

Mehta, Surinder K., *Population Redistribution and Business Structure and Relocation Patterns: Rhode Island 1929-1958*. (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1963) xxiii+172 pp.

What the "Chicago School" accomplished for the field of human ecology in the 1920's and 1930's, Kurt B. Mayer and his associates at Brown University are striving to do in the 1960's. That is, they are creating a "natural laboratory" of the city of Providence and the State of Rhode Island and assessing within this region a wide range of current issues in ecological and community organization. In the process, valuable contributions are being made to related fields such as economic geography, location economics, and urban demography.

In the present monograph by Surinder K. Mehta, prepared under the direction of Kurt B. Mayer, the author examines the response of retail and wholesale trade activities to the redistribution of population over the period 1929 to 1958. Focusing on the question of whether or not business growth

and development has kept up with the extensive suburbanization and decentralization of population that has occurred during this period within Rhode Island, the author investigates the degree of correspondence between the patterns of redistribution for these phenomena. Specifically, four indexes of trade activity for the different types of communities within the state are examined: (1) the number of trade establishments considered as a whole and for specific types of trade, (2) the total volume of sales, (3) sales per capita, and (4) sales per establishment.

The results show that the state's larger and older communities are not only losing population to suburban areas, but they are also declining as the dominant centers of major *retail trade*, in terms of the various indexes of economic activity. However, it should be noted that there is some inertia in the redistribution of these retail trade establishments; thus supporting the traditional ecological view that services follow population, not the reverse. Moreover, changes in sales volume and sales per capita for retail items tend to proceed changes in the location of establishments. On the other hand, the distribution pattern of *wholesale trade* activity and volume of sales per establishment has not shifted with the major changes in population. In short, the author concludes that retail trade activity is more sensitive to the redistribution of population than is wholesale trade.

This brief summary of major findings has done scant justice to the detailed and very complex patterns that emerge in this redistribution process. In addition to the practical importance that a study of this type has for leaders in the communities concerned and those interested in specific types of business activity, it also offers us a fine example of the sophisticated type of research employing various types of indexes in a time series analysis that is possible in this field. One of the major shortcomings of the study, which is recognized by the author, is imposed by limiting the source material to census data. A number of questions are raised about the extent of movement itself for the various kinds of service activities, the factors entering into such moves, and the implications of movement for the industries themselves. It is hoped that in future studies the researchers will not stop at the ecological level of analysis, but will endeavor to investigate the full implications of the process of redistribution, including the movement phenomena, that are necessary to complete our knowledge about the redistribution of population and the economic activities serving this population.

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