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City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy

Ann R. Markusen

This paper investigates the interrelationship between city spatial structure, women's household work, and urban policy. It first differentiates between two types of work in urban space: wage-labor production and household reproduction of labor power, generally and incorrectly ignored in analyses of urban spatial structure and dynamics by neoclassical location theorists and Marxist urbanologists alike. I contend that social reproduction, organized within the patriarchal household where an unequal internal division of labor favors men, profoundly affects and explains the use of urban space. The paper then presents a theoretical argument regarding the evolution of contemporary urban spatial structure. It argues that the dominance of the single-family detached dwelling, its separation from the workplace, and its decentralized urban location are as much the products of the patriarchal organization of household production as of the capitalist organization of wage work. While this arrangement is apparently inefficient and onerous from the point of view of women, it offers advantages to men and poses contradictions for capitalism.

Challenging such patriarchal structuring of urban space are residential choices that certain demographic groups are currently making. New spatial developments—such as retirement communities, gentrification (urban renewal for upper- and middle-income households), and the growth of small towns—suggest that the dominant urban decentralized form of housing and land use may pose major obstacles to efficient household production. A second, and less anarchic, challenge is from the women's movement. Since the 1960s women have organized to

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change land-use laws, to restructure the patterns of housing ownership and housing-unit structure, to form urban cooperatives for child care and other sharing of household work, and to restructure the urban transportation system. Nevertheless, current patterns of homeownership, real estate construction practices, and the permanency of urban physical structure are formidable barriers to the nonpatriarchal restructuring of urban space.

The analysis of urban spatial structure from a feminist perspective leads ultimately to a questioning of national urban policy. How has it influenced such structure in the past? Does the current policy debate encompass women's concerns? A review of the Carter policy proposed in 1978 shows that its focus on investment stimulation and city fiscal crisis would not have appreciably helped women, especially with issues of the household division of labor in urban space. The final section presents a vision of a feminist national urban policy.

Production and Social Reproduction in Urban Space

Human energy is largely spent in one of two activities: the production of commodities for market exchange and the reproduction of labor power. The former is organized, at least in capitalist society, within the institution of plants, shops, or offices, where employers hire workers (i.e., buy their labor power) for wages in order to produce commodities such as food, clothing, and shelter, machines, insurance, and so on. These are then sold to consumers or other employers for prices that more than cover wages and costs of production. Both neoclassical and Marxist economic analysts, studying the relationships among employer, worker, and output, seek to explain the conditions under which workers enter the labor market (labor force participation), under which their labor power may not be purchased by employers (unemployment), and by which certain levels of output are forthcoming from the use of certain production processes (productivity).

Similar studies look at the composition of output as a function of both demand (consumer's purchases) and supply (production conditions), and at the savings and spending behavior of workers, who receive wages, and of corporations and capitalists, who receive profits. Such studies contribute to the construction of aggregate Keynesian indicators, such as Gross National Product, and to interpretations of their causation that will guide a government intervention meant to perfect the operation of the production sphere. Marxist accounts emphasize different features of the same production process, particularly the exploitation of labor power and the inherent tendency toward crisis. Marxists consequently derive opposing views of the causes of capitalist economic problems, predicting that a socialist transformation is required to solve production-sphere problems.

In the urban setting, these production concerns take on a spatial dimension. As urban economic problems, production problems become those of the transportation of employees to work (the journey to work), of the availability of desirable production space (including rights to pollute), of the fit of skills of a local population to regional industrial structure, and the multiplier process whereby locally generated income and locally stimulated production result in further increases in output and income in secondary and tertiary sectors. Neoclassical urban economic studies, at both the micro and macro level, aim at so characterizing the production process in urban space that government policy can substitute in cases of market failure (pollution control), strengthen or subsidize the market where it is weak (transportation), and stimulate the aggregate level of activity in a local economy when it is recessed (countercyclical revenue sharing). In Marxist versions, urban problems stem from the very structure of capitalism, because both economic crisis and class conflict produce contradictions in urban structure and governance.¹

While these are generally considered to be the "economic" realities of urban life, the sphere of social reproduction, or reproduction of the production sector workforce, is equally economic in the sense that it, too, requires labor time. Social reproduction involves the activities of both government and households that reproduce both current and future generations of labor power. These include the direct provision of the conditions of physical and mental health, cooked meals, personal services, education, maintenance of living conditions, and child care. However, the organization of social reproduction, meaning the context surrounding the use and compensation for labor time of the household workers involved, is quite different from the terms under which labor is hired and organized in the capitalist wage-labor sector.

Of the two basic institutions involved in social reproduction, government hires workers in much the same way that private businesses do. However, government does not compensate laborers strictly on the basis of productivity, does not aim to make a profit on their labor, and does not derive revenues from the sale of labor-produced output. It instead raises funds via a complex taxation system. Demands for public sector outputs are registered, not by a market process, but by a political system where voter-elected representatives determine levels of output and tax payments. Much more needs to be understood about the way in which the public sector operates, and the ways in which the structuring of urban space conditions the efficiency and equity of the local public sector. In minor ways, the recently proposed national urban policy addresses certain of these conditions by proposing incentives to metropolitan areas to adopt tax-sharing schemes and by requiring neighborhood citi-

1. Neoclassical work can be sampled in such periodicals as the *Journal of Urban Economics*; Marxist work in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

zen participation in certain public sector urban programs. Another subject worthy of research is the interrelationship between household production and local public sector structures.

Of greater interest to us now, however, is the structuring of social reproduction in the household realm of urban society. Most economists and other social scientists treat the household as a social and economic unit without disaggregating it to its individual members. Conventional economic analysis treats the household as a consuming and resource-owning unit, whose sole relationships to wage-labor and commodity markets consist of supplying labor to and consuming the output of the commodity production process. Similarly, Marxist analyses of the household under capitalism have emphasized its function as a private sphere absorbing the alienation of the capitalist workplace² and even as a triumph of the working-class family preventing complete proletarianization.³ Both types of analysis obscure the role that household members, chiefly women, perform in the reproduction of labor power and the social relationships of the household in which it takes place.

In urban space, the location and organization of households are generally considered of economic interest only as the locational source of labor power and buying power. Neoclassical studies hypothesize that household-location decisions are primarily a function of the journey to work and secondarily reflect preferences for accessibility to open space, good public services, retail markets, and housing quality.⁴ Even the term "journey to work" suggests, incorrectly, that no work is done in the household. The locational outcomes are always presented as utility-maximizing decisions undertaken by the household as a whole. They have not been analyzed as decisions per se about production input required in the reproduction of labor power (e.g., minimizing travel time to schools, to health care, to markets, and to recreation). Nor has household-location analysis considered conflict among the members of the household, particularly between those who are primarily engaged in the capitalist labor market and those primarily responsible for social reproduction activities (especially when working as wage labor also), that is, conflict between men and women or husbands and wives.

The Marxist feminist literature⁵ is beginning to correct these omis-

2. Eli Zaretsky, "Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life," pts. 1 and 2, *Socialist Revolution* 3, nos. 1-2 (January-April 1973): 69-125, and 3, no. 3 (May-June 1973): 19-70.

3. Jane Humphries, "The Working-Class Family, Women's Liberation and Class Struggle: The Case of Nineteenth Century British History," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1977): 25-41.

4. William Alonso, "Metropolis without Growth," *Public Interest* 53 (Fall 1978): 68-86.

5. Sheila Rowbotham, *Women's Consciousness; Man's World* (London: Penguin Books, 1973); Dorothy Smith, "Women, the Family, and Corporate Capitalism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 20 (1975-76): 55-90; Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a New Union," *Capital and Class* 3 (Summer 1979): 45-72; Ann R. Markusen, "Feminist Notes on Introductory Economics," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1977): 1-18.

sions. It argues that the household is not a passive consumption unit, but one in which people reproduce their labor power, of both current and future generations, through a process that involves considerable male/female division of labor, extensive expenditure of labor time, and particular composition of output that has its own quality and distributional patterns. Even though more than half of all adult women under age sixty-five work for wages, they still bear the primary responsibility for household work. The products of their labor are meals, clean and mended clothes, home health care, preschool education of children, financial and transportation services, and so on. Yet, the economic nature of this activity is largely hidden by the informal economic contract involved. Marriage, this view argues, is an implicit rather than an explicit contract for the exchange and organizational control of labor power in the household.

*Household Production, Women's Roles, and the Structuring
of U.S. Urban Space*

The most striking aspects of modern U.S. city spatial structure are the significant spatial segregation of residence from the capitalist workplace, the increasing low-density settlement, and the predominant single-family form of residential housing. Most contemporary analysts variously ascribe these developments to the rise of mass production techniques, to the automobile, to FHA mortgages, and to class and racial segregation. None of the analyses mentions woman's household work, household social relations, or patriarchy as primary determinants of this structure. Feminists critical of urban structure claim that current forms are inefficient for social reproduction and reinforce women's roles as household workers and as members of the secondary labor force. Yet no one has systemically critiqued the myopia of both neoclassical location theory and Marxist urban spatial theory by documenting the centrality of the patriarchal form of household organization as a necessary and causal condition responsible for contemporary urban structure and its problems.

Hayford has explored the relationship of patriarchy to community structure throughout human history.⁶ Our more specific concern here is with the spatial form produced by the conjuncture of patriarchy and capitalism in advanced industrial countries. By patriarchal structuring of social reproduction, I follow the definition of Hartmann, in which the labor power of women within a capitalism system is employed partially or wholly in the service of men in the household and where the returns to both women's and men's labor are contained in the family wage, which the man controls. Women's work involves the same basic activities that

6. Alison Hayford, "The Geography of Women: An Historical Introduction," *Antipode* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1-6.

occur in capitalist production, but organized differently. A woman produces a meal for the household by purchasing raw material inputs at the grocery store or by growing a garden, combining them with her labor time, energy, and machine power provided by kitchen equipment, and serving them to household members. In contrast, her hired counterpart in the restaurant may do the same things, but her service is sold for a price that covers both her own wages and her employer's required return on investment. The productivity and efficiency of household production in the former case are just as important as in the latter, except that in the latter the market test is the willingness of the consumer to buy the restaurant meal at the price covering costs, while the quality and costliness of the household meal are directly "tested" by household members' satisfaction, and the implicit price is represented by the expenditure of household income and time.

The organization of household production has not been without its students and efficiency-promoting studies. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, home economics specialists investigated ways of increasing the efficiency and quality of household production. They introduced mechanized techniques (sewing, washing, and dishwashing machines; vacuum cleaners; etc.), and they rationalized organization of women's time, using methods reminiscent of scientific management in the factory. Such efficiency concerns, however, have accepted the nuclear household as the unit of analysis. Most home economists have confined their prescriptions to changes within the household, rather than to changes in the size, composition, or spatial organization of households in urban places, including their juxtaposition to other institutions that supply inputs into the household production process. A few considered collective kitchens and apartment hotels, but for the most part dramatic changes in household organization were championed by utopians: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for instance, in *Herland*,⁷ her feminist utopia originally published in 1915, and Melusina Fay Peirce in her 1868–71 campaign for cooperative housekeeping in Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁸

Similarly, few treatments of optimal household location in urban space try to account for the maximization of efficiency in household production. Most location models assume that the household chooses between "the journey to work" (implying only one wage worker) and various consumption goods such as housing, open space, and public sector services. Gravity models (models that weight the multiple spatial orientations of the firm, e.g., toward sources of inputs and markets for outputs, by the transportation costs between each in order to predict the profit-maximizing location) have not been developed for intraurban household location. The exclusion of household production from the

7. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

8. Dolores Hayden, "Melusina Fay Peirce and Cooperative Housekeeping," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 3 (October 1978): 404–20.

calculus for urban spatial location is damaging, because it may lead to erroneous conclusions about the ability of certain urban policies to affect spatial form or to a blindness regarding the vulnerability of urban form to changes in household structure.

The fundamental separation between "work" spheres and home corresponds roughly to the division of primary responsibility between adult men and women for household production and wage labor, at least historically. Since patriarchy is the organizing principle of the former sphere, urban spatial structure must be as much a product of patriarchy as it is of capitalism. Patriarchy may thus contribute to and condition urban problems. The recent literature by feminists critiquing urban structure, both the single-family household and its spatial decentralization, argues that current patterns are inefficient for women because they result in wasted labor time and curtailed access to jobs and other facets of urban life.⁹ Popular accounts, such as Betty Friedan's critique of women's household experience in *The Feminine Mystique* and Marilyn French's detailing of suburban housework in the bestselling novel *The Women's Room*,¹⁰ also document the waste and alienation inherent in the current structure of urban housing, suburban neighborhoods, and intraurban transportation networks. Further proof can be discerned in the efforts by various women's groups and community organizations to protect existing forms of suprahousehold nonmarket production and collective consumption and to extend them further in the spheres of housing, child care, and other shared neighborhood services.

If these contentions regarding the inefficient structuring of urban space are true, why do women continue to choose household production roles in the existing urban structure? Primarily because their choices are so limited. In household decisions men and women are conditioned by the limited range of their options, a fact which conventional location analysis obscures. The major force encouraging women to remain in the household sector is the inaccessibility of jobs in the capitalist labor market, and the occupational segregation that keeps women's wages at strikingly low levels and women confined in low-skill, no-advancement jobs.

9. Dolores Hayden and Gwendolyn Wright, "Architecture and Urban Planning: Review Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 923-33; R. Palm and A. Pred, "A Time-geographic Perspective on the Problem of Inequality for Women," in *Women in Society*, ed. P. Burnett (Chicago: Maroufa Press, 1977); David Popenoe, *The Suburban Environment: Sweden and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Wendy Sarkissian, "Planning as If Women Mattered: The Story of Brown Hills," mimeographed (Berkeley: Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, 1978); Gerda Wekerle and Novia Carter, "Urban Sprawl: The Price Women Pay," *Branching Out* 5, no. 2 (1978): 12-14; Eva Gamarnikow, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Women and the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 3 (October 1978): 390-403.

10. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963); Marilyn French, *The Women's Room* (New York: Summit Books, 1977).

These conditions, in turn, have been traced to patriarchal compromises struck between male workers and capitalist employers, where the primary incentive for male workers to oppose women's incorporation into wage labor was the level of service and power men commanded in the household.¹¹ Even when women work for wages, and a majority do, their lower pay reinforces their role as supplemental breadwinners for the household, and they continue to bear the primary responsibility for housework.

A second, and tempering, observation must be made. Given the quality and paucity of the alternatives, women's control over their own working conditions may be greater in the household workplace than in a factory or service establishment. Of course, this may not be universally true; some husbands require extraordinary cleanliness and service on command, and some use physical violence to enforce their demands. Household production organized in single-family units permits some variation of tasks and development of a higher level of skills, compared to the specialization and deskilling generally enforced in the lower ranks of the labor market, a station to which most women would be assigned if working as wage labor. This consideration of quality of working conditions cautions us against concluding that household production per se is inefficient. A feminist society, in which oppressive household divisions of labor were eliminated, might still choose to perform many tasks in the reproduction of labor power within a modified form of household.

But, if contemporary urban spatial structure is dysfunctional for most women, then it must be functional or efficient from the point of view of capitalism or patriarchy or both. To distinguish between the two, we must look at the ways in which the conditions governing women's household production in urban settings have evolved with developments in the capitalist workplace and in the patriarchal household. Capitalist structuring of twentieth-century society has profoundly influenced the household, both directly through its requirements for the type of labor power to be reproduced and indirectly through its organization of commodity production. Increasingly, because of its hierarchical elaboration of the labor force, the capitalist production sphere required dramatically different conditions for the rearing of children. This has resulted in class-differentiated neighborhoods with tremendous responsibility for child care devolving upon women in individual households. Women may collaborate in the decision to live in suburbia, because, given the options, suburban locations offer safer, less crime-ridden, and less racially tense environments for both blacks and whites for bringing up children. Furthermore, since the types of household labor involved in caring for children are dissimilar from those involved in reproducing the labor

11. Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 3, pt. 2 (Spring 1976): 137-69; Ruth Milkman, "Women Workers and American Trade Unions," *Socialist Review* (1980), in press.

power of adults, it may be that differentials in quality, productivity, and required labor time result in the relatively high incidence of households with small children in metropolitan suburban locations.

Second, capitalist organization of land and housing as commodities brokered by the real estate industry, built by the construction industry, and financed by the banking sector, has found current patterns of residential decentralization and single-family dwellings profitable. However, such profitability need not require this particular spatial form. For instance, in the absence of the patriarchal nuclear family, these same industries might have made just as much profit off the construction, sale, and financing of high-density, urban apartment-like living quarters accommodating various forms of household composition. It is true that the single-family form of housing is more amenable to the type of recycling of urban space that occurs with blockbusting, speculation, and continual construction and destruction of housing values. Nevertheless, this argument cannot explain the single-family unit; more accurately, it reflects its popularity. The housing and land use recycling process has, however, indirectly promoted the isolation of the suburban household worker by eroding the extended family and community network that previously helped informally to collectivize household work in urban areas. The dynamics of urban land use increasingly result in the wholesale slumification or renewal of neighborhoods, a process that undermines entire ethnic communities and disperses their residents. This is also a function of the increasing labor mobility required by employers, which produces individual household migration patterns, both intraurban and interregional, that disrupt long-term community ties.

A final factor in the individualization of urban household work has been the restructuring of the income basis for retired people toward social security and pensions and away from inclusion in family support systems. This development has eliminated the need for generations to occupy the same household or to settle near each other. Incomes of the elderly are frequently insufficient to support residence in the same neighborhood as those of their sons and daughters. As a result of age segregation of urban and even regional space (seniors moving to Florida and Arizona), women have lost the propinquity of parents and other older neighbors as child carers. Di Leonardo's work¹² indicates that in Italian urban communities of all classes, intergenerationally shared household arrangements have been a primary motivational reason for women's dedication to household work and have frequently eased work duties through sharing. While an individual woman might be glad to escape her mother-in-law, on the whole this nuclear fragmentation of the family appears to increase the relative inefficiency in household pro-

12. Micaela Di Leonardo, "La Vita Nuova: Class, Work and Kinship among Italian-American Women in California" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1980).

duction for women, though not necessarily for patriarchal relations or for capitalism as a whole.

While individual employers may benefit from mobility of labor within cities and regions, and while certain industries may have actively promoted and profited from the evolution of contemporary urban spatial form (the durable-goods industries, for instance), there are other ways in which the present form of household production in urban space is inefficient for capitalist production requirements. First, the continued absorption of women's labor time in the household prevents them from being available as wage workers to a production sector that is always in search of cheap labor. Second, current urban household spatial structure requires large commuting costs and considerable duplication of the household production apparatus, which become part of the basic living costs of workers that employers must cover in the wage.

It is unnecessary to attempt to unravel completely the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in promoting contemporary labor spatial structure. While eliminating capitalism does not necessarily end patriarchy, as the socialist countries show, it is not clear that we could eliminate patriarchy without transforming capitalism. Some argue that patriarchy indirectly serves capitalism by dividing the workforce and blunting class consciousness.¹³ However, acceptance of this view does not require a corollary that *all* forms and products of patriarchal relationships are functional for capitalism. Even if the current urban structure is efficient for capitalism as a whole, one can make a case that it is functional for patriarchy, and that the widespread indifference to women's concerns about its inefficiency can be attributed mainly to patriarchal, rather than capitalist, ideology.

How do men benefit from contemporary urban spatial structure? I can offer several hypotheses. First, the "ideal" single-family, detached, urban or suburban dwelling embraces the contemporary patriarchal form of household organization. Within it, the man (when present) is generally considered the head of household (until the current census, he was officially so), the primary wage earner, and the major support of the household. This form discourages extended family or community sharing of housework; deploys the machinery of housework in individual units, which makes sharing difficult; and replaces collective play space (parks) with individual yards. The journey to work of the husband tends to dominate location decisions, and the distance to jobs, combined with inadequate public transportation, discourages women from working for wages. The publicly subsidized (FHA) propagation of homeownership entails significant commitments on the part of both women and men to maintenance work on the individual structure, toil that is confined and controlled within the household unit.

13. Rowbotham (n. 5 above).

Second, the apparently wasteful expenditure of women's labor time under such circumstances underscores the nature and maintenance of power and privilege of men in the patriarchal household unit. Veblen argued years ago that men receive satisfaction from the conspicuous consumption of women's labor time in the household: the more waste apparent, the more social status accruing to them.¹⁴ If this motive prevails, productivity of women's time in the household is not important, and a concern with it would directly conflict with accrual of status. Feminist historians have observed that working-class women as well as men aspired to replicate the upper-class family, where women did not have to work for a wage, but would instead perform the role of household manager and servant. The lack of interest in household efficiency in the larger spatial context also reinforces the illusion that only men "really" work and "provide" for their families. At any rate, we can conclude that in general, American men have not registered complaints about the waste of women's labor time, or inefficiency, of dispersed, residential, single-family dwelling patterns.

A third, and nonconflicting, hypothesis concerns the quality of output achievable under the patriarchal form of household organization. The advantages of this form of organization include the flexibility of scheduling of certain services (meals, recreation, etc.) and the potentially higher quality of home-cooked meals, homegrown vegetables, and personally tailored services. (Of course, such personally crafted services could be worse, as well!) In this sense, the current form of household production may not be inefficient, that is, wasteful of women's labor time. This argument would hold if women's preferences coincide with men's preferences; given the alternatives, women may indeed enjoy their own home-cooked meals and may prefer taking care of their own children to cheap restaurants or for-profit custodial child care. But it may also benefit men at women's expense. Flexible and quality meals for husbands may require the squandering of women's labor time.

We are, of course, dealing with shifting definitions of efficiency. In the argument regarding quality of household output, the "efficiency" of a home-cooked meal depends on which side of the dinner table you occupy. While it appears that men as a rule gain from the current organization of household production, these gains are qualified by their position as wage-earning workers. It is possible that such personal service could become very expensive with certain changes in capitalist workplace organization, commodity composition, and women's resistance. For instance, if women's wages were to rise enough to make their wage labor attractive; if women were to demand full partnership in household work; and if the quality and price of market-produced child care, meals, and so on were to improve substantially, men might agree

14. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899).

more readily to women's wage work, with a diminution of the quality and privilege associated with full-time household work, and to restructuring of the household in urban space. Nevertheless, the single most significant factor in the structure of the patriarchal household is the derogation of primary responsibility for household labor upon women. If men were to assume their share of responsibility for housework and child care, then we might experience significant changes in household structure and spatial location in urban areas. Such an event might show us just how inefficient contemporary household production patterns really are. Similarly, the question of whether current patterns are functional for capitalism depends upon the net effects on profit produced through such arrangements and, further, on the way in which patriarchal concessions to male workers are necessary to the maintenance of a docile workforce.

Of course factors other than the patriarchal form of household production influence location decisions and housing choices, particularly race and class characteristics and the relationship between households and wage-labor work locations. Furthermore, American individualism has undoubtedly coincided with patriarchal household structure to promote the single-family suburban housing that is more common in U.S. cities than in European ones. Yet, the central theoretical point stands: patriarchy profoundly shapes American urban spatial structure and dynamics. It implies that the dismantling of patriarchal household arrangements might call for dramatic restructuring of cities.

The Reshaping of Urban Space

Patriarchy is not a static system. Currently under widespread attack by the women's movement, it also must accommodate itself to changes in capitalism, particularly the increasing availability of commodity substitutes for household labor (child care, restaurant meals, and so on). In unorganized as well as organized ways, changes are taking place in urban living arrangements that foreshadow the future evaluation of urban spatial structure. For instance, three significant demographic changes have occurred in the 1970s in the United States that involve new forms or locations of household production. Their emergence contributes substance to the argument that decentralized urban single-family households are not the most efficient workplaces for the reproduction of labor power and human life. Each instance involves a different segment of women in the population, but all three suggest significant efficiencies deriving from a more integrated use of urban space or a more collective form of household or neighborhood structure.

The first phenomenon is gentrification, that is, the reverse migration of middle- and upper-income residents to urban centers, bringing housing rehabilitation or rebuilding with them. While no urban analysts

have pursued this explanation, it seems clear that gentrification is in large part a result of the breakdown of the patriarchal household. Households of gay people, singles, and professional couples with central business district jobs increasingly find central locations attractive. Particularly important has been the success of both gays and women in the professional and managerial classes in gaining access to decent-paying jobs. Gentrification must also be ascribed to the growth of high-income professional and managerial jobs per se in big cities, where the needs of contemporary large-scale corporations have concentrated jobs associated with the control and management of large-scale economic enterprises and with government-related activity.¹⁵

Gentrification in large part corresponds to the two-income (or more) professional household that requires both a relatively central urban location to minimize journey-to-work costs of several wage earners and a location that enhances efficiency in household production (stores are nearer) and in the substitution of market-produced commodities (laundries, restaurants, child care) for household production. In some areas, such as the SoHo district in New York City, large networks of women-headed households share child care and other household production activities in a well-organized manner. The flexibility in designing living space out of converted lofts enhances this collectivization and permits variation in household composition.

Second is the movement of retired households to relatively nonurban settings, all the way from southern New Jersey and the Upper Peninsula in Michigan to retirement colonies like Leisure World in Florida and in the Southwest. While these households generally remain nuclear, the division of labor between men and women frequently breaks down. One striking feature of these communities is that they provide relatively easy access to the normal range of inputs in the household production process, eliminating the difficulties posed by urban and suburban traffic, parking, and high taxes. Condominiums reduce the household maintenance tasks. Such communities are experiencing the revival of noncommodity production and barter among residents, women and men alike, with a more explicit emphasis on the quality of household production. Retirement housing is also frequently more collective in shared space and facilities. Buildings or complexes may include group dining facilities, group recreational facilities, and small health-care and therapy centers.

Finally, there is striking evidence that the fastest growing American communities are small and medium-sized towns, not urban areas.¹⁶ Although suburbs continue to be developed, the total suburban popula-

15. Stephen Hymer, "The Multinational Corporation and the International Division of Labor," in Stephen Hymer, *The Multinational Corporation: A Radical Critique*, ed. R. Cohen et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

16. Alonso (n. 4 above).

tion is not rising rapidly, and many urban areas as a whole are experiencing depopulation. While decentralization of employment and the relatively lower cost of living are most often cited as causes, my own informal observations suggest that women are frequently strong proponents of such moves, because they provide greater possibilities for shared child care and greater community involvement in social reproduction. Such places also involve easier access to jobs, even though they may not offer better pay than those available in urban areas. I have noticed, for example, that wives of construction workers who are regionally mobile often choose to live permanently in small towns rather than cities because they make household life easier while their husbands migrate to seasonal jobs.

These latter two examples are not cases of the breakdown of patriarchy *per se* but of household and urban spatial patterns that have evolved from a breakdown of the patriarchal structuring of household production. In fact, both of the latter cases may be explained as reactions to the extraordinary success of that form in dominating the housing stock and the spatial array of urban residences. In the former case, older people frequently find it inefficient to continue to live in, maintain, and pay taxes on a large house which previously operated as the workplace for rearing children. The homogeneity of single-family neighborhoods makes it nearly impossible to find alternative housing in the same area. The choice to migrate to another region entirely may be more a hallmark of the destruction of any meaningful or accessible social unit larger than the family than a product of the cessation of wage work or the search for a warmer, healthier climate. Similarly, the migration to small towns of nuclear families not tied to urban labor markets signals the inefficiency of household production imposed by the patriarchal urban form, particularly its destruction of access for women to collective help with household production, to jobs, and to urban amenities.

However, just as patriarchy will not disappear without organized resistance, the trends we have just discussed cannot be counted on anarchically to undermine the patriarchal structuring of households and urban space. The sobering reality of this form of urban spatial structure is its permanence. It is literally constructed in brick and concrete. Therefore, its existence continues to constrain the possibilities open to women and men seeking to form new types of households and to reorder the household division of labor. The fact that housing, the primary workplace for social reproduction, is also the major asset for many people tends to reinforce the single-family, patriarchal shape of housing and neighborhoods. Builders, and people buying from them, worry that innovative housing forms will not have a resale value. People interested in suprafamilial communal living situations have generally had to either migrate to rural areas where they could construct their own housing or to older central city areas where they could convert large old housing units (originally built for extended families or boarders). Efforts by les-

bians and other organized groups (e.g., a church group in Detroit) to take over entire neighborhoods are severely hampered by the individualization of land-ownership patterns and the legal sanctity of property. Developers, through urban renewal, may use public domain powers to clear entire sections of urban land for private business development, but community and neighborhood groups have no such access to eminent domain for efforts to collectivize living space for the tasks of social reproduction. The dominance of the single-family, detached dwelling in a decentralized urban spatial structure reinforces people's ideas of what forms of household structure are possible and penalizes them materially if they wish to pursue other visions.

Since the resurgence of the women's movement in the late 1960s, women who wish to change their living arrangements and household responsibilities, or to increase their options for doing so, have found it necessary to attack the structural determinants of patriarchal household urban form directly. The women in SoHo successfully fought city zoning ordinances that prohibited the types of units they wanted to construct out of old lofts. Ettore's study¹⁷ of lesbian ghettos in Britain documents their struggle to secure access to the city, through forms of squatting and collectivized households, in living arrangements not mediated by marriage. In many urban areas, women have set up cooperative child care and other forms of cooperatives that help alleviate the burdens of housework.¹⁸ Women have found regulations of the welfare state that presume the patriarchal family is the normal household unit and that are frequently oppressive to men as well as women (e.g., the refusal of HEW until recently to grant aid to dependent children to fathers).

The widespread activism of women in urban struggles around housing, child care, and neighborhood preservation has generally been neglected in the literature on urban social movements.¹⁹ Feminist critics of this literature point out that because women's struggles have frequently been over issues bearing on conditions of social reproduction, they are invisible to the students of urban social movements, who identify urban problems as capitalist, not patriarchal, phenomena.²⁰ Furthermore, the literature frequently overemphasizes the role of men in such movements and misrepresents the goals and strategy of the organizations. While

17. E. M. Ettore, "Women, Urban Social Movements, and the Lesbian Ghetto," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 3 (October 1978): 499-520.

18. Anna Whyatt, "Cooperatives, Women, and Political Practice," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 3 (October 1978): 538-57.

19. Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1977); Janice Perlman, "Grassroots Participation from Neighborhood to Nation," in *Citizen Participation in America*, ed. Stuart Langdon (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976).

20. Hilary Rose, "In Practice Supported, in Theory Denied: An Account of an Invisible Urban Movement," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 3 (October 1978): 521-37; Gamarnikow (n. 9 above).

leadership may be male, the main organizing in many urban struggles has been accomplished by women, who tend to know their neighborhoods better, who build collectivization of household labor into many community group organizing efforts, and who seem to opt for a form of organization that permits them to continue their household work.²¹ Recently formulated socialist strategies for transforming urban structures, such as Stone and Hartman's program for housing,²² have as a rule completely ignored the role of social reproduction and household labor in structuring urban space. Such plans also neglect to ask women what types of housing and changes in the organization of urban space would alleviate the unequal patriarchal division of household labor. The Stone/Hartman strategy, for instance, would leave untouched the basic single-family housing unit. Nor does it include any explicit expectation that a socialist housing strategy should alleviate women's household working conditions.

The National Urban Policy Debate

All women are affected by the limited choices offered in urban space. In addition to local struggles, a major means for reshaping urban spatial structure is national urban policy. How well has urban policy addressed feminist concerns with household and urban form? Clearly since World War I, U.S. policy has reinforced the nuclear family, detached dwelling, decentralized urban structure. A review of the most recent set of urban proposals at the national level does not promise much relief. Wekerle²³ has attacked them, because they ignore women's urban needs, specifically the limited proposals for low-income housing, and because of the absence of new programs for improved transportation, certain types of urban infrastructure, and welfare programs. But, urban policy debate is significant more for its omission of women's concerns than any deliberate attempt to preserve existing spatial structure. While the most recently proposed policy has floundered in Congress, its scrutiny reveals the conspicuous absence of the feminist perspective. In March 1978, the Carter administration unveiled its National Urban Policy, designed to fulfill campaign promises to an urban constituency, including black groups, that had supported Carter's election bid. They had been patient, particularly since the urban policy had been assigned sec-

21. See, e.g., Ronald Lawson and Stephen Barton, "Sex Roles in Social Movements: A Case Study of the Tenant Movement in New York City," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1980), in press.

22. Michael Stone and Chester Hartman, "Housing, a Marxist Analysis and a Socialist Program" (paper presented at Cornell University Conference on Progressive Planning, Ithaca, New York, April 1979).

23. Gerda Wekerle, "A Woman's Place Is in the City," mimeographed (Toronto: York University, 1978).

ondary priority while the Carter administration undertook its first major policy initiative, energy, and since the energy policy, as a whole, had assumed an antiurban bias.²⁴

The urban policy identified two major problems that characterized U.S. cities in the late 1970s: declining economies (some central cities, some suburbs, and even entire metropolitan areas), and attendant urban fiscal crises experienced by their local governments. The first integrated and explicit urban policy, it implicitly embraced a theory that the urban crisis occurring in many different U.S. cities can best be reversed by a major attempt to revive private economic activity, thereby mitigating high levels of unemployment, plumping city tax bases, and diminishing such decline-related expenditures as welfare. More than any previous urban-oriented federal policy, this one aimed at underlying causes rather than such symptoms as poor housing or unemployed people. Supposedly, the new attack on basic economic conditions would generate the income and quality of public sector services that would, in turn, prompt improved housing and human welfare.

Thus the keystones of the package were its business-oriented stimulants, particularly the National Development Bank (NDB), the targeted investment tax credit (ITC), the Employment Tax Credit at the federal level, and the fiscal stimulants of Soft Public Works and renewal of Supplemental (previously antirecessionary) Assistance for the local level. The NDB would offer loans and grants to private businesses to expand production in urban areas. The targeted ITC would soften the anti-urban bias of the proposed extension of the 10 percent ITC by adding on an additional 5 percent tax rebate for building in troubled urban, as opposed to suburban or rural, areas. The Employment Tax Credit would permit employers who expanded their urban workforce to deduct a percentage of the new payroll from their federal corporate income tax liability. The Soft Public Works program would expand jobs (part union labor, part hard-core unemployed) in the construction industry through rehabilitation and insulation projects on public buildings. Supplemental Assistance would extend the then-existing countercyclical revenue-sharing program, in which large grants went to cities with unemployment rates sharply above the national average, mostly large northeastern and midwestern cities like New York and Detroit. While the proposed urban policy contained a number of housing and neighborhood programs, such as community health centers, community anticrime programs, and housing rehabilitation loans, the proposed dollar commitments to these types of program were small. By far, the largest financial commitment (over 90 percent) would go into the investment-inducing and fiscal solvency proposals (see table 1).

24. Ann Markusen and Jerry Fastrup, "The Regional War for Federal Aid," *Public Interest* 53 (Fall 1978): 87-99.

Whether the Carter investment-oriented programs would, in fact, stimulate employment is not at all clear, since they are heavily biased in favor of highly capital intensive redevelopment. They include no direct requirement that private-firm beneficiaries be accountable for the net number of jobs created (including those eliminated by new developments) or generate new tax revenue to cover the additional public sector services that their expansion would require.²⁵ At any rate, this question is now moot, since neither the ITC nor the NDB proposal passed Congress.²⁶ An extension of the regular investment tax credit did pass, and although it is to include rehabilitation, its bias is toward new

Table 1

New Urban Initiatives, 1979–81
(Fiscal Years, in Millions of Dollars)

Function and Program	Budget Authority		
	1979	1980	1981
National resources and environment	40	15	15
Transportation	200	200	200
Community and regional development:			
Public works	1,000	1,000	1,000
National Development Bank	2,360	3,405	3,620
Community development corporations	20	20	20
Urban parks and recreation facilities	150	150	150
Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (sec. 312)	150	150	150
Self-help development program	15	15	15
Community Development Credit Unions	12	...	...
Urban Volunteer Corps (new, ACTION)	40	40	40
Loan guarantees*	(2,200)	(3,800)	(5,000)
Education, training, employment, and social services	172	172	172
Targeted Employment Tax Credit	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,500)
Investment Tax Credit Extension†	(200)	(200)	...
Community anticrime programs	10	10	10
Health—Community Health Center	50	50	50
State incentive grants	200	200	200
Supplementary fiscal assistance	...	660	...
Totals:			
Budget authority outlays	4,419	6,087	5,642
Revenue reductions	(1,700)	(1,700)	(1,500)
Loan guarantees	(2,200)	(3,800)	(5,000)
Total effect of proposals	8,319	11,587	12,142

SOURCE.—Adapted from President Carter's speech to Congress, "New Partnership to Conserve America's Communities," March 27, 1978, Washington, D.C.

NOTE.—Figures in parentheses are not outlays, but revenue foregone and value of guarantees.

*Nonbudgetary. Figures represent the value of loans guaranteed. Cost to the taxpayer depends on rate of default.

†Figures are questionable. Much higher figures for the investment tax credit extension are found in Luger (n. 27) on the order of \$8,400 per year in lost revenues.

25. The National Urban Policy Collective, "Carter's National Urban Policy," mimeographed (Berkeley: Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California, 1978).

26. Marc Weiss and Erica Shoenberger, "Carter's New Urban Strategy," *In These Times* (February 28, 1979), p. 17.

building and rebuilding rather than maintenance. New building heavily favors rapidly growing regions and suburban areas, not the most problematic areas. The extension can thus be expected to continue to encourage the suburbanization and regional shift of employment.²⁷ A version of the employment tax credit did pass, but only after it was divorced from the urban policy and rolled into the general tax reform bill.

The major successes to date in the Carter program are those policy innovations that the executive branch could implement without Congressional approval or appropriations, namely, Carter's pledge to perform urban impact analyses of new federal policy initiatives and his pledge to redirect federal procurement and federal facility location to needy regional economies. Yet even these efforts define "impacts" and "needs" in terms of conventional economic criteria such as employment, income, and local government tax and expenditures.

The perspective implicit in the national urban policy debate is that the urban problem consists only of the behavior of economic aggregates. In other words, if we could equalize (and lower) unemployment rates and equalize (and raise) public expenditures across cities and suburbs, we would have solved the urban problem. Lower unemployment could be achieved by investment and employment incentives; higher public expenditures could be achieved through state and federal increases in revenue sharing and grants. Restored health to the basic economic indicators of urban unemployment and city fiscal solvency would reflect increased well-being and security of urban residents. More jobs would increase incomes and reduce unemployment; a solvent city would be able to reduce taxes, expand social services, and stem the out-migration of business. Equalization across cities and regions could be achieved by spatial targeting of both policy types.

It is difficult to discern exactly what the net effects of a Carter-type new urban policy on women might be. Most of the proposals are aimed at improving employment or income, without targeting beneficiaries by class, race, or sex. They do not chart the complex process by which increases in employment and income filter through a local economy, displacing some jobs, restructuring some neighborhoods, increasing some types of public services, and lowering taxes for some groups. A business receiving a grant or subsidy would not have to guarantee job creation or worry about its impact on the restructuring of urban space, such as destruction of existing neighborhoods to build a new subsidized inner-city plant. In this sense, the policy is worse than urban renewal, which at least invested residents with legal rights to relocation assistance. The policy as a whole does little to help women, especially with problems of the urban structuring of household production.

Housing programs have constituted a major exception to this rec-

27. Michael Luger, "The Unintended Regional Employment Consequences of Business Tax Incentives," mimeographed (Berkeley: Department of Economics, University of California, 1978).

ord. However, housing policy has traditionally been a pro-production policy in disguise, aimed more at stimulating the construction sector, thereby boosting real estate and building industry profits and expanding jobs for construction workers, than at providing decent housing (part of social reproduction) for the population.²⁸ As Wekerle has pointed out,²⁹ the strongest housing emphasis in the Carter urban policy lies in its new rehabilitation program. Yet rehab loans can only benefit professional and upper-income women, who have only recently gained access to credit. Moreover, Carter's proposed program cuts both public housing and Section 8 funds, though these housing programs and purchase subsidies for low-income households are the most likely to reach low-income households. If anything, the Carter policy might be expected, through these mechanisms, to widen the gap between working-class and professional/managerial-class women. No part of the policy appears to address either the employment problems of lower-income women or the inefficiency of household production imposed by current patterns of urban structure. Thus, while the housing programs may aid the dismantling of patriarchal household relations in one class segment, they may by omission reinforce them for women in other class locations.

More by its omission than by its content, the national urban policy debate has not been concerned with the particular problems that women face in the urban environment as household workers, many of which assume crisis proportions in this era of change in family structure and in women's participation in the labor force. While it is not a policy that purports to deal with urban spatial dynamics directly, its focus on investment location, and its assumption of continued housing and transportation policies that do favor current patterns, betray its belief that women's spatial concerns are not important. The policy does nothing to encourage commercial, residential, and workplace reintegration or greater choice in housing form. In fact, to the extent that it encourages and perpetuates the replication of existing urban structure and function, with its massive-scale segregation of workplace and household and its emphasis on single-family dwellings, we can more grimly conclude that it perpetuates women's problems with the urban environment and does little to eliminate the burdens of patriarchy.

Toward a Feminist National Urban Policy

Since urban spatial structure and housing form is such an important constraint on women's ability to change household work roles, national

28. Stone and Hartman (n. 22 above); Marc Weiss, "The Origins and Legacy of Urban Renewal," in *Urban and Regional Planning in an Age of Austerity*, ed. P. Clavel, W. Goldsmith, and J. Forester (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980); Joel Friedman, Judith Kossy, and Mitt Regan, "Working within the State: Progressive Roles for Planners," *ibid.*

29. Wekerle (n. 23 above).

urban policy should be a major target for feminists. The Department of Housing and Urban Development should rank high with departments concerned with labor, health, education, and welfare as a major agency charged with policy responsibilities central to women. HUD's programs should be scrutinized for their impacts on women and new initiatives should be proposed and demanded.

What would a national urban policy that addressed women's issues look like? Perhaps if we could map this out, we could better assess current national urban policy. The answer grows out of our criticisms of the current structuring of urban space for household production and from a more general critique of social structures that impede women's progress and that could be addressed at the urban level. First of all, the most pressing issue for both women's involvement in the labor force and for economizing on household production involves child care. Without some form of socialized child care, women with young children will remain tied primarily to household production locations. Three solutions are possible: sharing informally through extended-family arrangements and neighborhood co-ops; publicly producing child care; and privately producing, for profit, child care. Each currently exists on a limited basis. Each has serious consequences for both the quality of child-care services and the labor-force participation of women. No thorough study of the implications of each as a prototype system has been done. Clearly, the problem is urban in nature: Should child care be provided cooperatively in small neighborhood complexes or single-family homes, by the public sector in public buildings (like elementary education) on a larger neighborhood scale, or in private enterprises in neighborhood or regional shopping centers? The alternative location—at the plant, office, or shop—has received little attention, even though it has interesting possibilities for parent/worker involvement in child care and for efficiency in journey-to-work trips.

A second issue, also of significance, is the type of housing available in urban areas. Women living without men but with children (a rapidly growing group), and groups of single adults, have difficult times both in adapting existing housing to their needs and in obtaining access to it. Restricted credit opportunities are only one of several discriminating barriers. We have no way of knowing what types of households people would choose to live in, given a choice, but we can say that these choices have not existed in the past, nor do they exist in the present. Federal policy might (as it does in the energy business) invest in research and development and experimental projects with various forms of collective and nonpatriarchal housing.

A third set of policies would encourage and subsidize the reintegration of uses in urban space to enhance the efficiency of the household production sector. These policies might pioneer and provide incentives to small-scale commercial development; to the decentralization of jobs in small establishments; to efficiencies in the use of urban space, such as

more park space in place of endless private front yards; fine-grained transportation systems; etc. While I leave the design of these to my imaginative sisters, I might suggest one criterion that could be used to judge the desirability of such projects (net of other costs): the elimination of unnecessary labor time expended in individual travel (excluding public transportation time which can be used to read newspapers or books or to socialize), in individual yard improvement and grooming, in individual meal preparations, child care, and so on. Other criteria must address both the quality of output and the quality of women's working conditions.

Of course, the efficiency of household production cannot be gauged without considering its market-produced substitutes and its alternative employment opportunities for household (mainly women) workers. No urban policy focused on household production could be satisfactory for women without parallel all-out attack on discrimination in employment. The value of women's labor time in household production can only be accurately assessed if full value is accorded women's work in the wage-labor market.

Finally, a feminist urban policy would establish a new research agenda. This would explore the theoretical understanding of the relationship between patriarchal household form, urban housing, and spatial structure. It would pursue extensive empirical work to document the cost in women's labor time and the working conditions within the household resulting from various aspects of urban structure. It would develop and introduce a new type of cost/benefit calculus for judging the efficiency and social welfare of such public projects as transportation systems, housing, and urban infrastructure (parks, streets, utilities). This calculus would evaluate the effects of such projects on the household division of labor and its productivity. It would design, propose, and experiment with policies and projects that would directly address household production concerns, increase women's choices, and alleviate the onerous division of household labor. It would investigate the proper levels of government or form of collective organization that should be charged with reshaping elements of urban structure. Such a research agenda, which would undoubtedly uncover many creative possibilities, would end the invisibility of women's concerns within both the academy and the agencies that shape urban policy.

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