

# STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN CANBERRA—PART I

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Chicago sociologists illustrated the processes of neighbourhood population change. Burgess's four stages in the invasion-succession cycle is an example. He proposed the Concentric Circular Zone model (Burgess, 1925, p.50). This model involves the following five zones which expand radially from centre of a city to its outskirts:

1. The central business district.
2. The zone in transition.
3. The zone of workingmen's homes.
4. The zone of middle class dwellings.
5. The commuters' zone.

He insisted that each zone extends its area by invading the adjacent outer zone, and this spread results in a succession.<sup>1</sup> According to his model, each inner-city residential area passes through four stages and is converted eventually into commercial or industrial areas. Burgess (1928, p.112) identified the following four stages in the invasion-succession cycle in American cities;

1. Invasion, beginning often as an unnoticed or gradual penetration.
2. Reaction or resistance, mild or violent, of the inhabitants of the community.
3. The influx of newcomers and the rapid abandonment of the area by its old-time residents.
4. Climax or the achievement of a new equilibrium of communal stability.

More recently Hoover and Vernon (1959, pp.183-207) formulated a "neighborhood life cycle" model, which has had a great influence on research in this field (Schwirian, 1983, pp.91-92). They maintained that neighbourhoods undergo a five-stage cycle in terms of residential land use and population change: development, transition, down-grading, thinning out, and renewal.<sup>2</sup> Their succinct summary was given by Gist and Fava (1964, p.174).

1. Vacant land is developed with houses in the popular style of the period—whether Victorian gothic, brownstones, row houses, terrace apartments, or split-level single-family homes. Often the predominant home style in an area enables us to date the period when the neighborhood first grew. At this stage the neighborhood attracts middle- and high-income groups, and families with children.
2. The second stage marks the continued growth of residential building in the area, usually with apartment houses, because land values have increased and the continued growth of the city has given the area a more central location. Population density increases and single individuals and childless couples are more frequent residents.
3. At the third stage there may be signs of downgrading in residential land use—the conversion of apartments into smaller units, the appearance of "Room to Let" signs on private homes, and the resulting increases in population density. It is at this point that lower-income families or ethnic or racial minorities begin to "invade" an already declining area. The minority groups are usually in the child-bearing ages and this adds to the congestion and overtaxing of neighborhood facilities. Blight, which had been underway before these groups moved in, is accentuated.
4. The fourth stage involves the "maturing" of the area as a low-income minority group place of settlement. Often the population density ultimately declines as the children marry and leave. The area may then be ripe for invasion by another low-income group. Negroes and Puerto Ricans are moving into many such areas in New York City.
5. If the area is close to the city centre, it may be residentially upgraded again. Luxury apartments are likely to result from private development and low- or middle-income come housing if there is governmental assistance. It is important to stress that this sequence is not inevitable; a neighborhood may remain at any stage almost indefinitely. Equally important is that if change occurs it is likely to be in the direction of neighborhood deterioration. Few urban neighborhoods ever attain the "renewal" of Stage 5.

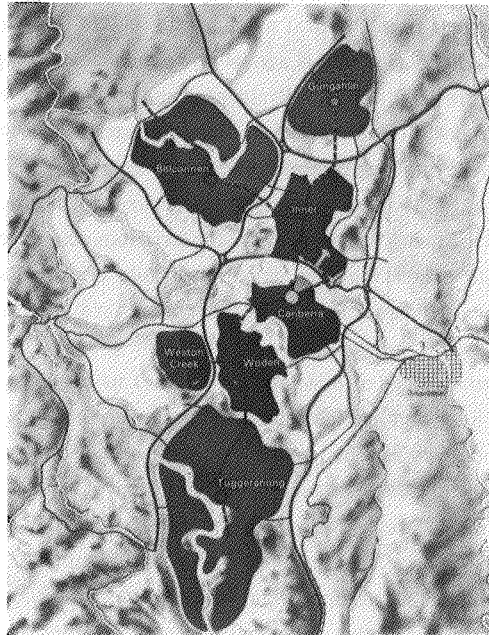
In a similar manner to their stage of neighbourhood change, stages of development in Canberra will be proposed here. For this purpose, it is necessary to clarify the functions of

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Canberra's planning body and to think back to the history of its expansion.

The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) is the central government agency in charge of development in Canberra. The Commission makes policy plans and development plans; decides land use policy, with public comments in mind; gives planning approvals to private developers' applications by assessing them, and constructs a range of public facilities for client departments and authorities and public housing. However, the NCDC cannot issue an eviction order for the purpose of development; the choice of moving is left to residents.

Since 1965 the NCDC has developed Canberra to cater for long-term population growth according to the dispersed settlement plan. The plan proposed a dispersed pattern of low density urban settlement with abundant provision for open space (National Capital Development Commission, 1970, pp.219-34). Canberra today consists of four "towns": the original Inner Canberra, Woden-Weston Creek, Belconnen and Tuggeranong. The three new towns, Woden-Weston Creek, Belconnen, and Tuggeranong have been developed according to the dispersed settlement plan. The first settlement in Woden-Weston Creek was started in 1963, in Belconnen in 1967 and in Tuggeranong in 1974 (Figure 1).



0 10km

**Figure 1**      **Map of Canberra**

Since areas in the same phase of development tend to be in the same situation and to be confronted with the same kinds of problems, they have similar characteristics. This makes it possible to define stages of development in Canberra. The purpose of this article is to discuss these stages of development in Canberra, to illustrate them and to examine their implications. Four general characteristics of each stage will be pointed out: (1) an overview, (2) unity or conflict of interests, (3) political actions and (4) residents' concern for their suburb

and local community cohesion. As the NCDC is the central government agency for development (a statutory authority) and represents the interests of government bodies for the most part, similarities and differences in the interests between the NCDC and residents will be examined here. This scrutiny is designed to present a hypothesis regarding neighbourhood relationships. It should be noted that this article will describe Canberra as it was in January 1988 when the interviews with community leaders were carried out.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 THREE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

In Canberra, there are three stages of suburban growth. The first stage is the town construction period. Community facilities and services are insufficient during this stage and do not satisfy the needs of residents. Because of this, residents tend to organise community interest groups to demand community facilities and services from the government.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a new area affords its residents many opportunities to cooperate with their neighbours for their community establishment. Participation in community interest groups and opportunities for cooperative work result in local community cohesion. The suburban development of Tuggeranong was in the first stage at the time of the present study.

The second stage is the period after a new town has been completed. Woden-Weston Creek and Belconnen were in this stage. Residents tend to be satisfied with local amenities for the most part, and take them for granted. They appear to lose interest in their suburb and to confine themselves to their private lives.

The third stage is a period when redevelopment occurs in established areas, or development of a nearby new town has repercussions for neighbouring areas. Community interest groups are organised to protest against any undesirable effects. Participation encourages social integration in local communities again. Inner Canberra was in the third stage at the time of the present study.

This perspective on the stages of development enables us to suggest why political actions occur in specific localities and how local communities become integrated in Canberra. A case study of several suburbs will be used to test this contention.

Both Burgess's stages of invasion-succession and Hoover and Vernon's neighbourhood life cycle suggest that urban areas go through several stages. They are similar to our stages of development in this respect, but they are different from our stages of development in other aspects. The "invasion-succession cycle" and the "neighbourhood life cycle" models set up the stages with demographic and ecological elements in mind. In contrast, our stages of development are concerned with (1) the level of provided community facilities and services and (2) the occurrence of negative externalities.<sup>5</sup> Our stages of development are based on the alterations of these two elements.

There are two reasons why it is inappropriate to propose stages in terms of residential land use and population change in Canberra. These are related to urban development policies implemented by the NCDC.

Firstly, the NCDC regulates land use in Canberra. The NCDC stipulates conditions for the location of such activities as settlement areas, employment and retail nodes, leisure and recreation facilities, and the main road system (National Capital Development Commission, 1984, pp.41-45). Furthermore, the design of the settlement areas has been based on the

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neighbourhood unit principle (Perry, 1929). One local centre is usually allocated to a suburb. In most cases a centre occupies a site of about five acres. It may contain general stores, a pharmacy, milk bar, petrol station, and offices for doctors and dentists etc. It is only within this area that people are allowed to conduct a business (National Capital Development Commission, 1970, p.84). Because of the rigidly controlled land use, natural change of land use is not expected in Canberra.

Secondly, the NCDC has a policy of social mix (Stretton, 1970, p.73; Adrian, 1986, p.21). It attempts to minimise segregation among suburbs in terms of the socio-economic status of its residents. However, the policy of social mix makes it unlikely that socio-economic status in an area of Canberra will change as dramatically as it has in America with the lapse of time.

Because these two urban planning policies of Canberra make it difficult to establish stages in terms of residential land use and population change similar to Burgess's four stages in the invasion-succession and Hoover and Vernon's neighbourhood life cycle, development in Canberra must be considered in terms of both the level of provided community facilities and services and the occurrence of negative externalities.

### 3 DADA AND DADA COLLECTION

Research suburbs were determined by consultations with the well-informed staff of the NCDC, the Department of Territories, the Belconnen Community Service and the Tuggeranong Community Service. The main sources of data in this research are interviews with members of active political action groups and community centre management committees.<sup>6</sup> Interviews were conducted by a non-directive method. I prepared rough questions, but changed some questions and asked additional questions on the spot according to circumstances so that I might elicit respondents' experience in groups during interviews. I asked about the activities and history of groups, and respondents' opinions about their activities.

### 4 FIRST STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

The first stage is the period when a new town is being constructed. The development begins with the construction of serviced residential blocks (i.e., water supply, drainage, sewerage, telephone lines, electricity), paved roads, kerbs and gutters, footpaths and street lighting, and basic community facilities in the neighbourhood, according to the principle of the neighbourhood unit. Initial fundamental neighbourhood facilities include a local shopping centre to meet the day-to-day shopping requirements of residents, a pre-school, a primary school, playing fields, parks, public telephones etc. Residents usually organise groups such as playgroups and community centre management committees for the common use of facilities. As the population increases, government bodies (the NCDC and the Department of Territories in most cases) provide additional community facilities and services covering a group of suburbs. These could include supplementary facilities and services such as a group centre, town centre, post office, high school, hospital, library, police, ambulance and fire stations and bus services. The NCDC usually completes the facility and service systems in a new town within approximately ten years (National Capital Development Commission,

1984a, pp.34-35). During the interim period, insufficient community facilities and services are provided for residents.<sup>7</sup>

Shortage of community facilities and services is a serious residential problem in the middle or low status suburbs where housing is cheaper. Because of the availability of inexpensive housing, families tend to be at an earlier stage of their life cycle, and thus there is a predominance of families with small children. There are three reasons why these deficiencies in facilities exert a great influence on the lives of young women who stay at home with young children during the daytime. Firstly, even though initial neighbourhood-based facilities have been constructed, adequate additional community facilities are not yet provided. As a result, longer trips are necessary for the women to avail themselves of such infrastructure elsewhere. For example, in 1986, as the Tuggeranong Town Centre had not yet been constructed, the people in Tuggeranong had to shop in the town centres of other towns. Secondly, young couples in this life stage are usually not wealthy enough to be able to afford two cars. So, because her spouse goes to work in the family car, a car is not usually available for the use of a housewife with small children. Thirdly, public transport, namely the bus service, is sometimes not available in newly developed suburbs. Moreover, the as yet poorly organised bus system results in wasted time spent in roundabout routes to given destinations. These three conditions, occurring in the first stage, tend to discourage women from utilising community facilities and services outside their suburb. It should be noted that most Canberra suburbs are classified as middle or low status suburbs and this pattern is the dominant process of development, owing to the NCDC's anti-segregation policy.

However, the shortage of community facilities and services does not exert a serious effect on daily life in high status suburbs in which housing is more expensive. Two reasons can be adduced. Firstly, such suburbs tend to be occupied by wealthier second or third home purchasers who sold their previous homes, and are at a more advanced stage of their life cycle. Their children have grown up to the extent that they require less child-care and women can work outside of the home. Secondly, such families tend to be rich enough to buy a second car which means that the women are more mobile. Therefore they have the opportunity to utilise facilities and services in other areas, thus the shortage in their own area does not prove to be a problem. At the time of the present research Faddon and Macarthur in Tuggeranong showed the pattern of high status suburbs.

Improvement of community facilities and services adds value to the property of almost all residents. It follows from this that residents are interested in the improvement of community facilities and services. Moreover, the NCDC promotes the development of new suburbs in the first stage. Assessing the needs of the residents, the NCDC gives priority to construction projects and the building of facilities. This means that the interests of the NCDC are identical to those of residents and that these common interests facilitate agreement and compromise between the NCDC and residents.

Canberra has been unique to date in that large amounts of government resources are made available to suburbs if residents organise themselves into lobby groups and express their requests to government bodies.<sup>8</sup> This is partly because Canberra is under the direct control of the national government as no local government is as yet established. Owing to the absence of local government, residents cannot demonstrate their opinions with regard to local issues by means of voting. So petitioning and lobbying are instrumental in expressing

the residents' demands.

The provision of community facilities does not meet community demands in the first stage. As is usual with new and rapidly expanding municipalities, residents organise community interest groups so that they may prompt government bodies to supply them with these facilities and services (Halligan and Paris, 1984, p.69).

There are two types of involvement of community centre management committees in political actions.

In the first type, a committee works as a pressure group, in addition to managing its community centre. This is a common pattern in Inner Canberra, Woden-Weston Creek, and Belconnen. Giralang Community Association in Belconnen is taken as an example to illustrate this point.

A group of residents in Giralang, wishing to ensure that community facilities and services were provided in the suburb, called a public meeting and formed the Giralang Community Association in 1976. It made representations to the government for this purpose. The Association rented a Commonwealth-built house as a community centre, and was very active in its early days. Besides petitioning the government and managing the community centre, it held fund-raising events at a school oval once each year from 1977 to 1979 to foster community feeling. It also produced newsletters for its residents.

In the second type, a group independent of a community centre management committee is formed solely for political action. There is then a division of work between the community centre management committee and the political action group. The Fraser Action Committee on Education, Tuggeranong Community Council and South Tuggeranong Progress Association are examples of political action groups.

The Fraser Action Committee on Education (FACE) in Fraser, Belconnen, serves as an example. When this suburb was constructed in 1975, a primary school had not then been planned. Because the number of school-children was higher than the NCDC estimate, the community centre management committee, Croajingalong Community Centre, took up this issue. Subsequently, three members of the group joined three other residents and organised a political action group called the Fraser Action Committee on Education in 1976 in order to petition government bodies to build a primary school. This petition was supported vigorously by many residents at that time. For instance, between 60 and 70 residents attended monthly meetings of the Fraser Action Committee on Education (Fraser Action Committee on Education, 1976). As a consequence the establishment of the primary school was approved by the government in 1977. Fraser residents formed this group because the issue vitally concerned many residents.

The division of work between community centre management committees and political action groups in Tuggeranong is another example of the second type. Two political action groups, Tuggeranong Community Council (1983) and South Tuggeranong Progress Association (1982) have been established there (Canberra Times, 1983). While the former is responsible for residential problems in the whole region, the latter focuses on development problems in South Tuggeranong. Community centre management committees in Tuggeranong concentrate on management of their centres. For example, the Richardson Community House Management Committee and the Chisholm Community Centre Association are not directly involved in solving residential problems (Canberra Chronicle, 1985).

Whether a community centre management committee is engaged in political actions or not, it is hypothesised that residents are sensitive to community affairs and are integrated in their neighbourhood in the first stage for two reasons.

Firstly, deficiencies of community facilities and services result in residents' attention being focussed on their suburb. Many residents who need community facilities and services support political actions to promote provision of these requirements by attending meetings of community interest groups and by signing petitions etc. Such involvement binds people together. This point was documented by Gans (1963). Studying American suburban lives, he mentioned that "moving into a new community creates an initial feeling of cohesion and universal friendliness, especially if there are shared problems" (Gans, 1963, p.187).

Secondly, when people occupy new residences, they often find themselves faced with circumstances in which neighbours begin to cooperate in community services. For example, the NCDC builds pre-schools and health centres, and such establishments are provided with furniture and equipment. However, such equipment is often insufficient; Parents and Citizens Associations raise funds to provide further equipment (e.g., library books, toys and playground facilities) and to improve landscaping. Opportunities to work with neighbours for community benefit integrate residents and interest them in community affairs in newly developed suburbs. A study reported by Gans is relevant to this. He said that "a new suburb usually lacks the basic church and voluntary organisations which residents need. Consequently, even people who have never been active before, and had no intention of becoming so, find themselves helping to start organisations in their new community" (Gans, 1963, p.188).

Attendance at public meetings of community interest groups results in increased interest by residents in community affairs in the first stage.<sup>9</sup> Such attendance varies remarkably according to the topics to be discussed. About 300 residents were present at a public meeting held by the Tuggeranong Community Council in 1986 to discuss the Tuggeranong Town Centre and to put forward their proposals to the NCDC. On the other hand, a South Tuggeranong Progress Association meeting in 1984 about tourism development was attended by only 70 concerned residents. These figures suggest that Tuggeranong residents are interested in residential matters. As previously mentioned, meetings of the Fraser Action Committee on Education had a large attendance.

Local community cohesion and interest in their suburb make recreational activities by community centre management committees possible and they lead to the development of local ties. For example, the Giralang Community Association held festivals from 1977 to 1979 and issued newsletters; Croajingalong Community Centre held parties and wine-tastings for fund raising in the latter half of the 1970s.

Completion of a town centre makes a town a relatively self-sustaining unit of daily life. Accordingly, its construction is a landmark of the transition of a town from the first to the second stage of development. The suburban development of Tuggeranong was in the first stage at the time of the present study. Woden-Weston Creek moved to the second stage in the first half of the 1970s, and Belconnen proceeded to the second stage in the second half of the 1970s.



## 5 SECOND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

The second stage is the period when the basic development of a town has been completed. Ample additional community facilities and services covering a group of suburbs in a town (e.g., a group centre, a town centre, a post office, a high school, a hospital, police, ambulance and fire stations and bus services) are provided, in addition to the initial fundamental neighbourhood-based facilities (e.g., a local centre, a pre-school, a primary school, playing fields, parks and public phones). As provision of community facilities and services has been organised and coordinated well in this stage, most residents have good access to sufficient infrastructure. Provision of amenities creates no serious residential problems.<sup>10</sup>

Most residents are so content with community facilities and services that they wish to maintain their present environments. From this it may be inferred that most residents share an interest in trying to preserve their areas from environmental deterioration. The NCDC shares this interest with residents; the NCDC does not intend to change the environment in the second stage. Therefore, both residents and the NCDC have a common interest; no dramatic changes of physical setting are expected in this phase.

These circumstances affect residents' interest in their suburb and local community integration. They take ample provision of amenities for granted, lose interest in their suburb and confine themselves only to their private life. As Gans pointed out, the initial feeling of cohesion and universal friendliness disappears "as people settle down, the novelty of the community wears off, and class and other cultural differences make themselves felt" (Gans, 1963, p.187). More importantly, once the residential environment gets into smooth-running order, opportunities for residents to work together for their community decrease. For instance, it is no longer necessary for residents to give greater assistance to the administration of a pre-school or a health centre. It is reasonable from this argument to put forward the hypothesis that residents lose interest in their suburb and are not socially integrated in the neighbourhood in the second stage of development.

Two characteristics which are commonly observed in the second stage of development indicate the residents' indifference to their suburb. Firstly, indifference of the residents often makes community centre management committees change their aims and functions. Residents who are provided with community facilities and services do not support the activities of a committee as a pressure group. Community centre management committees, which organised political actions to demand provision of infrastructure in the first stage, have to limit their activities to management of the community centre. Secondly, because the area is void of residential problems, political action groups which were organised in the first stage are dissolved. Even if some residents attempt to organise political actions and/or hold recreational activities, they find it difficult to get support from other residents.<sup>11</sup>

Changes in operation of two community centre management committees are described to illustrate the above-mentioned points.

*Giralang Community Association held fund raising activities but indifference made it difficult to continue such activities. Festivals have not been held since 1980. The association organised a Community Day in 1985 and members of all community groups in the suburb (e.g., scouts, churches, playgroups, nursing mothers' association etc.) gathered at the community centre to explain their activities to its residents, but no residents attended the meet-*

ing. A member of the association said in 1986, "We no longer intend to try to foster community interaction nor take positive measures to increase the use of the community centre because we're tired of such futile efforts."

Croajingalong Community Centre committee in Fraser, Belconnen, serves as another example. The committee, which had previously been active in organising political actions, has restricted its function to the management of the centre since 1979. The original committee members who had been involved in the political actions resigned in 1985 because other committee members did not support their proposals that the committee should attempt to solve minor residential problems by lobbying and petitioning and to form better community relationships by holding festivals etc.

Woden-Weston Creek and Belconnen were in this stage at the time of the present study. This stage usually lasts until the redevelopment of existing suburbs and/or the development of another new town adjacent to them begins.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

(Received November 10, 1989)