

Urban Expansion and Urban Land Ownership
in the Rural-Urban Fringe:

A Preliminary Survey of Developing Societies

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I. Urban Land Ownership - a Neglected Aspect in the Study of Urbanization

There has certainly been no lack of studies on urbanization and urban life from the turn of the century. Many aspects have been discussed and considerable progress has been made in understanding the process of urbanization and the change of urban social structure over time. One aspect has however curiously been neglected, namely urban land ownership. This is even more surprising as there is an abundance of studies on rural land tenure. Neither classical sociological studies like Max Weber's "The City" nor the far-reaching ecological studies of the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s have placed any emphasis on the ownership and transmission of land in urban areas. Whereas questions about the use to which urban land is put, who occupies such land and what price it fetches on the urban land market have been discussed in great detail, the more fundamental question of who owns the land has hardly ever been touched upon.

Modern studies of the Shevky-Bell-type social area analysis have introduced many variables and factor-analyzed them. But neither the earlier studies of Shevky and Bell nor recent more advanced studies like Berry and Spodek's factorial ecology of large Indian cities (Berry and Spodek 1971) have introduced land ownership as one of their main variables.