On the contrary, what would cost them dearly, in both personal and career terms, would be admitting that they were wrong, that they had disrupted thousands of lives and wasted billions of taxpayer dollars.

"Urban Sprawl"

From the second half of the twentieth century onward, a variety of programs created by planners and social reformers have sought to limit the housing choices of people across a broad socioeconomic spectrum. While many of these programs have artificially limited the housing choices of low-income people through building restrictions that raise housing costs, other programs have targeted more prosperous people who have moved out of the cities and into the suburbs, creating what has been called "urban sprawl." The definition of this term has been elusive but the fervor of the attack on it has been unmistakable. Sometimes these attacks have been aesthetic, sometimes economic, and sometimes social.

One of the leading critics of urban sprawl, Lewis Mumford, said:

> Circle over London, Berlin, New York, or Chicago in an airplane, or view the cities schematically by means of an urban map and block plan. What is the shape of the city and how does it define itself?[56]

Like many other critics, he deplored the "sprawl and shapelessness" of cities *as seen from overhead.* In other words, the aesthetic criticism of much suburban development has been that it does not look attractive to third parties flying over it. But obviously such development would not have taken place and grown if it were not attractive to those on the ground who moved into such places. The underlying basis for the criticisms rests on a presumption of better aesthetic taste on the part of third party observers, as compared to the taste of ground-level inhabitants. This presumption is often explicit and has been part of the criticism of urban expansion into the surrounding countrysides for more than a century.

Modern critics blame the automobile for suburbanization or "sprawl," just as in the nineteenth century the Duke of Wellington blamed the newly

created railroads for encouraging "the needlessly." Obviously the "common p moved if they had considered it needless. is that third-party elites know better thar at their own expense. "Taste is utterl British critic who deplored those who countryside in 1932.[57] A similar aesthet twentieth century by American folk s suburban development houses, such as "ticky tacky" boxes, "little boxes all the sa

Obviously such developments would r homes did not find the lower prices ma identical houses more important than t with different tastes and priorities remai distinctive and more expensive housing "ticky tacky" boxes may well have been a s moved into them from crowded urban a whether many people moved to Daly Levittown from Park Avenue. The aesth has been only one of many criticisms enduring and, since it is subjective, it c facts, as other claims against "urban spra

It is not only the quality of particu apparently chaotic expansion of urban c been criticized. However, the fact that o a community do not see a pattern does relevant to the desires of the people living suburbanites who are, after all, not livi presenting a tableau pleasing to third par

"Planned" communities— whether pla builders under the direction or cons commissions— may better meet the pre necessarily serving the functional purpose the internationally renowned planne

Sweden— remains the exception, rather than the rule, even in Sweden, where most people choose to live in communities very much like "unplanned" communities deplored by critics in the United States and in other countries. As one study notes: "With its freeways, shopping centers, and big-box Ikea stores, much of suburban Stockholm looks more like suburban America than like Vällingby."[59]

What is called "smart growth" in some places is government imposition of the preferences of observers, critics, activists, or "experts" to over-ride the desires of the people themselves, as expressed in what they are willing to spend their own money to buy or rent. Although the term "smart growth" is new, the concept itself is not. The first Queen Elizabeth issued an edict in the sixteenth century forbidding building around the city of London. Centuries later, an elaborate Greater London Plan of 1944 and other plans to control growth likewise imposed radical changes in land use laws but in the end still failed to stop urban sprawl around London.

It is as misleading to speak of "planned" and "unplanned" communities as it is to speak of planned versus unplanned economies. In both cases, individuals and enterprises making decisions independently of government officials do not behave randomly or chaotically but plan just as much as any planning commission. What government planning means in practice is the suppression of individual plans and the imposition of a politically or bureaucratically determined collective plan instead. The history of centrally planned economies, most of which were increasingly superseded by more market-oriented economies by the late twentieth century— even in countries controlled by socialists and communists— suggests that what seems more plausible to observers does not necessarily produce end results desired by most people. "Unplanned" communities, like "unplanned" economies, must be guided by the desires of people at large, in order to earn their money, whether or not those desires are understood or approved by third party observers.

Specific factual claims by critics of "urban sprawl," as distinguished from their aesthetic or other presumptions, can be subjected to the test of evidence. Among these claims is that laws limiting growth are necessary in order to preserve fast-disappearing open space from being paved over. But,

as noted earlier, only about 5 percent of the la
been developed. In other words, if every city ar
in size— which could take generations— that w
the land undeveloped. Some of the most a
demands for more "open space" preservation l
made in places where much, if not most, of the
on which nothing is allowed to be built.

In 2006, for example, various conservation g
Bay Area advocated setting aside an additional
space on which building would be forbidden by
San Francisco Chronicle reported, "the Bay Are
most open space of any metropolitan area in
million acres in the San Francisco Bay Area,
developed— which is to say, five-sixths of the la
despite rhetoric which might suggest that open-s
to save the last few patches of greenery from bei
a million acres were already legally off-limi
Nevertheless, despite a growing population and s
prices in the nation, a coalition of conservation
another million acres of land off-limits to build
guarantee a further escalation of housing prices
average new home buyer's income was already go

The question here is not whether open space i
open-ended commitment to ever more open spa
desirable. It is especially important to weigh co
there is crusading zeal and heady rhetoric in
virtually everyone regards as desirable, because cru
cost-benefit analysis.

A related claim, made not only in the Un
countries, is that agricultural land must be pre
common even in countries where agricultural su
and costly problems for generations, such as the U
of the European Union. The American governm

billions of dollars to take farm land out of production, in order to try to keep agricultural surpluses from being even larger and more costly than they are.

The fact that so many farmers are abandoning farming, and that so much agricultural land is available for building residential communities, ought to be decisive evidence against those who raise alarms about the dangers of "losing" farmland. Indeed, the very need to pass laws to prevent this land conversion from taking place contradicts the rationale used to justify such laws. But, here again, what seems plausible to third-party observers whose views are promoted among the intelligentsia and echoed in the media can be politically decisive, despite the desires of far more numerous other people directly involved, whose desires as tenants or home owners can be thwarted by laws based on beliefs in more elite circles and whose economic consequences are not widely understood.

Claims of environmental pollution created by the spread of suburbanization are also among the claims that can be scrutinized in the light of empirical evidence. It is certainly true that places where there are people tend to generate more air pollution from burning fuels, as well as pollution from sewage and other waste products, as compared to the pollution generated in open, uninhabited countrysides. But it is people—not their location— which both generate pollution and use up natural resources.

When half the people in a city relocate to the countryside, half the pollution may go with them but, if so, that can mean that there is only half as much pollution back where they left. The case that there is a *net* increase in either the total pollution or the total use of natural resources from a relocation of people is one that would have to be made explicitly and supported empirically, not insinuated by showing that pollution and resource use are greater in occupied places than in unoccupied places. Moreover, the farmland that many are anxious to preserve generates pollution of ground water from the run-off of chemicals used in growing crops and pollution of the air from the use of insecticides and fertilizers.

It is often assumed that suburbanization means an increased use of automobiles and therefore an increased use of fuels, resulting in an increased pollution of the air. That would be virtually axiomatic if suburbanites all

commuted to jobs in the central cities. But ' movement of jobs as well as people out of the c is not a new pattern but one seen generations a twentieth century, one-third of all manufacturi were located outside the central cities and, by m were located outside the central cities. Simi London spread out into the suburbs back in the from one part of the suburbs to another becam from the suburbs into London.

Similar patterns have been found in Ha European cities, to a greater extent than in sout American cities showed a pattern similar to tha

> In North American urban areas the 1920s was even more of a mass moveme expansion and intensification of retail ar downtowns led to a sharp decrease in the nu the center of cities. In this trend, American long visible in the city of London in which intensely crowded during the workday and and weekends. . .
>
> Unprecedented levels of affluence, exce and rising automobile ownership allowe American urban population, including even blue-collar families, to have the option detached houses in the suburbs. Much of th small subdivisions by thousands of small-sca the 1920s, hundreds of square miles of h overnight. . . Although few middle-class today would consider a 1,000-square foot raise a large family, for many families at tha house where they could live under their ow yard represented a real revolution in expecta

In general, whether or not suburbaniza commuting to work by car or not is an empiri conclusion, and the answer can vary from one pl air quality has been improving in many suburbanization suggests that there is no iron la

more pollution. Nor does preserving open space necessarily reduce pollution.

When preserving open space drives up housing prices, that can increase the amount of driving (and the resulting air pollution) by people who work in communities where they cannot afford to live. While some jobs can move out of the city with the people, some other jobs cannot. Firemen must be in the city to put out fires in the city, as policemen must be in the city to deal with urban crime,* teachers to teach urban children, and nurses to tend to people sick or injured in the city. Most people in these particular occupations cannot afford to live in those cities where housing prices have been driven up to extremely high levels by land-use restrictions designed to prevent "urban sprawl," and so must commute from whatever distance is required for them to find housing that they can afford. In short, it cannot be assumed that such land-use restrictions, on net balance, reduce either highway congestion or air pollution.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Over thousands of years and in countries around the world, cities have been concentrations not only of people but also of industrial, commercial, cultural and artistic enterprises. Indeed, it is these enterprises that have drawn people to the cities. Moreover, cities have been in the vanguard of many different civilizations, the places where new ways of doing things are developed and spread out into the provinces and the countrysides. Because so many cities are ports, whether on rivers or harbors, they import

* The sheriff's department in Redwood City, California, has leased a house, so that its deputies will have a place to sleep after they have worked long hours of overtime. That is because these deputies typically live so far from Redwood City that it would be dangerous for them to drive home tired at night after having worked overtime on some local law enforcement problem. Various schemes for providing "affordable housing" for teachers have surfaced in a number of communities on the San Francisco peninsula, though these schemes seldom go beyond token numbers of housing units, for the same reasons that "affordable housing" through subsidies are seldom adequate for dealing with the housing problems of other groups.

not only goods but also new ideas and new tec
then diffuse into the hinterlands. Like eve
imperfect and their benefits have costs— som
factly by most people but, among some, a reason
sometimes worst of all, "solutions."

The title of Edward Banfield's classic, *The Un*
that cities have never been perfect. The bool
current urban issues are not new, nor are the new
interventions likely to make things better, rath
many complex empirical questions revolving arou
the dispersal of urban populations, and there
analyzing these questions, with some of these st
But much of what is said about such things as '
on empirical evidence but on echoes of the Duk
there is a "needless" movement of "common pe
upscale people want them kept out.

It is very doubtful if the effort to keep them o
if presented starkly in terms of what is actuall
enveloped in a fog of lofty and idealistic-soun
would be likely to be won by saying that the
billions of dollars' worth of land to providing a
community of affluent and wealthy individua
ordinary people and preserve the vistas of a r
people at other people's expense. Instead, pol
celebrating a particular way of life in that commu
animal habitat, as if both were in grave danger o
where more than nine-tenths of the land is unde
particular way of living are not at issue. The or
for those benefits. If those enjoying such benef
them, why should the taxpayers or people seeking
be forced to subsidize those who are econ
themselves?

Politically, few people today can speak as
Wellington did in the nineteenth century. M