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Megalopolis

The Urbanized Northeastern Seaboard of the United States

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P R E F A C E

This book is the result of twenty years of study. It may seem bulky to the reader, but the author feels it provides just a brief summary. *Megalopolis* is a vast area. It encompasses many great cities, and its population is now close to 38 million, which is more the size of a nation than of a metropolis. It contains one of the largest industrial belts in existence and the greatest financial and political hubs on earth. Any attempt to describe such a region would require many words and maps.

What is offered here can hardly be termed a description. The writer has not aimed at a portrait of the area and its people, though he believes that it could have been a worthy and exciting enterprise. Rather he has endeavored to analyze and understand the extraordinary dynamics that have created, in a place that was a wilderness three centuries ago, the enormous and powerful concentration of people and activities now achieved in Megalopolis. Nowhere else have men ever built anything comparable, and with such a rhythm.

Exceptional as it is, the urbanization of this part of the Atlantic seaboard of North America has been a signal of a steady trend toward the concentration of dense populations in large urbanized regions, a trend gradually becoming characteristic of this century. The distribution of habitat and economic activities is thus changing; new modes of life are appearing and spreading. This process, which marks an essential turning point of history, has been most advanced in this region, Megalopolis. In this book the urbanization of Megalopolis is presented as a significant experiment, the lessons of which must be taken into account not only by the people living in the area but by those of many other lands as well.

My field studies and investigation of this area and its problems began some twenty years ago. For ten years I have been lecturing and writing on the subject. The last five years have been devoted entirely to its study. An innumerable number of persons, organizations, and institutions have helped in this inquiry, and my indebtedness to the work and knowledge of others is expressed in the many footnotes in the volume. A brief statement of acknowledgments following the conclusion stresses the most important contributors. This study could not have been carried out without the continued interest and generous support of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, and of the Twentieth Century Fund, New York; to the Directors and staffs of these two institutions I express my profound gratitude.

J. G.

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