Where do we stand? Lessons from the IUSSP Working Group on Urbanization

Tony Champion

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

tony.champion@ncl.ac.uk

IUSSP Working Group

- 1999-2002: Goldstein Committee as model
- Organizing group: Tony Champion (chair), Graeme Hugo, Alfredo Lattes
- Prepared position paper and commissioned 18 other papers
- Discussed these March 2002 at Rockefeller's Bellagio Centre and drew up its observations
- Produced edited volume (Ashgate 2004)
- Other dissemination and next steps

Aim and outline of presentation

- Aim of presentation
- Starting point
- Challenges of changing settlement patterns
- Central principles in defining settlements
- Key elements in a generic classification
- New opportunities, old constraints?
- Towards a way forward

Starting point

- Place is of central significance in analysis of population change and demographic behaviour

- Settlement systems are changing rapidly, necessitating regular review of conceptual and operational approaches to their definition

- Technologies provide opportunities for better data collection, processing and retrieval

- User needs are growing and diversifying

Challenges of changing settlement patterns

- Blurring of rural-urban distinctions
  - What alternative responses?
- Recognition of multi-dimensional nature of human settlement
  - What implications for settlement classification?
- Emergence of new forms of urbanization
  - how to understand these better and cope with them?

Blurring of rural-urban distinctions

- We have always accepted that there is no clear dividing line between these two types.
  - Is it now time to recognise this formally?
- Alternative A: allow a third category?
  - 'Intermediate' preferred to 'transitional' (Brazil) or 'semi-urban' (CES, Europe)
- Alternative B: adopt a continuum approach?
  - Just as for size classes. (Examples from USA, Indonesia)

Recognition of multi-dimensional nature of human settlement

- Urban-rural distinction is based on a range of criteria, with latter collapsed to one dimension

- Perhaps once the criteria were conformable, but nowadays this is not so in most countries
  - (see Coombes and Raybould 2001)

- At least three dimensions with separate forms
  - settlement size: from metropolitan to hamlet
  - concentration: from dense to sparse
  - accessibility: from central to remote

Emergence of new forms of urbanization

- Perhaps the most problematic challenge: identifying the core and boundaries of individual settlements

- Beyond suburbs: Urban decentralization and metropolitan areas

- Era of counterurbanization and proliferation of urban centres: Megalopolis, polycentric urban region and extended metropolitan region

Central principles in defining settlements: 1. Building blocks

- Use <u>small</u> building blocks to allow flexibility
  - easier to update definitions and measure impact
  - easier to classify because more homogeneous
  - allows user-defined areas

helped by small area statistics and geocoding
  - how to encourage and support these developments in all countries?

Central principles in defining settlements: 2. Localities

- Rules for defining and identifying 'localities'
  - NB. not Building Blocks but 'distinct and indivisible population clusters' of any size or status
- UN Recommendations give great prominence to this concept, but do not say exactly how to define it for operational purposes.

- Vapnarsky (1978) provides one model:

Vapnarsky's 5 conditions for a 'locality'

1. The definition should guarantee that every point of concentration detected through it should appear in the listing resulting from its application, without repetitions or exclusions.

2. It should permit an accurate delimitation of the area of concentration, whether it be continuous or discontinuous, associated with each point of concentration identified.

3. It should permit the accurate assignment of a population figure to each area of concentration.

4. It should not be based on legal or administrative considerations of any kind.

5. It should be accompanied by technical rules that make the definition empirically applicable.

Vapnarsky's conditions for an urban agglomeration

1. Every block constituting the agglomeration must possess a minimum of built-up stretches and streets.

2. The distance separating a block from its nearest neighbour already within the same agglomeration must not go beyond a certain maximum.

3. A minimum number of blocks meeting the two above conditions must exist in order for an agglomeration to exist.

- An approach greatly facilitated by GIS

Central principles in defining settlements: 3. Social and economic catchments

- Using definitions that go beyond localities, based on:
    - territoriality: place-based
    - communion: sense of belonging
    - interaction: functional links
- NB. Now often multi-dimensional: commuting catchments different from social catchments

Key elements in a generic classification

Built-up urban place

Catchments of urban places

Extended metropolitan areas

Megacities

Wider urban systems

Rural areas

Accessibility

New opportunities …...

- Geographical Information Systems (GIS)
  - can combine and re-combine area/point data
  - can apply any criteria quickly/efficiently
  - allows population, land use, cadastral, interaction etc data to be related simultaneously
- Remote Sensing
  - can facilitate morphologically-based classification
  - data input to drawing boundaries of built-up areas
  - helps to differentiate areas via land use, dwellings

…. **old constraints?**

- Certainly GIS and RS costly in terms of data, equipment and staffing - a big obstacle for many countries

BUT

- increasing call for local intelligence in parallel with devolution of urban management

- technology is becoming cheaper to acquire and easier to use

- possibility of greater co-ordination and support from international sources?

Towards a way forward

- Make available an international database of procedures currently used by countries

- Research the key dimensions of settlement systems and learn more about user needs

- Move away from administrative areas as the basis for delineating urban areas

- Experiment with small building block areas for alternative settlement classifications

- Use results to review UN Recommendations

- Devise a plan of action to develop the relevant expertise/resources within countries