

PAST AND FUTURE
OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Industrial societies are seeking a civilization for which they have not as yet found a firm framework of moral and social values, nor definite forms of social life. That is why traditional peasant values and ways of life, and social institutions in rural communities, still appeal so strongly to emotion and remain so strikingly evocative in our urbanized, industrialized world. Village society is still seen as an ideal—and often idealized—social model; industrial societies would like to have something comparable in their vast cities.

As a country becomes urbanized and industrialized, village communities undergo profound changes. With rare exceptions, one no longer finds in western Europe coherent instances of closely-knit village communities, in which face to face relationships are predominant and each individual knows everyone else.

We propose, after describing a model of the traditional village community and the changes it is undergoing today, to try and envision a local community of the future—with reference mainly to French instances we have studied.

THE TRADITIONAL RURAL COMMUNITY

A traditional village society is characterized by three fundamental traits: self-sufficiency, cultural homogeneity and social diversity.

To take self-sufficiency first, it was threefold—demographic, economic and social. The villagers kept to themselves, had little to do with the outside world, and everyone in the village knew everyone else. They did not seek to marry “outside the fold.” Endogamy was not absolute in single villages, but a group of villages appear as an endogamous group.

Demographic self-sufficiency went hand-in-hand with economic autarchy. The traditional family farm was adequate to fill essential needs. A certain amount of exchange was necessary, but it was limited to the confines of the village or, at most, neighbouring villages. The blacksmith, the carter, the weaver, the tinker and all other traditional handicrafts were available to cater to the needs of the farms, and of farming families.

Once these requirements had been met, contacts with the outside world were minimal. In order to pay tax, buy salt and other products that had to be procured from outside, it was enough to sell part of the crop, but still on a self-sufficiency basis: the villagers did not produce for purposes of sale, but sold “surplus” produce. Sometimes, when no surplus produce was available, “commercial” crops were added to the subsistence crops or a part of the work force went to work outside, to bring in a salary.

Living among themselves, more or less cut off from the outside world, the villagers had their own way of life. Each little territorial unit had its own “culture”; this fragmentation of rural societies is apparent in the many dialects which are the product and instrument of each “culture.” Language, words, pronunciation, often differed from district to district and from village to

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village. This diversity extended to customs, ideas and general world-view.

This social and cultural self-sufficiency presumed general agreement within the social group—a consensus of beliefs, outlook, moral values and behaviour. All social groups and individuals shared this way of life and were in agreement on good and evil. When the vicar delivered his sermon at Sunday mass, the whole population of the parish would be present; he spoke a language understood by all, from the lord of the manor to the beggar. No doubt a big landlord would also have ways of thought and standards that differed from those of the main peasant group, but in essentials he shared the peasants' ethos, just as he spoke the local dialect with them.

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Demographic and economic self-sufficiency, homogeneity of "culture," were counterbalanced by a profound social diversity.

To begin with, there were men and women, young and old. In traditional village society, some social functions devolved on the young, others on the adult and others still on old people. There was sharp cleavage between the tasks of the sexes. Young people looked after the social side, organized the festivals. The the young, others on the adult and still others on old people. passed on the cultural heritage and saw to it that the traditions and the rules of behaviour were observed.¹

The village also comprised various social groups and categories. The peasants formed a majority, but they were very diversified. The holdings of the poorest smallholders were barely adequate to keep them alive. They had to have other work as well, as artisans, or to emigrate in winter. Then there were medium, big, and very big peasants. There is a striking contrast between a one hectare holding, without even a horse-and-cart, and a forty-hectare estate with several brace of oxen or horses and a large domestic staff. In most regions, there was genuine social stratification among the peasantry.

Besides the peasants, the village comprised other social categories. First came the notables, who lived off the land without

¹ A. Varagnac, *Civilisation traditionnelle et genres de vie*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1942.

themselves cultivating it. They included the landowners, whether noble or bourgeois, and many notaries, lawyers and bailiffs, as well as priests, teachers and doctors. The countryside industries were run by forgemasters, by master-glaziers, by textile manufacturers and merchants and by small manufacturers who produced a variety of goods. These notables formed a relatively numerous group, with far-reaching power and prestige.

In second place came another fairly numerous and diversified group: the handicraftsmen, merchants or purveyors of services who produced or repaired everything required. The artisan-manufacturers such as weavers, joiners, wheelwrights, marked the beginnings of rural industry. The latter's expansion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries led to an increase in this "peasant-worker" class. Third came the administrative personnel such as tax-collectors, gendarmes, council clerks and those employed on the big estates, in the manufactories and in trade.

Finally, there were often a good many people without means of production. Those who could do only manual labour were servants and hired farmhands, artisans' helps, or, if unfit for such work, beggars. Begging was an appreciable source of income in the old villages.

This social diversity lay at the root of a lively and satisfying social life. Within the local community, people could fill most of their needs. It was Marcel Maquet² who described the village as an "inter-cognitional" society, where everyone knew everyone else; these personal relations gave village society a peculiar "transparency." Thanks to inter-cognition, this combination of diversity and homogeneity imparted that extraordinary vitality described in literature dealing with 18th and 19th-century village life, that contrasts so strikingly with the boredom and social lethargy that seems to have taken possession of the countryside today.

SEASONAL MIGRATIONS

Although at all times the farming population accounted for only a fraction of people living in rural areas, the growth of the

² M. Maquet, "Remarques sur le village comme cadre de recherches anthropologiques," *Bulletin de psychologie* 8 (7-8) April 1955 (373-382).

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population in the 19th century led to an upsurge in all non-agricultural occupations, such as rural industry and seasonal migration. The sub-prefect of Riom wrote in 1848: "In the county of Saint-Gervais (Auvergne) there are only two industries, apart from profession indispensable for the daily needs: linen-making and periodical emigration, which help to make up for the inadequacy of agriculture. Some 850 bricklayers and 50 sappers leave in March and return in November with hard-earned savings from the Lyon, Orléans and Champagne areas."

In the southern Alps, seasonal migration was essentially of an agricultural nature.³ The mountain folk with their herds descended southward, where they found a different climate. In the plains, the women and children minded the herds, while the men took farming jobs. Thus the mountain dweller saved on food while keeping his herd alive. A 19th-century author maliciously remarked that "the mountain dweller, very frugal at home, becomes a big eater and a big drinker when food is part of his salary, in winter..."

Whether migration was industrial and restricted to men, or agricultural and on a family scale, village agriculture was reduced to a subsistence level, being left to old people, women and children, while the men went to earn their living elsewhere. It was in the men's interest to go alone. They could then make the most of their small village capital: the dwelling provided the family with housing, and the little farm provided them with food. If the men had tried to sell their modest assets, they could not have made enough to install their families in town by buying something comparable there.

Seasonal migration was economically justified, as sociological analysis confirmed, but it had serious drawbacks. In their villages, these peasants owned something and held clearly defined positions, whereas in the towns, owning nothing and being unskilled, they became "proletarians" employed on work sites or in transportation, and they hardly led pleasant lives. Moreover, the women were left in sole charge of the farm and children.

The seasonal migrant was therefore faced with a hard but rational choice. Many mountain communities have kept in close

³ R. Blanchard, *Les Alpes et leur destin*, Paris, Fayard, 1958, pp. 283.

touch with the outside world through seasonal migration.⁴ Traditional migration broke down geographical barriers and mountain isolation. P. Rambaud⁵ stressed the fact that life in these mountain communities was so “deeply moulded” that all mountain folk felt the need to “go out into the world.”

The foregoing is of course no more than a schematic reconstruction; the picture differs widely from region to region. But it helps comprehension of the factors that broke up the old order of things. By means of urban industrialization, society introduced social disorganization factors into the countryside, progressively destroying the foundations of traditional civilization. It would exploit to its own advantage a disorganization that would cause the local communities to lose their autonomy.⁶

EXODUS AND CHANGES IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

Demographic self-sufficiency could endure as long as migration affected only the overflow population—the excess of births over deaths. A genuine exodus, however, involves more than the overflow, and this breaches demographic autarchy. In parallel, economic self-sufficiency is broken, since city markets keep growing, and in order to satisfy them, agriculture is increasingly orientated towards commercial production.

In many regions, however, there was a massive exodus without loss of traditional economic self-sufficiency; those who remained continued to cultivate their land for food. But in most cases the exodus did not affect all social categories equally, causing an imbalance and thus changing the model we have just outlined.

Partial exodus of the population is not always a factor of imbalance, provided it affects all social categories without distinction. The social model may still function on a smaller scale if its economic bases remain relatively sound and the fundamental social roles are filled. In most cases, however, the bulk of those

⁴ H. Mendras, *Six Villages d'Epire*, Paris, UNESCO, 1961.

⁵ P. Rambaud, *Economie et sociologie de la montagne: Albiez-le-Vieux en Maurienne*, Paris, Colin, 1962.

⁶ A. Giraud, H. Bastide, G. Pourchen, “Mobilité géographique et concentration urbaine,” *Population*, 1964.

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who left belonged to social categories without which local communities could not function on traditional lines.

All available statistical data and local research prove that it is the young people who leave in great numbers and at all periods. Recent research bearing on the French farming population shows that half the young agricultural workers aged 15 to 30 left the land between 1954 and 1962.

The natural result is an ageing process entailing well-known demographic results, particularly a decrease in the birth rate. In a society with an excessive percentage of old people, it is obviously difficult to have a balanced, satisfying social life.

A second resulting phenomenon is sex imbalance. The men initiate a rural exodus; they migrate on a seasonal basis, or for good. The women have no reason to go because they cannot find outside work; they remain more closely integrated in the traditional social and family life of the villages.

But when the rural exodus has gathered momentum, women are more inclined to go; at this stage men prefer their village occupations and their farms, whereas women are more attracted by tertiary forms of urban employment. Research by the INED⁷ has shown that 56 per cent of recent provincial migrants to Paris were women.

These trends result in disproportionate age pyramids, with more men than women, more old people than young. In extreme cases, one finds hamlets without young women, and farms run by old or unmarried people. Particularly the mountain regions show a marked masculine predominance in France; the ratio may reach 124 men to 100 women between the ages of 25 and 34.⁸ From the angle of social relations in the village, ageing and the absence of women lead to major difficulties, for social life depends on young people and women; if young men have difficulty in finding a wife, no social life is possible.

All the social categories do not leave the village in equal numbers, or at the same time. A differential pattern of exodus by social categories can be given, but this is purely theoretical,

⁷ L. Chevalier, *La formation de la population parisienne au XIX^{ème} siècle*, Paris, PUF, 1950 (Cahier de l'INED No. 10).

⁸ J. Duplex (Ed.), *Atlas sociologique de la France rurale*, Paris, A. Colin, 1968.

varying in each region according to social history. The many local research programs we have reviewed are usually vague on this point.

Often the big notables are the first to leave. They lived both in the village and in town, often only on income from their land, but began to devote more time to their non-agricultural pursuits. The manufacturer concentrates on his industry, leaving his estate to be managed by a farmer or a butler. The notary and the lawyer devote more time to business, to which they add real estate and banking, advising their clients on investments. The children go into the administration, politics or business. All tend to spend more and more time in town, returning to the village only when on holiday, in summer.

They therefore lose political control of the village, which passes to a new category of notables. Peasants who have made money give up direct farming to lead a bourgeois life, and gradually turn their farms into small manors. Small-town bourgeois acquire land on a bigger or smaller scale, to imitate the departed notables. Yet these new notables in turn head for the cities, for the same reasons as their predecessors.

Unskilled men, unattached to the village by capital possessions—particularly the seasonal farmhands—go at the same time as the big notables. As a result of population growth and agricultural modernization, it is more difficult to find work on the farms, while industrial development provides urban employment. The artisans, too, are ousted by cheaper industrial production; the village weavers, for instance, tend to move to town manufacturing, where they can do better than in the villages. The farmworkers and artisans constituted the “proletarian army” that enabled industry to expand in the second half of the 19th century.

The peasant smallholders whose farms were too small for modernization were likewise unable to adjust to the changed agricultural economy and, somewhat later, followed the farmhands.

Ph. Pinchemel⁹ studies three cantons in Picardy. Disregarding the seven small market towns located in that area, one finds

⁹ Ph. Pinchemel, *Structures sociales et dépopulation rurale dans le campagnes picardes de 1836 à 1936*, Paris, A. Colin, 1957.

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that the purely rural population dropped by half in a century, from 1836 to 1936. Yet this drop went hand-in-hand with a comparatively stable number of farmers in the three districts: 1,836 farmers in 1836, 1,832 in 1872, 1,493 in 1911 and 1,221 in 1936.

An important 19th-century professional category has, however, disappeared completely today: the "*ménagers*" (homesteaders) who in 1836, with 878 families, accounted for two-thirds of the total number of agriculturalists. In some villages, they outnumbered the genuine farmers. The homesteaders were small farmers who owned a house, a garden, poultry, perhaps a cow and a small plot—not more. Their holdings were not true subsistence farms; in order to live, the "*ménager*" had to work for a big farmer who gave him some help, in particular lending him a plough and horses for tilling his field. There were close and complex bonds between the big farmers and the homesteaders. The latter often engaged in a handicraft such as weaving, chairmaking etc., living off his little holding, his work as a hired labourer and his handicraft.

The hired farmworkers numbered 4,274 in 1836, 4,884 in 1872, 4,417 in 1911 and 1,131 in 1936. Thus until 1911 the agricultural population, comprising independent farmers and wage-earners, remained almost stable, even increasing slightly. Then came a sharp fall, exceeding 50 per cent, in the number of farmworkers, whereas the decrease in the number of farmers was slight.

The artisans, totalling 6,427 in 1836, fell to 3,460 in 1872, 2,569 in 1911 and 1,143 in 1936, a 6:1 ratio. Thus the rural exodus was essentially non-agricultural. There were spinners, weavers, stocking-makers, loom menders, rope makers, dyers, fullers, etc. Inter-penetration between in agricultural and "industrial" activities was complete. In 1873, the number of "home-based" artisans began to decrease and small manufactories appeared. These began to merge and in 1911 were less numerous. There was a short woodworking and chairmaking period between 1872 and 1911; in the latter year sugar mills, breweries and a fertilizer plant were set up. In 1936 the manufactories had completely disappeared. The passing of a century had witnessed a profound social change. Integration between agricultural and

textile production had given way to agriculture backed by agro-supporting and processing industries.

Artisans providing services, merchants and the liberal professions remained about as numerous as before, moving from the villages to the cantonal centres. The artisans became slightly fewer and began to do different work: the blacksmith and upholsterer were replaced by the farm machine mechanic. The merchants showed a relative increase, from one in 60-70 inhabitants to one in 50, but in absolute numbers they were fewer. The liberal professions and State employees (notaries, doctors, tax-collectors, gendarmes, teachers etc.) increased from 1 in 100 in 1836 to 1 in 34-39 in 1936.

Summing up, Pinchemel distinguishes between "strong villages" and "weak villages." The former were villages of 18th-century labourers, a rugged peasantry which either stood up to crises or took the initiative, increasing their holdings by buying land and preventing the homesteaders or hired workers from becoming farmers. In the weak villages, there were only homesteaders and hired men, unable to expand, who left their land to the big farmers of "strong" villages. Sometimes a single farmer from outside would quickly achieve a concentration of land to his profit.

In other words, in some villages the agrarian structure stood up to the changes because the larger holdings were able to modernize, while other social categories, such as the homesteaders, had to go. In villages where the poorer peasants and artisans were in the majority, the social structure lingered on until it finally broke down and big farmers from neighbouring villages bought up the smallholding.

Local society, composed mainly of agriculturalists, was exposed to the direct influence of industry.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Comparing a village in 1830 to one in 1960, one finds that, with the departure of all those social categories, only big or medium farmers are left. There is no longer any social diversity;

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this diversity being a pre-requisite of the traditional social life, the rural exodus causes the last-named to disappear.

More and more, the countryside is populated by agriculturalists, since the other social categories have moved to urban areas. Village institutions such as schools, churches, co-operatives also tend to move to the market towns. Both trends become more pronounced and induce a change of scale in rural society: formerly, the village was a valid framework for analysis of the traditional form of society, whereas nowadays the framework for such research is the village group. A scale of about one kilometre now approximates to ten kilometres.

The departure of different social categories at different times not only shook up the social scene, but also the "balance of power." The notables held political and social sway over the community as a whole; it was they who ensured contact with the outside world. When they left, these functions became vacant. In France, the small-town bourgeois or rich peasants who took over or split up the estates naturally tended to inherit the positions and become notable when they, too, went away, they left them to the teachers and doctors. These three generations of notables each wielded their influence in their own way, slowing down or speeding up the exodus as their interests dictated.¹⁰

The departure of the notables, whether noble or bourgeois, brought down the keystone of the village hierarchy. Now the weight of influence passed from an influential minority to the most numerous group: the peasants. Thus the community principle of diversity and hierarchy disappeared. All became socially equal; there was no chance of social betterment, and any young men who wished to change his status or "get on in life" had to leave the village.

With a decreasing population, it is difficult to maintain communal institutions such as the village hall, the school and the church, particularly when the population is wholly agricultural.¹¹ In the latter case, the village council has to deal with farming problems only. Professional organizations such as farmers' and

¹⁰ Cf. e. g. R. Thabault, *Mon village*, Paris, Delagrave, 1945.

¹¹ C. d'Aragon, "Le village et les pouvoirs," in J. Fauvet & H. Mendras, *Les paysans et la politique*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1958.

producers' associations and co-operatives have appeared; the village council is staffed by the same people as those organizations, the two categories tend to coincide, and there is duplication. The village council is emptied; there are no candidates at council elections; the budget is too small to permit any action; the same is true of the church and farmers' union. A community of a couple of hundred people cannot carry traditional institutions, not to speak of new ones such as community or welfare centres.

Paradoxically, a waning population and social life coincide with a proliferation of institutions, which cease to play a part in communal life. The exodus "feeds itself" by destroying the structures and mechanisms that made village life worthwhile for villagers. In different countries, much local research has been done covering the existence of churches and schools, the clientele of the various trades and professions, though these have not yet led to conclusions, or even to reference norms. Such norms would vary with existing demographic conditions, but it seems worthwhile to give some instances.¹²

The rural exodus was paralleled by a phenomenon that would link agriculture with urban industrial production. One may reasonably wonder whether technical progress in agriculture has not more or less "substituted itself" for the fundamentals of traditional community life. The old social interplay, based on diversity, would, after many social categories had disappeared, be rebuilt with those who remained: the farmers. New values would emerge: the central figure would be the big farmer, who by introducing up-to-date agricultural techniques would gain growing influence and assume the status of the former notables.¹³

This reshaping of village life is well-known to agricultural propagandists who, when seeking to introduce a technical innovation, know they must first convince a "big" peasant. When this is done, the others will follow suit sooner or later.

With technical progress, agriculture turned resolutely towards market production. Traditional self-sufficiency was replaced by

¹² A. Sauvy, Ghez, George, Chevalier, *Dépeuplement rural et peuplement rationnel*, Paris, PUF 1949 (Cahier de l'INED, No. 8).

¹³ Cf. E. Juillard, *La vie rurale dans la plaine de Basse-Alsace*, Paris, Ed. F. X. Le Roux, 1953.

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increasing dependence on outside markets—the cities. Agriculture became closely bound up with industry—the supplier of fertilizers, machinery, agricultural engineers, etc. Thus the social systems of these local communities, no longer self-sufficient, would gradually become integrated in global society.

One may object that the foregoing is to some extent exaggerated. In many parts of Europe one can find survivals of the old ways of life and social systems, including the landlord-tenant and other traditional relationships, but one soon finds that these survivals are not based on social realities, but rather on rejection of change. Such rejection occurs mainly in backward areas, where agriculture has not changed sufficiently to induce the emergence of new social structures. When the big village landlord is the descendent of the old nobleman (and not a rich peasant who introduces mechanization) and continues to farm his land by means of a large group of tenants or farmers, instead of consolidating it; when thereby agricultural production still keeps a good many people alive (albeit precariously) traditional social relationships may be preserved and, in fact, fight a rear guard battle against the new, global social design. This produces the “vicious circle” well known to experts on under-development: its main elements are traditional social structures, rejection of technical progress and hostility to the outside world, relative impoverishment of the community, ill-will towards anything that threatens a scheme of things that has become a “refuge,” etc.

The rural world in the developed countries is today characterized by the coexistence of two types of rural communities: on the one hand those which, following the emergence of a social system based on technical progress, adjust themselves to the economic requirements of global society, and on the other, those who have stayed on the fringe of social evolution and observe, to some extent, the ways of life and ways of thought inherited from traditional life.

Each type no doubt prevails in some entire regions, yet the the observer is often confronted with a more complex reality: the two types exist side by side within a group of villages, or even in the same village; two social groups are in opposition. For instance, one group of agriculturalists has adapted its production system to the exterior market, whereas the members of another

group, who have found employment in a neighbouring town, continue to cultivate their own smallholdings, or work on a day basis, in their spare time.

Unexpectedly, it is usually the second group that is more inclined to perpetuate the old way of life; they seem willing to let the full-time farmers take charge of village life and, indeed, replace the former notables. The full-time farmers may in that case either try to use the village institutions to their own advantage, or effectively, if they feel that agriculture is threatened, step in to preserve the traditional ways. It is a transitional stage; small communities are unsuitable for the coexistence of "identical" people. The result is a sense of frustration and aspirations to return to the traditional way of life.

The transitional social models which have superseded the traditional models have served mainly as vehicles for agriculture's economic mutation. Possible patterns for the future should now be envisioned.

MODEL OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE

The picture of the countryside as a workshop of agricultural production still endures. If the notion of "countryside" is broadened to include the small country towns, we find that the last fifteen years have witnessed a dwindling, both relative and absolute, of the agricultural section of the total active population of the rural areas, and we revert—in a different way—to the situation at the outset of the 19th century: there are fewer and fewer farmworkers in the countryside, and the latter is becoming less and less a workshop of agricultural production.

Our analysis now bears on a different unit. The 19th-century peasant society could be termed either a "village" society or a "peasant" society; conversely, the rural communities of today and to-morrow cannot be termed villages, but rather "rural areas" centred around a small, essentially tertiary, yet also rural town. The diversity of the 19th-century village now reappears on a different plane: there are ever fewer agriculturalists, but a very considerable tertiary population working in trade and

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in the services, a secondary population engaging in minor local industries and a residential, non-productive population.

The ideal model of the rural community of to-morrow could be a small town with a population of about 5,000—not exceeding 10,000—surrounded by essentially agricultural hamlets and farms, with an additional residential population scattered round the area.

This structure, though on a quite different scale, might be comparable to a 19th-century village with a population of about 1,000, centred around its church and village hall. The centre of our modern rural town would be far larger, due to the growing diversification of industrial civilization.

There would be one fundamental difference: in the new model, global society would be within easy reach of any member of the community through the mass communication media: television, press, cinema. It would seek them out in their homes, in contrast to the old villages, where the only “media” were the notables.

The new structure would thus be urban rather than rural. Exception for a lower density, it would be rather like a city suburb.

Thus the dominant organizational factor of the rural community of to-morrow would not be tradition or natural resources, but its proximity to and relationships with the ruling urban society. Rural concentration is paralleled by the tendency of the urbanized areas to expand outwards. Towns are becoming less and less “walled centres, where people live” but rather, despite density of urbanization loosely knit habitats. The description of a rural community might also fit an urban community. Seen in this perspective, there is no difference between a genuine rural-type community, far from any town, and a suburban community with a very small percentage of agriculturalists.

Let us take a closer look at this rural or suburban community. The agricultural population would vary from 50% of the active population, in areas that might remain “agricultural workshops,” to 2% of the active population in some suburban communities. The residual population would be residential, working in the cities or suburbs, drawing a pension or possessing independent means.

In a rural community-proper, the active, non-agricultural

population may be residential, commuting greater or lesser distances. In highly industrialized areas such as northern or eastern France, Holland, Belgium and parts of Germany, there is not much difference between urban and rural residence for industrial and administrative workers. In less densely populated areas, however, the active agricultural population is numerous: these areas are "genuine countryside." The residual population may be increased by seasonal tourist and vacation migration—the reverse counterpart of the seasonal migrations of farmworkers in earlier periods.

The secondary residence phenomenon is developing in the coastal areas and seaside resorts as well as in the rural areas proper. Migration on retirement seems to be assuming growing importance in our society, since increasing expectation of life and duration of retirement causes more and more people, belonging to the "third-age" category, to live on their earnings, as consumers only. Many would rather live in the country than in towns.

The number of these temporary or permanent non-producer, consumer residents is increasing steadily in the countryside; they have needs that must be filled, and money to spend. This calls for a build-up of services, including trade, and catering to recreational and cultural requirement in the small towns, involving a fairly numerous service population.

Finally, telecommunications should enable some activities to be moved from town to country. A large bank, for instance, could store its securities in any outside location, provided communications were quick and easy.

In a mountain region, the residential population would consist essentially of summer vacationers or winter sports enthusiasts. This would be a borderline case: a picturesque area, with facilities operated by a few guides and hotel keepers for tourists who come ski-ing, or to give their children a "taste of fresh air."

Agriculture always has been a subsistence occupation, providing agriculturalists with enough to eat. A typical instance was the 18th-century countryside; the French revolution of 1789 broke out partly because the village folk had not enough to eat. In those times, governments were worried about food shortages in the countryside; nowadays, it is the other way round—govern-

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ments have to cope with problems of agricultural over-production.

In the new communities, the old problem may return—modern villages, besides procuring industrial products, may have to procure food, like any urban district. A possible future development may be a revival of individual food production: all local residents without professional commitments, and having external sources of income, would devote some of their spare time to gardening or poultry-keeping.

Tinkering and minor handicrafts are on the increase, in both town and country. Standardized mass production does not meet every personal and special requirement; a whole new subsistence production, both agricultural and of the handicraft type, will gain ground.

CONCLUSION

Having reviewed the present-day organizational trends of rural communities in the industrialized countries, one finds that the rural society of to-morrow may be moving towards renewal—on a larger or regional scale—of the essential traits of the old villages. We refer to traits that were disappearing in the upheavals caused by industrialization and the rural exodus:

1. Cultural homogeneity, born of participation in global, not purely local civilization;
2. Social diversity, due to the many rural services and residential population;
3. Coherent social relationships built up on cultural, sporting, political, religious and other pursuits;
4. Agriculture, whether of the commercial or subsistence type would be the pursuit of a minority;
5. Overlapping and coexistence of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations within the same family, with some persons engaging in both;
6. Seasonal migration would play a capital role as an element of contact with the outside world, and of population growth.

On passing from the old pattern to the new, however—from a population of 500 to a population group of some 10,000—the old inter-cognitional relationships among everyone would not be possible. Distant, functional (or secondary) relationships would be set up and elementary, urban-type groups, with new personal relationships, would appear.

Some readers may find this likening of late 20th-century rural society with that of the 18th century somewhat far-fetched, and attribute it to a nostalgic hankering for the old order; let them consider the validity of the available elements of observation, and the coherence of the model we present.

There is no more urgent task in this late twentieth century in the industrial countries than to study the mechanisms of transmission and preservation of these provincial or ethnic originalities. Adequate intellectual instruments should be created to describe traditional diversity, and provide the means of expressing and predicting the diversity of to-morrow. If the rural sociologist fails to apply himself to this task, a time may come when peasant populations disappear and he is unable to answer one of the major questions posed by our civilization; he will have to seek refuge in folklore or in the psycho-sociology of agricultural work—that is, renounce being a sociologist.