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WILLIAM ALONSO

Urban Zero Population Growth

IT IS REMARKABLE how rapidly the fashion for American states and cities has shifted from the traditional boosterism to a questioning and even an abhorrence of growth. It is common to read in the newspapers that states such as Oregon, California, Vermont, and Maryland want to stop or limit their growth, as do cities such as San Francisco, Boulder, and countless suburbs.

Undoubtedly this has much to do with the new Malthusian concern with the consequences of unlimited population growth at national and world levels. Some seem to think that the place to start controlling the nation's population growth is at the level of their city, metropolis, or state. Others hope that, as the nation moves toward zero population growth (ZPG), so will their communities. Both these views are misleading half-truths. Local policies to limit population are probably not very effective, and when they are effective they are regressive and counter-productive in terms of social well-being. They are seldom aimed at reducing local birthrates (except among those on welfare in big cities), but rather they are aimed at keeping outsiders out. Thus, what is locally perceived as a growth or no-growth policy in reality merely affects the geographic distribution of people and economic activity within some larger society such as the region or the nation.

Neither is it credible that, when and if the national rate of population growth moves toward zero, local populations will become stable. In the first place, natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) varies enormously from one area to another, so that as the national rate approached zero, many areas would fail to reproduce themselves while others would continue to grow by natural increase. In the second place, continued structural change in the economy is inevitable, with or without economic growth. Indeed, my impression is that such structural change would be deeper if conventionally defined economic growth were limited. Change in the economy would be mirrored in shifts in the location of economic activity and, accordingly, in population shifts. In short, a nationally stable population would be composed of many localities declining in population, many localities growing, and only some remaining stable.

Why should a city, a town, or a state prefer to stop its population growth? There are many conceivable reasons: growth might lower average income, or bring in poor people who do not mix comfortably with present residents; it might produce challenges to local social structure, or change life styles for the worse, or increase pollution and congestion, or overrun prized landscapes. These would be changes in the real city, which is composed of people and their relations to each other, to their institutions, and to their physical environment. But there is an unfortunate confusion which frequently overtakes the debate and which must be clarified at the outset. The word "city" is also used as the name of a municipal corporation which derives its income principally through taxation and, in exchange, provides certain services to the population. This corporate entity is only one of the elements of the real city. Yet very often debate and evaluation of advantages and disadvantages are based on the limited viewpoint of the municipal corporation, and thus miss many of the most important consequences, good and bad, for the real city.

This confusion and some of its implications may be illustrated by a recent case in a wealthy metropolitan suburb where a substantial reserve of land was probably going to be placed on the market, and many thousands of new houses built. A consulting firm was retained, and it reported, after considerable analysis, that this would be very costly for the city. It remarked that it would be cheaper for the city to buy the land itself with money raised through the sale of municipal bonds. This report met an enthusiastic reception. It not only addressed the central preoccupation of local tax groups, it also confirmed the questioning of growth among local youth and cultivated older people, and it surprised and delighted environmentalists by showing that preserving the landscape made economic sense. So well did it match the concern of many people that its conclusions were widely quoted in the national press and are often cited as proving the case against growth.

But the case as presented confused the municipal corporation for the real city. The fiscal effects on the municipal corporation can be predicted very easily, and the consultant's diligence in gathering numbers was not really necessary. On the average, a new house has associated with it about two school-age children. The taxes it pays rarely cover even one child's school costs. It also imposes the costs of providing other muncipal services, although these are small by comparison. Thus, in any such case, new houses are money losers for the muncipal corporation. In this particular case it only made matters worse that, as a result of the current residents' wealth and love of learning, local schools were excellent and costs per child especially high. All of this was in spite of a market analysis which concluded that the average price of the new houses would be higher than the price of existing houses in that town. It is more common in similar cases for the new houses to be cheaper than the existing ones, and inhabited by people not as wealthy as the present inhabitants.

If we consider the real city of present residents, they would probably still be worse off, although the matter is not as clear. Some property values would rise; some merchants and other businessmen and their employees would profit; the small proportion of poor and minority in the city would have increased job opportunities and residential choices (and indeed they were the only ones to dissent from the nearly universal approval of the consultant's recommendations); the children of the upper middle class would meet a somewhat different group in school; some local businesses would more easily find certain types of labor; shopping and entertainment facilities might become more varied and extensive; and so forth. On the other hand, a lovely landscape would be largely filled up; congestion might increase; present residents would have to rub elbows with a slightly lower class and a broader ethnic group; there might be a slight increase in deviant behavior (on the part either of the newcomers or of present residents whose conduct might be redefined according to the more standard mores of the newcomers); and, of course, residents would pay higher taxes.

It is quite likely that a full consideration of these effects would result in the same conclusion: buy the insulation. But there is yet a further consideration, which to my mind is conclusive. What is the population of this city? Is it only those living there now, or does it include those who would move in if they could? If we are speaking of a future community of which there are two alternative versions, it makes as much sense to consider the interests of all the people who would make up the expanded version, as to consider those of the original version. After all, even if growth is prevented, given the mobility of Americans, only a fraction of the future residents will consist of those living there now. The future majority will consist of newcomers, although they will be socially and economically similar to present residents. Who is choosing for whom?

If this seems abstract, the matter can be put another way. Suppose that growth is restricted. What happens to the people who would have moved in but could not? Obviously neither they nor their children cease to exist. They will find second-choice homes; their children will go to more run-of-the-mill schools and impose their costly presence on people who are less able to afford this added burden than the wealthy residents of the suburb in question. It would appear that they will be worse off, and so perhaps will the present residents of wherever they end up. The rub is that what seems from the local viewpoint an issue of growth is, in a larger framework, an issue of distribution, both in the social and in the geographic sense—not whether these people and their children shall exist, but where and how. In the abstract, the distribution problem could be solved if residents of the excluding locality made compensatory payments (a form of rent) to those whom they would exclude. But no feasible way of arranging for this suggests itself.

The point of the example is that the current balkanization of metropolitan areas into dozens and even hundreds of local governments encourages beggar-thy-neighbor strategies. Furthermore, confusing the municipal corporation for the real city leads to the meanest forms of municipal mercantilism, ones which ignore more important consequences for people. Perhaps the most hopeful recent development on this matter, in spite of setbacks, is the emergence of a number of court opinions, of which *Serrano vs. Priest* was the first, that, under the equal protection principle, rule it unconstitutional to rely on property taxes for financing schools. If these decisions stand, their logic points to their application to other services and broader geographic areas. Hopefully, too, they will lessen the influence of base motives on the formulation of local population policies.

I cannot abandon the subject of local fiscal impacts, however, without making clear the abysmal state of knowledge in this area. It is perfectly clear that an ordinary fertile family is a money loser for the local fisc. Similarly, the underprivileged create a fiscal drain through their children, their criminality, their sickliness, their morbidity, and their reliance on welfare payments. This was the basis of much of the urban renewal activity of the 1950's and 1960's, which tried to rid the central cities of such troublesome residents (where were they to go?), and bring back those who were then called "the people," the upper middle class apartment and town-house dwellers without these problems. The fiscal consequences of factories, skyscrapers, commercial developments, apartment houses, and military bases are very poorly understood, even in the direct sense of the net balance between their direct contribution in taxes and the direct cost of the services they need. Their indirect effects are even less known. Such developments always affect property values and promote or retard other developments which are difficult to predict and whose fiscal impact is also imperfectly understood, so that uncertainty is compounded in estimating their full fiscal effects. To my mind all of this makes the use of this basis for local population and development policy even worse, for it invites cruelty without certainty of advantage.

Our knowledge is no greater if we try to go beyond fiscal consequences to a more general evaluation of the impact of development upon the real city. Take the case of office buildings. They create jobs in construction, and later they provide white-collar jobs for the rising lower-middle classes and for a smaller number of professionals and administrators; they pay taxes, they increase congestion, they require new types of fire-fighting equipment, they alter the skyline and the look of the streets; they increase panoramic views for those who work in them while reducing those of residents in cities fortunate enough to have this problem, and so forth. Some of these are matters of fact which might be determined through investigation, some are matters of taste, and some are matters of conflict. Beyond these quite direct consequences, there are others, fairly closely linked, which can often be guessed at and even estimated. For instance, offices may generate nearby parking lots and eating places, which may then be used at night in association with entertainment activities; the new office space, by increasing supply, may affect rents, values, and usage of the older stock of offices; and so forth. Beyond this ring of effects there is another, vaguer but probably more significant in the long run. Offices are where information is received and processed, bargains are struck, and decisions are made. A city without offices is limited to hand functions subsidiary to another city's head functions, and its economic base will consist of branch plants and other dependencies. It will not generate the sorts of men and institutions that are in daily contact with the national and international web of information, ideas, and modes of decision. Compared to a city with offices, it will be out of touch, sluggish in its reponses, and therefore fragile in the face of continuing technological and economic change.

On the whole, I think that office development is good on social, economic, and fiscal grounds, not too bad on ecological grounds, a matter of taste aesthetically, and often troublesome for traffic congestion. Yet, even with considerable familiarity with the professional and scholarly literature on the subject, I would be hard put to make an exhaustive list of the direct effects of office, manufacturing, or other types of development. Many of the effects that I can think of, I could not measure. Many that I could measure, I could not evaluate. And many that I could evaluate hide within their total value sharp gains for some and losses for others. The relatively few serious attempts to find out about these matters have run into grave theoretical, definitional, and data difficulties. Although some progress is being made through research, in the meantime debates and decisions are quite naturally based on shallow reasoning and spurious numerology. Some decisions will not wait.

It is an open question whether a community can effectively enforce a choice to grow or not to grow, however it arrives at this choice. Until recently virtually every city in America tried to encourage growth by a variety of local actions and by seeking state and federal preferential treatment. Although there have been some dramatic successes, there have been very few. Indeed, there is now in this country, as in many others, a national policy of establishing growth centers for depressed regions, which by a variety of federal, state, and local actions, tries to induce rapid growth in selected small cities, but these programs have had very limited success.

It might appear to be easier to limit growth than to promote it, but this is not the case according to a rich experience of national policies in Europe and the socialist countries. Moscow, Paris, London, and Warsaw are among the centers where vigorous policies have been followed to contain and even reverse growth. The means at hand have often appeared foolproof, including not only the tax incentives and disincentives, subsidies, land use regulations, and other devices familiar in American experience, but also direct command over the location of jobs and people through state control over many enterprises, location and expansion permits for industry, residence permits, and job and housing assignments for people. Even so, these centers have continued to grow, although perhaps less than without these measures. These powerful tools have failed in the face of more powerful social and economic currents. Even in totally controlled societies power is not controlled monolithically, but distributed among the agencies of the state. In setting priorities and bargaining over specific decisions, the agencies charged with territorial distribution have not been able to count as much as the sectoral ones.

A locality in America may similarly choose to discourage growth either by making it hard for people to establish residence, or by discouraging the creation of jobs which would attract people. While a small independent city might succeed in this, it appears that a metropolitan area cannot. An industry or person excluded from one municipality will find a place in another within the metropolis. Overall metropolitan levels of population and employment are set largely by economic and demographic forces at national and international levels. Local policy affects primarily the intrametropolitan form and distribution of that development, and, if it is set by the selfish interests of the component municipalities, it does so inefficiently and unjustly. A suburb may be able to keep population or industry out, but it can do so only by directing it to other suburbs or by keeping it cooped up in the central city.

Examine the normal instruments by which a municipality keeps people out. It may restrict the use of space, either absolutely through land reserves such as parks which keep everyone out, or through zoning which keeps out those who cannot afford large lots. Other devices of varying subtlety are available. It may refuse to accept subsidized housing. Or it may set high standards through building and related codes which raise the cost of housing. Or it may set very high standards for public services, especially schools, creating high local taxes that will discourage those who cannot afford them. Or it may maintain very poor schools, so that it is unattractive to the suburbanizing lower-middle class looking for the advancement of their children through education, but acceptable to those who can send their children to private schools. Or it may refuse to provide utilities for large-scale developments, but permit low density development by allowing septic tanks and water wells. Or it may keep out the jobs that would bring in new people, primarily potential industrial workers, by zoning, or by strong regulation of pollution, or by not allowing necessary infrastructure such as highway access.

It is clear that all of these instruments aimed at keeping people out tend to keep out those of lower income. In short, local population control policies are regressive. Thus what we see today, in city after city, and often at the state level, is a three-cornered political fight among the advocates of business and development, the poor and working class and their liberal advocates, and the environmentalists in alliance with no-growth people who are usually middle-class young or upper-middle class. This situation brings about strange alliances between, for instance, business groups and minority people, or ecologists and tax leagues. These same conflicts and contradictions are mirrored within many people who, traditional liberals, find themselves unable to reconcile their environmental interests with their concern for social equity.

The difficulty of tracing and evaluating the consequences of particular developments has led many researchers to examine whether some conditions vary systematically with population size across the array of American metropolitan areas. It appears that education, pollution, and crime rise with population, while the indicators of physical and mental health are mixed. Many of these characteristics are two-edged and hard to interpret. For instance, if divorce is more common, it may be evidence of more failed marriages or of a more adaptive response to marital failure. The evidence is shallow, impressionistic, or nonexistent on some of the most vital questions such as those concerning social and economic mobility, tolerance of diversity, the rigidity and invidiousness of social hierarchy, feelings of alienation, ability to control one's fate, the situation of women, and privacy.

Many people have been concerned about the possible noxious effect of population density because of a number of etiological studies showing the ill effects of crowding in animal populations. But recent and quite thorough studies show no such effects for human populations if crowding refers to the number of people per acre. They do show ill effects if people are crowded in their housing, in terms of people per room, which is a matter of poverty and not of urban size. Furthermore, the density (people per acre) of central cities and metropolitan areas as a whole is decreasing.

The effects of city size are clearest in economic areas. In the United States and other countries wages and per capita income rise rapidly and consistently with city size, even after taking into account their occupational and industrial composition. The cost of living and public costs also rise, but very little, so that real net income per capita improves markedly from smaller to bigger cities.

This rise in income with urban size argues that bigger cities are more efficient engines of production, and this is confirmed by fragmentary data relating to value added or gross regional product. Furthermore, it seems that larger cities derive more of their products from innovative activities, from newer processes, and from generating, handling, and using information and ideas. Smaller cities tend to more established, routinized activities such as mass production manufacturing with well-established technologies. The system of cities is a dynamic one, spawning innovations and new activities at the top, which, as they mature, filter down to smaller and more provincial centers.

Furthermore, statistical analysis seems to show that the cost of living and of municipal services rises as a result not of increasing urban size as such, but of other factors, most notably high income itself. For instance, it is a popular belief that it is more costly to live in bigger cities. It comes as a surprise that, when equivalent levels of consumption in different areas are actually priced, there is very little cost increase in bigger cities. A clue to this apparent contradiction is provided by a recent poll which asked people how much money they thought a family of four would need to live modestly but comfortably in their areas. Their subjective estimates did increase rapidly with population size. It would seem that what size does is to raise levels of expectation as to what constitutes a modestly comfortable way of life. In bigger cities people expect more. This may be related to their dynamism and innovation.

Another misconception is that bigger metropoles suffer more severe income inequalities. In fact, the proportion of families below the poverty level decreases steadily as the size of the city increases, and indices of income distribution show that the general range of incomes remains about the same. It may be that, although the poor are proportionally fewer, the increase in their actual number and their concentration in certain districts make their situation both more visible and more troublesome in more populous areas, but this is a different matter.

Although they have been much discussed, general indicators of well-being or satisfaction are not available, and probably not possible. We do have, however, some social surveys of varying quality. The one that has received the widest publicity is a commercial poll which asked individuals whether they would prefer to live in farms, small towns, suburbs, or big cities. A majority, regardless of their present residence, said they would prefer to live in small towns. This finding has been used as supporting evidence for programs to disperse the national population. Yet one must be very wary of responses to such hypothetical questions when posed in the abstract, as in this case. It may well be that this expressed preference for small-town life is a romantic response, deeply rooted in traditional American imagery and more symbol than operational preference. What people say to an interviewer on the spur of the moment does not necessarily match what they would really do or what they really want.

A more interesting study asked Mexican Americans in a small Texas city whether they would stay there or move to particular large metropoles under alternative suppositions as to wages. When wages were supposed everywhere equal, most said they would choose to stay, but a significant proportion said they would go to the larger cities, presumably because they believed that richer lives were available there. Not surprisingly, the proportion who would leave increased when wages were supposed higher in the larger cities (which is actually the case). But even when wages were supposed lower in the larger cities, a considerable fraction would still go to them. There were interesting differences between young and old, men and women, and the more and the less educated, but the gist is that this group, like any other, contained those who would stay under any circumstances, those who would go to the bright lights under any circumstances, and those who would weigh in their decision both their place preference and the economic rewards available.

It would be very valuable to have comparable studies for other groups and other places, especially if they distinguished local roots from preferred urban scales, life styles, and economic rewards, and gave us a sense of the kinds and numbers of people who held different constellations of preferences. That preferences do differ there can be no question. For instance, another survey asked people across the country if they thought their areas were too big, too small, or about right. Most people thought their area about right, regardless of its size. A few more who lived in large areas thought them too big than thought them too small, and the opposite was true in small areas. But among nonwhites, many more thought that it would be good if their area grew rapidly. This is what we would expect from the data on the proportion of poor in larger cities and confirms our earlier analysis of the regressive character of local stop-growth movements. Indeed, the advantages of larger cities for minorities are such that blacks, who are already far more urban in their population distribution than whites, are migrating rapidly from small to large urban areas. In the decade from 1960 to 1970, the five largest metropolitan areas all had a net outmigration of whites, but they averaged a 26 percent inmigration of nonwhites.

The idea that urban size matters carries with it a temptation to think that there may be a best size, and that, if this size were known, the ideal pattern of urbanization would be to create centers of that size until the entire urban population were accommodated. This is dangerous nonsense for at least four reasons. First, historic, economic, resource, and demographic circumstances vary greatly from city to city, so that a given size has sharply different implications in different places. Second, because different population groups have different preferences and interests, what might best serve one group might not suit another. Third, a change from one population size to another (or a holding steady) occurs at some concrete rate of growth or decline in real time, which in turn has important social, economic, and institutional consequences that affect different groups differently. Fourth, there is considerable evidence and some passable theory that the urban areas of a country are a system of interdependent elements and relations, so that a change in the size and the economic activities of Wichita affects in part those of Los Angeles. The issue is one of finding the most satisfactory constellation of interacting sizes, not of finding a single best size. The idea of finding an ideal size to be repeated over and over is comparable to a musical theory that would find the most beautiful note and then compose a symphony by endless and exclusive repetition of that note.

The concept of a system of cities has many facets, but one of particular interest for our topic is the concept of *borrowed size*, whereby a small city or metropolitan area exhibits some of the characteristics of a larger one if it is near other population concentrations. A statistical measure called *population potential*, which measures the accessibility from a given location to other centers of population, behaves very much like population in statistical analysis. For instance, per capita income in a place is as strongly associated with this measure as with its actual population. This makes sense if one considers that the essential reason why income and population levels are associated is that population is a rough index of the number of opportunities for interaction available in that place. Similarly, population potential is an index of the opportunities for interaction with people in other places, and may be thought of as an index of borrowed size. Thus, because of their high population potential, small metropoles in megapolitan complexes, such as that on the Atlantic seaboard, have much higher incomes than independent metropoles of equivalent size. In simple terms, while they retain many of the advantages of smaller size, such as lower levels of congestion, they enjoy the advantages of larger size through their easy access to other centers. Their people can use the shopping and entertainment facilities of other cities to complement their own, their businessmen can share such facilities as warehousing and business services, and their labor markets enjoy a wider and more flexible range of demand and supply.

This phenomenon of borrowed size, with the hint that it is possible to have one's cake and eat it too, has not been sufficiently studied, in spite of the strong statistical evidence of its existence. It seems to account for the fact that in the large American megapolitan constellations, the smaller metropoles are growing more rapidly than the bigger ones. It is also quite visible, although virtually unstudied, in certain European urban patterns, such as those of Germany and the Low Countires, whose cities, quite small by our standards, apparently achieve sufficient scale for the functioning of a modern economy by borrowing size from one another. This phenomenon transforms the issue of the size and growth of a city by redefining it to include, in some degree, its neighbors.

However, by studying the attributes of a cross section of urban sizes at one moment in time, one cannot draw reliable implications about what changes in size through time will do in any particular city. Unfortunately, little can be said about the consequences on a city of population growth, decline, or stability because the subject has been little studied. A rare recent study suggests that slow-growing areas show lower crime indices than comparable fast-growing areas. Possibly they have a different industrial structure. In addition, they tend to have a lower proportion of young adults because, under the rates of natural increase which have prevailed, slow growth is based on emigration, and it is the young who leave. For those who hope for greater tranquility with the passing of growth, it may be of interest to consider that this outmigration of the young may account for the low crime indices, since it is the young who are responsible for most crimes.

The absence of studies on the consequences of growth or no growth cannot be blamed altogether on scholarly neglect. The difficulty is that the growth rates that have existed have included a substantial natural increase, so that a locality that has exhibited anything like zero population growth in the past decade has had a substantial net outmigration, of the order of 10 percent. An extreme case is McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg, Texas, which has held virtually stable in population through a natural increase of 25.8 percent and an outmigration of 25.4 percent. Since it is primarily the young who leave, this leads to a population with few young people and many old ones, and this, among other things, lowers the local birth rate and raises the death rate. Thus, Scranton, Pennsylvania, with a net outmigration of 20 percent for the past two decades, had a yearly rate of natural increase of only 0.16 percent in the 1960's.

Such large rates of net outmigration occur only in distressed local economies, for, given the high rates of natural increase in the last decade, no reasonably prosperous area failed to grow by about 10 percent. Thus we have no instances for study which combine local zero population growth with economic well-being.

But the relation of migration to natural increase is more complicated than this suggests, and makes local population growth a more complex matter than national population growth. The key point is that, demographically, the United States is quite self-contained while urban areas are highly open systems. On the surface this does not seem to be so. Currently the United States population is growing by 1.1 percent a year, and a fifth of this growth comes from abroad (much of it accounted for by returning Americans). Similarly, in the last decade, three-fourths of metropolitan growth was accounted for by natural increase and one-fourth by new arrivals.[1] But these figures for average net migration mask tremendous cross-movements of population. As a rule of thumb, it takes ten migratory moves in and out of a metropolis to leave or take away one net migrant.

The figures of the 1970 Census are not yet available, but figures for the 1955-1960 period serve to make the point. Net migration from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan areas was 1.2 million, but this was the trace of 10.2 million moves: 5.7 million into metropolitan areas and 4.5 million out of them.[2] There were 7.7 million moves from one metropolitan area to another. Thus, a metropolis like Philadelphia, with a net inmigration of 12,000 in the five-year period appears to have led a quiet life; but this net migration represents the trace of 668,000 moves in and out. A fast growing area, San Francisco, had a net inmigration of 56,000, but even so 361,000 people left it. Had arrivals been 15 percent lower, there would have been a slight outmigration. And, in Pittsburgh, the largest metropolis near zero-growth, we find that 180,000 left and 113,000 came, for a net outmigration of 67,000. Thus net migratory gains or losses are only surface ripples of powerful cross-currents, and even apparent migratory stability conceals vast exchanges of populations.

Recent studies of these flows have made surprising findings of consequence for local population policies. Rates of inmigration are higher for prosperous places, but rates of outmigration do not appear to vary, except perhaps marginally, with local economic conditions. Instead, they depend primarily on the local proportion of young people. It seems that the young leave home in about equal numbers whether their home district is prosperous or distressed.[3] Thus, a policy which increases pay levels and the number of jobs in poor areas in an effort to retain the young may shift net migration from negative to positive, but it will do so by attracting more newcomers rather than by slowing down the exodus.

Conversely, if prosperous areas want to slow down arrivals, they could do so by making themselves ugly in economic terms. Their young would continue to leave, while inmigration would slow down or disappear, resulting in net outmigration. This, in turn, would gradually lower their rate of natural increase because the diminishing proportion of young people in their populations would lower the birth rate while the increasing age of the population would raise the death rate. Eventually, there would be few babies to grow into youth and leave, and the outmigration rate would slow down. This is, no doubt, a fanciful scenario. It amounts to choosing poverty, unemployment and old age. In brief, it amounts to choosing to be Scranton, and this is a choice that few will make. The alternative way of containing growth is by erecting barriers to migrants and this, as I have discussed, is likely to be ineffective; and if effective, it is regressive.

This example is based on the assumption that the local net reproduction rate would continue to be higher than a ZPG level.[4] To compensate for this, the age distribution for local ZPG would have to include far fewer young and far more older people than would a national ZPG situation. Even a metropolis which, through local family planning, achieved ZPG net reproduction rates might eventually maintain a balance of in- and outmigrants only if it were slightly less prosperous than the average. Otherwise, although it would have fewer births, it would also have fewer outmigrants, and would show a positive net migration since the potential pool of migrants from other places would be proportionately bigger than its own.

There is yet another paradox. I have focused the discussion thus far on the consequences and possibilities of local policies of population limitation, since this is the usual frame of reference, and I have obviously been negative about them. But examination of current patterns and trends persuades me that, whatever the difficulties of induced zero growth, it is quite possible that we will be faced in the 1980's with about eighty metropoles (central cities and their suburbs) which have spontaneously arrived at something near zero population growth. Whether this is good or bad, we have little understanding and experience of what such metropoles will be like. They will certainly be different from anything in our present experience but we are ill prepared to anticipate their problems and opportunities. The key difference will be that these will be reasonably prosperous places, whereas today only economically distressed ones show population stability.

This forcast is a chancy one, I realize, for two reasons. The first is that demographic forecasting has had an atrocious record. The second is that local forecasts are, of statistical necessity, much more prone to error than national forecasts. Nonetheless, I make this prognosis on the following basis.

In the past decade, the birth rate fell by about one-fourth and, in consequence, since the death rate held about constant, the rate of natural increase fell by about 40 percent. Should there be another one-fourth drop in birth rates in the coming decade, which seems perfectly possible in view of such social changes as the redefinition of female roles, the rate of natural increase will be cut approximately in half to about 4 percent. Of 243 metropolitan areas, nearly 60 percent had net outmigration during the 1960's and 10 percent, mostly small ones, had actual population losses. While net outmigration and population loss are more typical of the smaller metropoles, principally because of their economic fragility, four out of the ten largest metropoles had negative net migration, and an additional three had positive net migrations of less than 1 percent in the decade. At the same time, migration from nonmetropolitan areas is decreasing, and migration from abroad promises to stay stable by congressional decision.

Meanwhile, natural increase varies surprisingly widely. Localities that have large numbers of poor, of blacks, of Mexican-Americans, of Mormons, and of some other groups tend to have much higher birth rates. Localities that have experienced sustained net outmigration have lower birth rates. The interaction of these factors yields a range from virtually no natural increase for depressed areas in the Northeast to rates of 25 to 30 percent in the South and Southwest, rates comparable to those of underdeveloped countries. Even among the twenty largest metropoles the decennial rates varied from 7 to 25 percent.

This outmigration and variation in local rates of natural increase combined with a falling national rate point to the emergence of changes in quantity which amount to changes in quality. Whereas today any area that fails to grow or grows very little is poor and underemployed, should the birth rate continue to fall, we will have a new phenomenon: relatively prosperous areas which are stable in population, or which grow so little as not to matter.

What will such areas be like? They will have fewer young than today, and thus fewer children in school and a lighter fiscal burden. Economic evolution will be more by substitution than by adding new activities to existing ones, and may therefore involve more individual transitions. The burden of dependent aged will be greater. There will not be an appreciably greater continuity of population, since there will continue to be massive exchanges of the young with other areas. Two major sectors of the economy, construction and the education of children, will probably retrench.

Beyond this it is hard to see. It is possible that economic changes will be more of a shock because they will take the form of structural shifts rather than of adding on new activities. Possibly the young, being relatively scarce, will profit from accelerated social and economic mobility; but possibly the preponderance of old people and the limits on expansion will create a gerontracy. Possibly minorities will be frustrated, since there will not be new activities for them to move into and the old activities will be preempted. Possibly, however, they will benefit from lessened competition for the older housing stock which will permit them lesser per room densities together with lower rents.

There must be other questions about such circumstances that are not yet conceived. It is to be expected that, when growth is gone, there will be those who miss it, and that the current concern for bringing about ZPG may seem as quaint then as the worries of the 1930's and 1940's about the economic implications of the stable populations they erroneously forecast do now.

Local policies for zero population growth ultimately run into the problem that ours is a highly interconnected society and economy. No state or city is an island, entire unto itself. Local policies may try to limit population by passing restrictive zoning, limiting housing permits, and the like. This is the I'm-all-right-Jack-and-bar-the-door version, much favored by suburbs, which forces out the young and is regressive. Local policies may try to curtail economic growth, but effective policies lead to unacceptable social and economic consequences. And a local policy of limiting births, which seems to me the most morally acceptable of these policies, will do little to reduce growth because the young from other places will inevitably arrive.

Because the nation is so interconnected, local population policies, whether for growth or no growth, are usually an attempt at a mercantilistic beggaring of neighbors; however, because larger forces are operating in the system, they are likely to be ineffective. A hierarchy of levels is involved, so that what is viewed as an issue of growth at a lower level is an issue of distribution at the next higher level. Thus, growth decisions for each locality within a metropolitan area should be bargained out among all the components of the metropolis to insure that their effects on the futures of the other localities will be considered. This is necessary both for fairness and efficiency. If the objectives, plans and actions of diverse localities are inconsistent, they cannot all be right, and some will fail while others triumph. Only when these various growth considerations are viewed together can it be seen whether they add up, where joint action can be more effective than unilateral action for achieving complementary objectives, and where negotiation and compensation are needed to reconcile diverging purposes and interests.

For much the same reasons the growth decisions of the various metropolitan areas and other regions should be based on state and national considerations. The task is again one of coordination and mediation, and as yet we have very little operational knowledge of how to go about it, either technically or politically. Yet this is the issue which has attracted considerable, if confused, attention under the rather misleading name of "national growth policy."

In any case it is clear that, although questions of local growth should be treated as questions of distribution at a higher level, we should avoid what is often done, setting as policy goals arbitrary demographic rates (no growth or fast growth) or particular geographic patterns of distribution (dispersal or concentration). These rates and patterns are not proper goals, although they may be important instruments for advancing the real goals of material efficiency, of equity and fairness, of ecological integrity, and of a high quality of life. They are used as goals because they are easy to grasp and they avoid the real questions which are hard. They are also used, I suspect, because they substitute what appears to be a technical objective for what is really a political matter of deciding how to balance alternative and often conflicting goals, and how to deal with costs and benefits which are very unevenly distributed.

"National growth policy" should more properly be called "national territorial distribution policy," and local growth policies within metropolitan areas should be thought of as elements in shaping the distribution of metropolitan growth. In neither case am I suggesting that the ideal would have the higher level dictate to the lower one. The interests of each collectivity and each governmental unit must be represented in the making of the higher level policy. One of the urgent and unresolved issues of our times is the need to evolve processes to give a voice in the making of important decisions to the relevant collectivities, be they corporations such as local governments, or other collectivities such as ethnic and other interest groups. But this is a larger matter than the subject of this paper.

Something like national zero population growth seems to be desirable, and we appear to be moving rapidly in that direction. But it is quite clear that even in a situation of national demographic stability, some localities will grow, some will shrink, and some will stay at about the same population. Through all this, vast cross-movements of population will continue, as will structural changes in the society and the economy. Many of today's problems will continue to exist, and some new ones will arise. We will not arrive at an eternally tranquil late afternoon.

References

1. It is startling to most people to learn that three-fifths of this net migration into metropolitan areas came from abroad, and only two-fifths from nonmetropolitan areas. Thus, nonmetropolitan net migration accounted for only one-tenth of metropolitan growth in the decade.
2. The actual number of moves was higher. These figures report the numbers of those living in one area in 1955 and living in another in 1960. They do not count the very great numbers who went somewhere and returned home within this period, nor do they count intervening moves.
3. I must note that this is a topic of considerable scholarly debate at the moment. It is quite clear, at any rate, that local economic well-being matters far less than had been thought in determining the rate of leaving.
4. This would be a net reproduction rate of one which would mean that each generation would just replace itself if current birth and death rates were continued indefinitely in the absence of migration. Strictly speaking, however, net reproduction rates would have to be somewhat below the ZPG rate to accommodate immigrants from abroad.