its population composition. The neighborhood is therefore not a relevant unit for considering this issue.

different types of values is not an easy task. Nevertheless, the importance of the balanced-community concept in contemporary planning thought, and the constant rejection of the concept in the housing market, suggest that policy-oriented research along this line is badly needed.

### *An Appraisal of Present Conditions*

It should be clear from the preceding comments that I place little value on heterogeneity as an end in itself. Consequently, I see no overwhelming objections against the patterns of population distribution that exist in today's suburban subdivisions and new communities. I noted earlier the beneficial effects of the kind of population mixture found in Levittown. In addition, the fact that most developments are built in or near older towns, and therefore fall into existing political subdivisions, usually creates additional heterogeneity at the community level.

Thus it would seem that the present system, in which the housing industry supplies subdivisions which are homogeneous in price and where the buyer decides what he can afford or wants to pay, makes for a degree of heterogeneity that is satisfactory both from the point of view of the residents and from that of society as a whole. Three qualifying comments must be added, however. *First*, acceptance of house-price homogeneity should not be interpreted as a justification for accompanying by-products, and especially for racial or religious discrimination. Specifically, if an individual chooses to move into an area where the residents differ from him in age, income, race, religion, or ethnic background, he has not only the right to do so, but he also has the right to governmental support to uphold his action. If this wreaks havoc with the block's social life or the community's consensus, it is an unfortunate but irrelevant consequence. Freedom of choice, civil rights, and the protection of minority interests are values of higher priority than peaceful social life or consensus. *Second*, the homogeneity of population that results from the homogeneity of house price is on the whole voluntary, differing radically from the enforced homogeneity of slums and public-housing projects, which force deprived people into clearly labeled economic ghettos. *Third*, the fact that the present suburban housing-market arrangements may be satisfactory with respect to population mixture does not excuse their inability to house low- and even medium-income families.

### *Toward A Reformulation of the Issue*

At the present time, population heterogeneity as advocated by planners is not workable. Neither home

purchasers nor tenants seem to want it, and the housing market is not organized to provide it. (Planners themselves rarely practice what they preach, and usually reside in areas inhabited by people of like values and class background.) Consequently, it is unlikely that heterogeneity can be implemented through planning or other legislative and political means. Lack of feasibility is not a legitimate objection, per se. However, I have tried to show that heterogeneity does not really achieve the ends sought by its advocates.

Moreover, even if it could be implemented, it would not solve the problems that currently beset our communities. *Indeed, the opposite is closer to the truth; population heterogeneity cannot be achieved until the basic metropolitan-area social problem is solved.* This I believe to be the economic and social inequalities that still exist in our society, as expressed in the deprivations and substandard living conditions of the lowest socio-economic strata of the metropolitan-area population. These conditions in turn produce some of the residential patterns that restrict population heterogeneity. For example, the present homogeneity of the age and class in cities and suburbs results in part from the desire of middle-class and working-class families to avoid contact with the deprived population and with the way it is forced to live. Thus the city—and especially its inner areas—becomes the abode of the very rich, the very poor, and those who cannot get away.

The planner's advocacy of heterogeneity is in part a means for dealing with this problem; he hopes that the mixing of classes will iron out these inequalities. The intent is noble, but the means are inappropriate. What is needed instead is the raising of substandard incomes, the provision of greater occupational and educational opportunities to the deprived population, and the development of institutions that will create opportunities tailored to their needs and cultural wants. These programs should receive first priority in future metropolitan-area policy-making.

The elimination of deprivation cannot be implemented solely or even primarily by city planning as now practiced. Nor are physical planning methods of much relevance. Some policies may fit into the newly emerging field of local social planning, but many can be achieved only through economic and legislative decisions at the national level. Some of the programs in which city planners are involved do, however, bear a direct relation to the basic goal; and changes in city planning policies would, therefore, be helpful in achieving it. For example, urban-renewal programs that give highest priority to the improvement of housing conditions of the poorest city dwellers would be more desirable than, and considerably different from, those

presently supported by the city planning profession.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, school planning which seeks better methods and facilities for educating lower-class children—the average as well as the gifted—is more important than concern with space standards that are currently applicable only to high-income, low-density communities.<sup>12</sup> Also, a more serious attempt to solve the recreation problems of inner-city children should complement, if not replace, the current preoccupations with marinas and with regional parks for well-to-do suburban residents.

I am suggesting that the city planning profession should pay less attention to improving the physical environment of those who are already comparatively well served by private and public means, and pay more attention to the environmental conditions of the deprived population. Such a change in planning emphasis will not by itself solve the problem (even an intensive national program geared to reduce all inequality cannot erase immediately the inequities of a century), but it will be making a contribution toward the eventual solution.

The reduction of inequalities may also have some positive consequences for population heterogeneity. At first, greater social and economic equality would result in greater homogeneity of income, education, and the like. This homogeneity would, however, extend to a larger number of people the opportunity to make choices, and this in turn is likely to result in more heterogeneity of attitude and behavior. Thus, if more people have the discretionary income and the skills to make choices, they will begin to express and to implement preferences. This can create a demand for greater diversity in housing, recreation, taste, and in many other aspects of life.

It must be stressed, however, that the resulting heterogeneity would be qualitatively different from the type that exists today. The disappearance of ways of life based on deprivation would do away with such phenomena as the street life of the overcrowded slum which now provides a measure of variety to the social and physical landscape of a middle-class society. Thus, there would undoubtedly be less clearly visible *cultural diversity*, especially since ethnic differences and exotic immigrant neighborhoods are also disappearing. Conversely, the ability of people to make choices should result in greater expression of *individual preferences*.<sup>13</sup> Even now, homeowners in the Park Forests and the Levittowns make more individual changes in their houses than do the owners of urban row-houses.

There is no reason to expect that homogeneity of class and age will ever be totally eliminated in residential areas. But it is possible that a somewhat closer

approximation to the kind of residential heterogeneity advocated by planners may be realized when the extreme cultural differences have disappeared and when a greater number of people have more freedom of choice with respect to residence.

## Appendix

### *Heterogeneity for Aesthetic Values*

My argument has dealt primarily with population heterogeneity, but planners have also advocated heterogeneity of house types, primarily for aesthetic reasons. In the past, it was thought that aesthetic values could be achieved only through custom-built housing, and the discussions of the topic stressed the evils of mass production. Today the issue is: how much heterogeneity should be provided in mass-produced housing to create aesthetic values. No one, including the builder himself, is opposed to beauty; but considerable disagreement exists over priorities and about the definition of aesthetic standards.

The issue of priorities is basically economic, and the debate rages about the price consequences of house-type heterogeneity. I feel that the aesthetic benefits of house-type diversity are not sufficient to justify depriving anyone of a new house because he cannot afford to pay for variations in floor plans or elevations. No one wants what Vernon De Mars has called cookie-cutter developments, although the home buyer with limited means may have no other alternative, and he may subsequently build his own individuality into the house when he can afford to do so. Builders of mass-produced housing should of course be encouraged to vary designs and site plans as much as possible, as long as the added cost does not price anyone out of the market who would otherwise be able to buy. Planners and architects should be able to use their professional skills to help builders to achieve variety; but, too often,

<sup>11</sup> For details, see Herbert J. Gans, "The Human Implications of Current Redevelopment and Relocation Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 25 (1959), pp. 23-25. In contrast, it may be noted that the recent AIP policy statement on urban renewal refers only to the removal of blight and has nothing to say about the improvement of housing conditions of those who live in blighted areas. "Urban Renewal," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 25 (1959) p. 221.

<sup>12</sup> See John W. Dyckman, "Comment on Glazer's School Proposals," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 25 (1959), especially p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> The two types of heterogeneity and their implications for American society are explored more fully in Herbert J. Gans, "Diversity is Not Dead," *New Republic*, Vol. 144 (April 3, 1961), pp. 11-15.

their recommendations add too much to costs and prices.

In recent years, planners have advocated a mixture of dwelling-unit types, mainly to cut down suburban sprawl, but also to provide aesthetic variety. Unfortunately, architects have not yet designed salable row-houses or duplexes, and the universal dislike of these house types among most home buyers has not created the incentives necessary for experimentation by builders or their designers. Some sophisticated consumer research to discover what people dislike about the higher-density dwelling-unit types is necessary before acceptable new versions can be developed.

The second issue results from the lack of agreement on aesthetic standards. Although everyone seeks beauty, concepts of beauty and of what is beautiful or ugly differ between professionals and laymen, as well as between people of different socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels. Unfortunately, the American dedication to cultural pluralism specifically excludes aesthetic pluralism. As a result, demands for more beauty in housing usually favor the aesthetic standards of a single group, the well-educated, upper-middle-class professional.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, much of the critique of suburban housing and of suburbia generally is a thinly veiled attack by this group on the aesthetic principles and on the over-all taste level of the middle- and working-class population.

There is at present no democratic method for reconciling the aesthetic disagreement. Since differences of taste have not been proven to be socially or emotionally harmful, or inimical to the public interest, there is no justification for an undemocratic implementation of a single aesthetic standard. In a democracy, each person is, and should be, free to pursue his concept of

beauty. Aesthetic pluralism may hurt the aesthetic sensibilities of the better educated people, but until everyone has the opportunity to acquire their level of education, such hurts must be born as a price—and a small one—of living in a democracy. No one should be discouraged from advocating and propagating his own aesthetic standards, but public policy must take the existence of taste differences into account. Needless to say, this does not justify promoting ugliness or taking architectural shortcuts under the guise of aesthetic pluralism. Architectural and site designs should, however, respect the aesthetic standards of those people for whom they are primarily intended. This requires some knowledge—little of it now available—about diverse aesthetic standards, and cannot be based on uninformed guesses about such standards by either architect or builder. Public buildings exist for the benefit of all cultural groups, and should therefore appeal to what is common in all aesthetic standards; or better still, promote architectural innovation. Cognizance of the diversity of aesthetic standards will of course add additional heterogeneity to the landscape.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the illustrations of aesthetically desirable blocks in most planning reports are usually from high-income residential neighborhoods. See, for example, Henry Fagin and Robert C. Weinberg, eds., *Planning and Community Appearance* (New York: Regional Plan Association, Inc., May 1958).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of aesthetic differences and taste levels, see Russell Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," in *The Tastemakers* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), chap. 13. For an excellent discussion of aesthetic pluralism in a democracy, see Lyman Bryson, *The Next America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), chap. 10. Some of the policy implications of my point of view are discussed in Herbert J. Gans, "Pluralist Esthetics and Subcultural Programming," *Studies in Public Communication*, No. 3 (Summer 1960).