

URBANIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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AN excellent clue to the economic and social development of an area is the growth of cities. For this there are two reasons. First, the city *reflects* the changes in every sphere of social life. Its growth stems from all the factors that change illiterate agriculturalism to literate industrialism; it is correlated with increased industry and commerce, enhanced education, more efficient birth and death control—in short, with the whole process of modernization. Second, the city is a *source* of change in its own right. It is a diffusion center for modern civilization, providing a milieu in which social ferment and innovation can take place. City expansion therefore helps to determine as well as reflect the trend toward more modern conditions.

The present paper, based mainly on analysis of census data, attempts to relate the growth of cities to regional differences and problems in Latin America. Part I, "The Growth of Cities," considers the rate of urban as against rural population growth, the development of cities of different size, and the causes and consequences of urban expansion. Part II, "The Characteristics of City Populations," discusses the age, sex, fertility, literacy, and other differentials as between country and city and as between various classes of city. The entire study is meant as a contribution to Latin American demography and sociology.

Necessarily the treatment cannot be complete, because the data are not available for all areas or for all periods, and when available, are sketchy and unstandardized. It requires a great deal of labor and often a process of estimation to make the statistics com-

¹From the Office of Population Research, Princeton University, where the first author is a member of the staff and the second a Milbank fellow. The paper is an outgrowth of a thesis of the same title done by Miss Casis. Though the thesis was for the Master's degree at Syracuse University (1945), the work for it was done in the Office of Population Research under the immediate supervision of Dr. Davis. It was limited to four countries. The present work expands the area covered to as much of Latin America as possible, and is based on further research by both authors.

parable from one region to another and from one time to the next.

PART I. THE GROWTH OF CITIES

The Degree of Urban Concentration. In comparison with more industrialized areas, the Latin American countries do not seem, at first glance, to be highly urban. In the United States in 1940, for example, the percentage of persons living in places of more than 5,000 inhabitants was 52.7, and for Canada 43.0, whereas for most of Latin America it was only 27.1 (Table 1).² But when one realizes that the difference in urban concentration is very much smaller than the difference in industrial development,³ and that, as compared with nearly all other areas the Latin American countries have a very much smaller average density, the percentage of urban dwellers in the countries to the south begins to look fairly high. Indeed, it seems to us that in view of its retarded industrialization, Latin America is urbanized to a surprising degree. In other areas the growth of cities has arisen from large-scale industrial development, but in Latin America it has come more from non-industrial causes.

Table 1 gives for each country the percentage of the population living in cities of various size limits, with an unweighted average for each region. Column 6 of the table provides a rough index of urbanization, obtained by averaging the percentages in the preceding four columns. This index gives greater weight to

²The countries included in Table 1 do not embrace quite all of the Latin American region. They do cover 95.4 per cent of the total area and 94.5 of the total population. The areas omitted (mainly Paraguay, British Honduras, the Guianas, and most of the Caribbean islands) are undoubtedly more rural than those included, but since the parts omitted are very small in comparison to the total, the error introduced by this factor cannot be very great. The subregion most poorly covered is the Caribbean, where our sample embraces only 25.2 per cent of the area and 58.0 per cent of the population. Only in the case of this subregion is there a likelihood of serious misrepresentation.

³"One may conclude that in general the average per capita income in Latin America cannot be much more than \$100 per year and is probably less. The national income of all Latin America might then run to about \$10 to \$15 billion as compared with a current [1944] income of \$155 billion in the United States." Harris, Seymour E.: *ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF LATIN AMERICA*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1944, p. 4.

REGION AND COUNTRY	YEAR	IN	IN	IN	IN	INDEX ^a	CENT IN THE LARGEST CITY
		CITIES 5,000 + PER CENT	CITIES 10,000 + PER CENT	CITIES 25,000 + PER CENT	CITIES 100,000 + PER CENT		
LATIN AMERICA—TOTAL SAMPLE							
<i>ABC Area</i>		27.1	23.6	19.0	13.4	20.8	8.2
Uruguay	e. 1941	42.7 ^d	39.6	34.0	25.1	35.4	18.4
Argentina ^f	e. 1943	55.8	52.0	44.4	32.4	46.2	32.4
Chile	e. 1943	48.9	46.8	42.7	34.0	43.1	18.5
Brazil	c. 1940	44.8	41.1	34.3	23.1	35.8	19.0
Paraguay ^b	c. 1940	21.3	18.4	14.6	11.0	16.3	3.8
<i>Western South America</i>							
Ecuador	e. 1944	22.2	18.6	13.0	8.5	13.6	6.1
Venezuela ²	c. 1936	35.5	29.6	13.2	10.7	22.3	5.2
Peru ²	c. 1940	22.0	17.7	13.0	9.0	15.4	5.8
Bolivia ^f	e. 1942	18.1	15.4	11.6	7.4	13.1	7.4
Colombia ²	c. 1938	16.5	15.3	15.3	8.5	13.9	8.5
<i>Middle America, including</i>							
<i>Mexico</i>		20.0	15.6	12.3	9.6	14.4	8.5
Panama ²	c. 1940	26.2	24.7	24.7	17.7	23.4	17.7
Mexico ²	c. 1940	27.5	21.9	16.8	10.2	19.1	7.4
Nicaragua	e. 1941	26.0	20.6	15.6	—	20.7	9.4
El Salvador	e. 1942	20.4	14.7	8.1	5.6	12.2	5.6
Costa Rica ^f	e. 1943	17.4	12.1	10.6	—	13.4	10.6
Guatemala	c. 1940	13.2	8.4	6.0	5.0	8.2	5.0
Honduras	c. 1940	9.5	6.7	4.0	—	6.8	4.0
<i>Caribbean, Major Antilles</i>							
Cuba ²	c. 1943	26.8	23.6	17.6	11.3	19.8	9.7
Puerto Rico ²	c. 1940	38.8	35.5	28.8	18.8	30.5	13.8
Dominican Republic	c. 1940	25.8	21.2	15.2	9.0	17.8	9.0
Haiti ^b	e. 1944	15.8	14.1	8.8	6.1	11.2	6.1
Jamaica ^b							
NORTH AMERICA							
United States ²	c. 1940	47.8	43.1	36.4	25.9	38.3	6.8
Canada ²	c. 1941	52.7	47.6	40.1	28.8	42.3	5.7
	c. 1941	43.0	38.5	32.7	23.0	34.3	7.8
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES³							
Great Britain	c. 1931	81.7 ^e	73.6	63.1	45.2	65.9	20.5
Germany	c. 1939	57.4 ^e	51.7	43.5	31.8	46.1	6.3
France	c. 1936	41.7 ^e	37.5	29.8	16.0	31.2	6.8
Sweden	c. 1935	37.1 ^e	33.4	27.0	17.5	28.7	1.0
Greece	c. 1937	33.1 ^e	29.8	23.1	14.8	25.2	7.0
Poland	c. 1931	22.8 ^e	20.5	15.8	10.7	17.4	3.6
NON-EUROPEAN COUNTRIES²							
India	c. 1931	10.4	8.5	5.8	2.7	6.8	0.3
India	c. 1941	12.3	10.5	8.1 ^e	4.2	8.8	0.5
Australia	c. 1933	b	b	73.8	45.5	b	18.4
Japan	c. 1935	64.5	45.8	36.8	25.3	43.1	8.5
Egypt	e. 1939	b	27.0	19.7	13.2	b	8.2

^a The index of urbanization was computed by adding the percentages in the previous four columns and dividing by four.

^b Figures not available to the authors.

^c Percentages based on data from a census are designated by a "c" in front of the date of the census.

^d All regional percentages are unweighted averages, obtained by adding the percentages of the component countries and dividing by the number of countries.

^e Percentages based on estimated population figures are designated by an "e" in front of the date of the estimate.

^f Data on cities incomplete.

¹ Except for those countries otherwise designated, the population figures on which the percentages rest were taken from the *Handbook of Latin American Population Data* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Inter-American Affairs, 1945).

² Population figures were taken from census, yearbook, or other government publications.

³ Figures taken from United States Department of State, Division of Geography and Cartography, *Europe (without U.S.S.R.): Cities of 10,000 Population and Over by Size Categories, circa 1930*, No. 108, April 5, 1944. The percentage for 5,000+ in each case was estimated by us by assuming that the ratio between the percentage in cities 5,000+ and the percentage in cities 10,000+ was the same as the average ratio in the United States and Canada.

the larger places and thus expresses the depth, or profundity, of urban concentration.⁴ It follows rather closely the percentage of persons in cities of 25,000 or more.

By these figures, the most urbanized countries to the south are Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, and Panama, in the order named.⁵ The first three, strangely, are more urbanized than France (with 37.5 per cent in cities 10,000-plus); the first four, more urbanized than Sweden (with 33.4 per cent in cities 10,000-plus).

As might be expected, the various regions show sizable differences in the proportion urban. The so-called ABC area of South America has a high degree of urban concentration—an index figure of 35.4 as compared with the North American figure of 38.3.⁶ In fact the concentration in the first three countries of the ABC area—Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile—exceeds that of Canada and comes close to that of the United States, although they are far less industrialized than these two countries.

The next most urbanized region is the Caribbean. Doubtless

⁴It should be borne in mind that the average density in most of these countries is low. Argentina, for example, has only 5 persons per square kilometer, whereas England has 202. A country with as dense a population as England must necessarily have a considerable degree of urbanization, whereas there is nothing in the density of Argentina that would require urbanization.

⁵It should be stressed that in a number of cases the urban percentages are approximate only. Since Argentina has not had a census since 1914 and Uruguay has not had one since 1908, the data are deficient both in the numerator and the denominator of the fraction by which the percentages are obtained. In the case of Argentina there have been some special censuses of particular cities and provinces, so that the percentages should be reasonably approximate. Uruguay is more questionable, although observers generally affirm that it is a very urbanized country. The data for Chile, Cuba, and Panama are based on censuses.

⁶The regional averages given in Table 1 are obtained by adding the percentages for the countries of the region and dividing by the number of countries. This has the advantage of showing the situation prevailing in the average country of the region, but if the region is viewed as a unit in itself, then the average should be obtained by weighting the percentages according to the population of each country. When this is done, the following averages are obtained for each region.

	Cities 5,000 +	Cities 10,000 +	Cities 25,000 +	Cities 100,000 +	Index	Largest City
ABC Area	30.5	27.7	23.5	17.9	24.9	9.2
Western S. America	20.8	17.4	12.7	8.1	14.7	5.9
Middle America	24.3	19.0	14.4	8.4	16.5	7.2
Caribbean	30.7	27.5	21.3	13.8	23.3	11.0

the whole of this sector is not urbanized to the degree indicated by the only three Caribbean countries included in Table 1, but the addition of such places as Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Curacao would not bring the region down to the level of either Western South America or Middle America. Cuba stands out in this region with an index of 30.5, which is quite remarkable for a country that is almost purely agricultural. Of course the Caribbean is by far the most densely settled part of the Western hemisphere, with the exception of parts of the United States. In an economy based primarily on the export of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods by boat, as is the case in Latin America, an island has (in relation to the size of its hinterland) the advantage of maximum exposure to water transport. In the history of Latin America the islands were the first areas to be fully exploited, and their seaport cities grew accordingly. Today the Caribbean islands are the only places already faced with a serious population problem, and they are places where urbanization, in the sense of concentration of people, has gone ahead out of all proportion to the industrial base.

The other two regions—Western South America and Middle America (including Mexico)—have a very similar degree of urbanization. For the most part they are countries with exceedingly mountainous terrain, with large Indian populations, and with inaccessible hinterlands. In view of these characteristics the degree of urbanization, though the lowest in Latin America, is surprisingly large. Ecuador, with nothing but population estimates, is uncertain; the same is true of Bolivia and Nicaragua. Panama, by virtue of its proximity to the Canal Zone, is in a special category. Mexico, the most industrialized country of the two regions, also has the highest degree of urbanization, if only those nations having accurate census information (except Panama) are considered.

The last column in Table 1 gives for each country the percentage of the total population found in the largest city.¹ It is interesting to note that on the average the Latin America countries rank above the United States and Canada in this respect. Also, the ABC area is again outstanding, with the Caribbean, Middle American, and Western South American regions following in the order named. Finally, every one of the largest cities in each country is at the same time the political capital of the nation, whereas this is not true of the United States, Canada, India, or Australia. The fact that each country's largest city is invariably the capital and generally holds a sizable percentage of the total population may be an accident, but it is more probably an integral feature of Latin American social structure.

In the entire Latin American region there are twenty cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants, according to figures for 1940 or thereabouts. Of these twenty, the greatest number (13) are to be found in the ABC area, the next largest number (4) in the Western South American area, the next largest number (2) in the Middle American area, and the least number (1) in the Caribbean. (Table 2.)

Nearly all of the twenty largest cities are located either on the coast or on navigable waterways. This fact is not unusual, but the greater part of Latin America is distinguished by very poor communication between city and hinterland. Water-borne transport predominates over rail and highway transport, whereas the reverse is true in most industrialized countries. This fact gives a peculiar orientation to Latin American cities. They tend to face outward toward other countries—even toward other continents—rather than inward toward their own hinterland.

Figure 1 gives, for eight countries with recent and trustworthy census statistics, the percentage of the population living in vari-

¹This figure is not included in the urbanization index. The largest city does *not* embrace the metropolitan area. In fact, the metropolitan areas have been left out of account in this table entirely. For their treatment see below, especially Table 3.

ous size classes of city above 10,000, and in the rest of the country. The major difference between the most urbanized and least urbanized countries lies in the 100,000-plus class. It is in the large cities that urban concentration is having its main effect.

In nearly all cases we have taken the definition of the city's size and area from the censuses or official estimates. The Latin Ameri-

Table 2. Twenty largest cities in Latin America by rank, country, and region, about 1940.¹

CITY AND SIZE CLASS	POPULATION ^a	COUNTRY	REGION
<i>1,000,000+</i>			
Buenos Aires*	2,567,763	Argentina	ABC Area
Rio de Janeiro	1,563,787	Brazil	ABC Area
Mexico City	1,448,422	Mexico	Middle America
São Paulo	1,269,319	Brazil	ABC Area
<i>500,000-1,000,000</i>			
Santiago	952,075	Chile	ABC Area
Montevideo*	708,233	Uruguay	ABC Area
Habana ²	659,883	Cuba	Caribbean
Rosario*	521,210	Argentina	ABC Area
Lima ³	520,528	Peru	Western S.A.
<i>200,000-500,000</i>			
Avellaneda*	399,021	Argentina	ABC Area
Cordoba*	339,375	Argentina	ABC Area
Recife	327,753	Brazil	ABC Area
Bogota	325,658	Colombia	Western S.A.
La Paz ⁴	301,450	Bolivia	Western S.A.
Salvador	293,278	Brazil	ABC Area
Caracas ⁵	269,030	Venezuela	Western S.A.
Pôrto Alegre	262,678	Brazil	ABC Area
La Plata*	256,378	Argentina	ABC Area
Guadalajara	229,235	Mexico	Middle America
Valparaiso	209,945	Chile	ABC Area

^a Except for places marked by an asterisk, the figures came from census reports.

¹ The Office of Inter-American Affairs: HANDBOOK OF LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION DATA. Washington, D.C., January, 1945.

² República de Cuba. Dirección General del Censo: INFORME GENERAL DEL CENSO DE 1943. Habana, P. Fernández y Cía. S. en C., 1945, p. 843.

³ República del Perú. Ministerio de Hacienda y Comercio. Dirección Nacional de Estadística: CENSO NACIONAL DE POBLACIÓN Y OCUPACIÓN, 1940. Lima, Noviembre, 1944, Vol. I, p. 36.

⁴ H. Alcaldía Municipal de La Paz. Dirección General de Estadística: CENSO DEMOGRÁFICO DE LA CIUDAD DE LA PAZ, 1942. La Paz 1943, p. 12.

⁵ Estados Unidos de Venezuela. Ministerio de Fomento. Dirección General de Estadística: Anuario Estadístico de Venezuela, 1943. Caracas, 1938, p. 77.

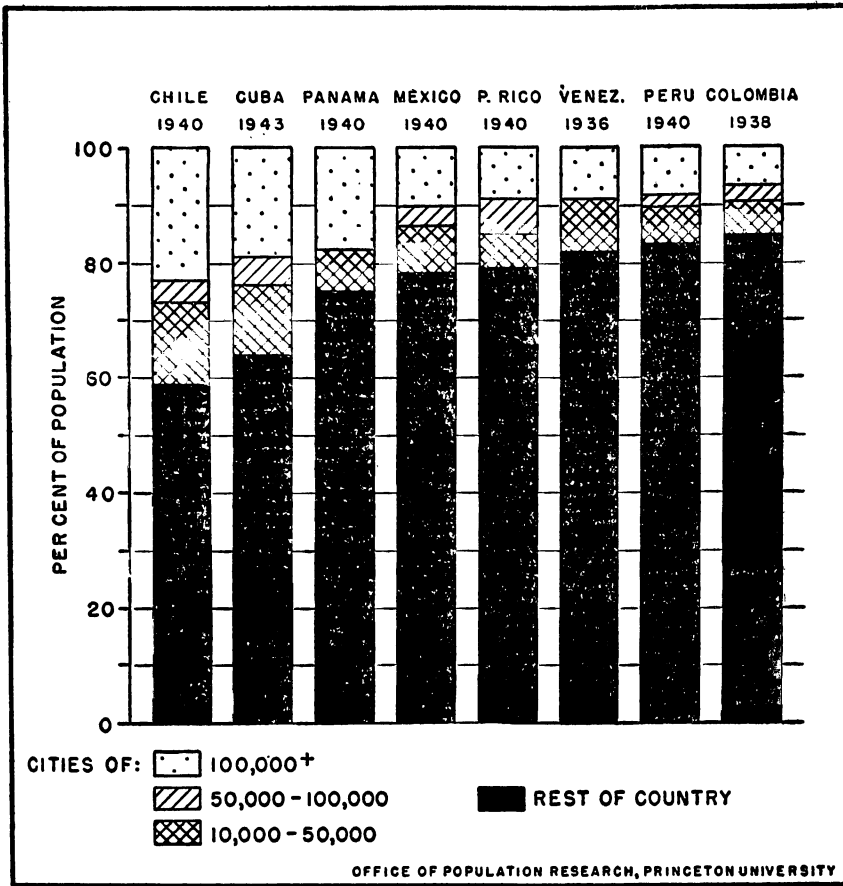


Fig. 1, Per cent of population living in various size classes of city above 10,000, and in rest of country. Selected countries.

can publications, however, do not always specify the exact boundary or area of the city. In general it seems that the city is narrowly rather than broadly defined—that is, there is a suburban population around the city that is not included. This means that we have been dealing with cities proper, rather than with metropolitan districts. The question is raised, then, as to what size the metropolitan areas may have.

For Chile the census gives figures for Greater Santiago in 1930. For Puerto Rico, Bartlett and Howell give the municipali-

ties that form the boundary of the San Juan Metropolitan Area.¹ For Caracas and Mexico City the Federal District was taken as the metropolitan area. For Cuba the cities immediately around Havana were included in the metropolitan district. For all others (except Panama) a circle with a radius of fifteen miles was drawn around the center of the city, and all the population within this area was included. In most cases, a person acquainted with the locale was consulted before a final decision was reached. All told, seventeen metropolitan districts were worked out. They would seem to be roughly accurate; if anything, they exaggerate rather than minimize the metropolitan population.

Our hypothesis was that the proportion living in the suburban area would be smaller in Latin America than in more industrialized regions. This turned out to be the case. Table 3 compares the Latin American percentages with those in the United States. Apparently the trend toward suburbanization has not gone so

Table 3. Suburban population as percentage of entire population of metropolitan areas, Latin America (around 1940) and United States (1940).²

Size of Metropolitan Area	Number of Metropolitan Areas Included	Percentage of Population in Suburban Part
<i>1,000,000+</i>		
Latin America	4	12.5
United States	11	35.2
<i>500,000-1,000,000</i>		
Latin America	4	7.7
United States	11	32.5
<i>200,000-500,000</i>		
Latin America	7	23.2
United States	37	26.9
<i>100,000-200,000</i>		
Latin America	2	13.6
United States	37	30.7

¹ The figures for Latin America were derived from censuses and official estimates by procedures described in the text. The countries included, and the number of metropolitan districts dealt with, are Argentina (1), Brazil (2), Chile (2), Colombia (3), Cuba (1), Mexico (3), Panama (1), Peru (1), Puerto Rico (1), Uruguay (1), and Venezuela (1). The figures for the United States were derived from U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1940, Vol. 1, NUMBER OF INHABITANTS, pp. 61-65, but only those districts were used which were also metropolitan districts in 1930.

² Bartlett, Frederic P. and Howell, Brandon: THE POPULATION PROBLEM IN PUERTO RICO. Government of Puerto Rico: Planning, Urbanizing, and Zoning Board, 1944, p. 47.

far in the countries to the south, doubtless because of less developed transportation, poorer communication, greater poverty, and the preference of Latin Americans for the central city.

The greatest percentage of the metropolitan population living in the suburbs is found in the following districts:

Puebla (Mexico)	43.6
San Juan (Puerto Rico)	43.3
Medellin (Colombia)	33.6
Havana (Cuba)	21.7
Caracas (Venezuela)	20.3
Mexico City (Mexico)	17.6
Buenos Aires (Argentina)	17.3
Panama City (Panama)	15.3

It should be borne in mind that we have only a sample of such districts, and that the methods of determining their population are crude. Nevertheless, the conclusion seems justified that although urban concentration has gone far in Latin America, the

Table 4. Growth of population in rural areas and in various classes of city, five countries combined,¹ 1910-1940.

PERIOD	AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE OF GROWTH (PER CENT)			
	Rural	Urban		
		Places 2,500+	Cities 10,000+	Cities 100,000+
1910-1920 ^a	1.24	2.71	3.15	
1920-1930 ^b	0.97	3.03	3.34	
1930-1940 ^c	1.43	2.87	2.93	3.20

^a In not all cases did the census dates coincide exactly with the periods specified. The first period for Chile was 1907-1920, and for Cuba 1907-1919. In such instances the average annual rate of growth for the period covered by the censuses was assumed to apply to the period mentioned in our table. Also, city boundary changes could not be taken into account.

^b Cuba, 1919-1931.

^c Cuba, 1931-1943.

¹ Assembled from census data for the following countries: Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico. For cities 100,000+ Panama drops out because it had no cities of this size in 1930.

metropolitan tendency has not gone very far. The process of suburbanization should become more prominent in the near future.

The Rate of Urban Growth. When one turns to the history of the urban concentration, one finds that the growth of cities in Latin America has been rapid and that it shows no sign of slowing down. In five countries with available data (Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, and Puerto Rico), the urban population (persons in places of more than 2,500) is growing on an average about twice as fast as the rural population (Table 4). Furthermore, the larger the class of city the faster the growth, for the population in places of 10,000 and over is gaining on the 2,500-and-over class, and the population in places 100,000 and over is apparently gaining over all the rest. Figure 2 seems to indicate that the cities between 10,000 and 50,000 are not growing any faster than the general population, but this may be merely a vagary of the particular sample. There can be no doubt that the cities of 50,000 and over are growing at a far more rapid pace than the rest of the population. "Between 1920 and 1940, the population of Brazil increased 36 per cent and the population of the 22 cities for which a 1920 figure is obtainable increased 61 per cent. For the same period, the corresponding per cents for Chile were 34 and 69; for Colombia between 1918 and 1938 they were 49 and 126."⁹ The general population of the Latin American countries is growing at an exceedingly fast pace, yet the cities are growing even faster, and the larger cities are growing with phenomenal speed.

In studying the expansion of cities of different size, one should keep in mind two distinct ways of measuring urban growth. One—the class method (used above)—traces the percentage of the population in each class of city from one census to the next, ignoring the shifting of particular cities from one class to an-

⁹Dunn, Halbert L. *et al.*: Demographic Status of South America. ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, 237, January 1945, p. 25.

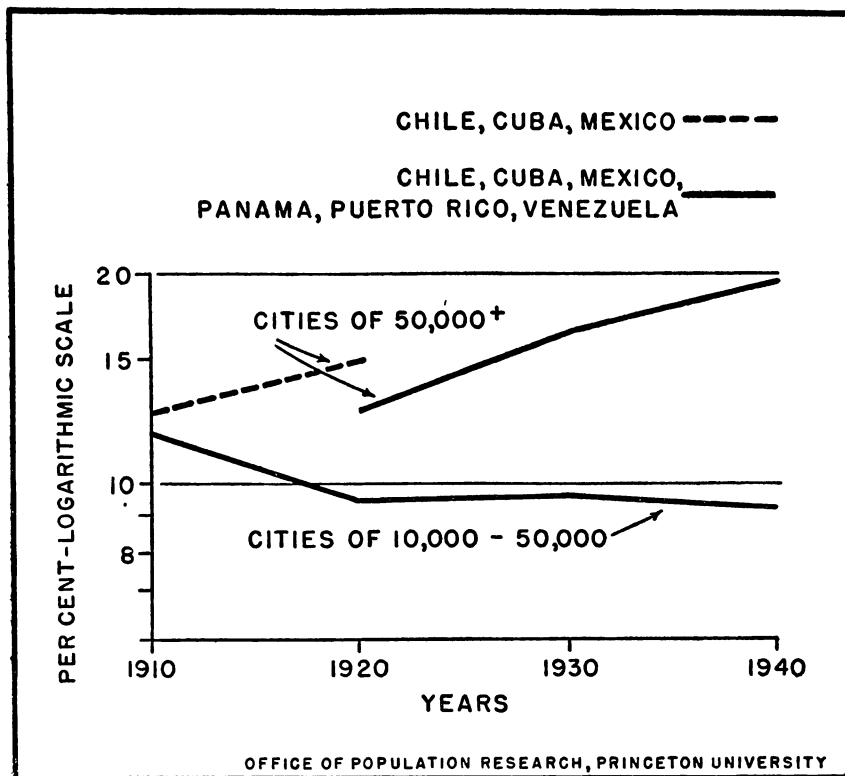


Fig. 2. Per cent of total population living in cities of two size groups. Selected countries.

other. The other—the city method—begins with particular cities and traces their subsequent expansion, ignoring what classes they may later fall into or what cities may later enter the same class. The first measure shows what is actually happening to the population in terms of its distribution by size of city. The second shows what is happening to specific cities as a result of their initial size differences. Since each method supplies an important and complementary kind of information, both are employed in the present study. Having used the first method already, we are now ready to apply the second.

Figure 3 shows for six countries the percentage of the total population living, during 1910-1940, in cities that *were* 20,000 or

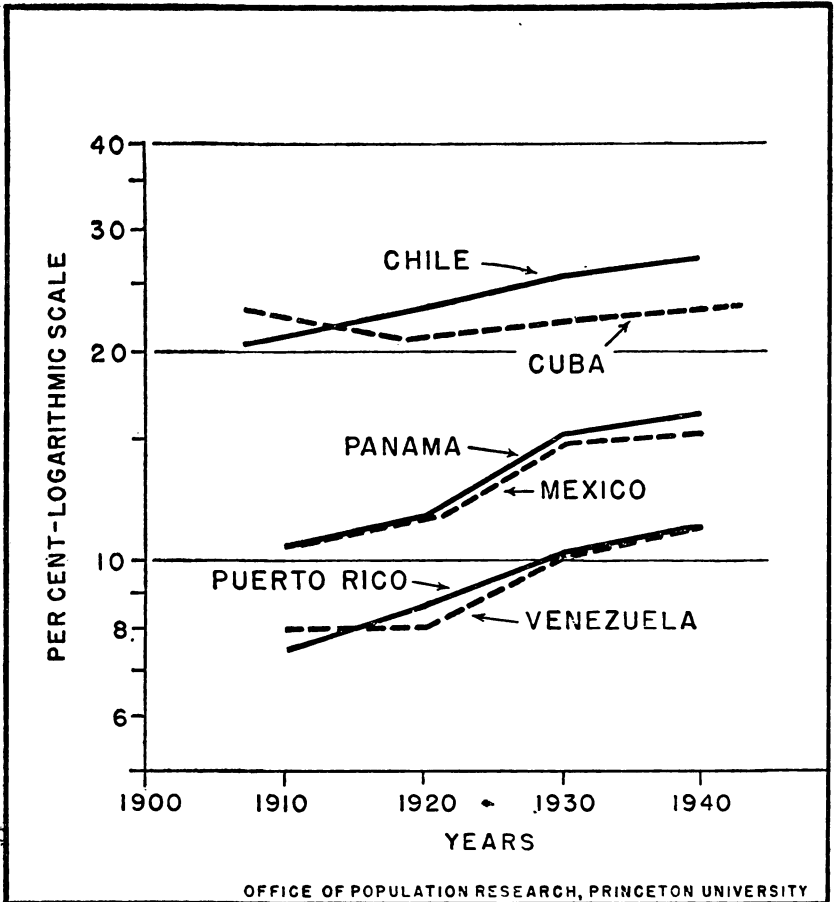


Fig. 3. Per cent of total population, 1910-1940, in cities that were 20,000 and over at beginning of period.

over at the initial date. Without exception these particular cities have grown faster than the general population, but it is worth noting that the rate of increase seems inversely correlated with the initial percentage. Those countries (Chile and Cuba) which had at the beginning the highest per cent living in these cities, showed a slower rate of growth of concentration in these cities throughout the period than did the countries that had a much smaller per cent to start with. This suggests that perhaps the older cities that had the highest proportion of people have not

increased their percentage of the country's population as fast as those that did not begin with such a high proportion, but the data are not conclusive.

The Causes of Urban Growth. If the urban concentration in Latin America has already gone beyond that called for by the stage of industrial development, and if it is destined to increase still more in the future, the next question is why such striking urbanization is taking place.

Speaking first in purely demographic terms, we can say that the cause of rapid urban growth is *not* a superior natural increase in cities. In all probability the natural increase of the urban population is less than that of the rural population. Without exception, wherever the data are available, the ratio of children to women in the reproductive ages is lower in the city than in the country. Furthermore, when vital statistics are sufficiently reliable for comparisons to be made (as in Argentina, Chile, and Puerto Rico), the urban birth rate is substantially lower than the rural. At the same time, the death rate in the cities is not sufficiently lower than that in the country to balance the inferior fertility; in fact in some cases the urban mortality may be higher.¹⁰

We must attribute the growth in urban concentration mainly to the other demographic factor—migration. The importance of this factor is shown by the age distribution of the cities. The combined data for six countries (Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela) show that the cities 10,000 and over had 55 per cent of their population in the ages 15-49, whereas the rest of the population had only 47 per cent in these ages.¹¹ Statistics on rural-urban migration in Latin American countries are discouragingly scarce, but one or two cases may indicate the general situation. In the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, according to the 1936 census, 47.8 per cent of the population were born out-

¹⁰The subject of rural-urban vital statistics is discussed in Part II.

¹¹A part of the difference is probably accounted for by differential fertility, but not all of it.

side the City; and in the Federal District 43.2 per cent were born outside the Federal District, a figure which, by 1941, had risen to 50.8. In 1921 the Federal District of Mexico, according to census returns, had 44.1 per cent of its population born outside the District, and in 1930, 50.8 per cent. In 1940 in Peru, the wholly urban province of Callao had 51.4 per cent of its population born outside the province, and the Department of Lima, 67.6 per cent urban, had 35.7 born outside the Department. It is true, too, that the foreign-born population of Latin America is mainly concentrated in the cities. In Panama, for instance, the two cities of Panama and Colon contained in 1940, 72.5 per cent of the total foreign-born population of the country; indeed, more than 23.5 per cent of these cities' inhabitants were foreign-born. In Buenos Aires, according to the census of 1936, the percentage of foreign-born was 36.1, which was much higher than the proportion of foreign-born (estimated at about 20 per cent) in the total country.¹²

But why the migration to the cities? This question raises a paradoxical issue. If, as maintained above, the urbanization has gone beyond its industrial base, compared with other areas, how does it happen that there is considerable rural-urban migration? What is the incentive? The answer seems to lie in Spanish and Portuguese institutions on the one hand coupled with the Latin American environment on the other.

Progress in Latin America did not begin spontaneously or indigenously. Instead, coming as a foreign, ocean-borne intrusion, it began on the coastal borders, where the Europeans first settled and where water transport was available. This might have been a prelude for gradual penetration and settlement of the interior, and so it was in a sense. But the Central and South American land masses were tropical or semi-tropical, moun-

¹²Bunge, Alejandro E.: *UNA NUEVA ARGENTINA*. Buenos Aires, Guillermo Kraft, 1940, pp. 116, 141.

tainous or jungly, excessively wet or dry, and peopled by hostile or at least alien peoples. The conditions offered formidable barriers to settlement, and the Spaniards hardly had hard work in mind. As a consequence, the interior was not developed along the lines of homestead farming, but was given to large landowners (*encomenderos*) who used native or slave labor and aimed at getting out from forest, field, or mine as quickly as possible a commercial product for foreign shipment. The market lay across the ocean. The city, usually a port, was the necessary nexus, without which the interior would be worthless.

The interior, inaccessible and undeveloped, had little of culture or convenience to offer. It was remote from the center of civilization (Europe), and from the cities through which European influence filtered. Nobody wanted to stay there any longer than necessary. To live in the city was every man's dream. Persons who owned enough land in the interior lived in the city, where they formed a class of absentee landowners, educating their children abroad, doting on Europe, and in general neglecting the interior from which their wealth came. The existence of this class also drew to the cities a numerous body of retainers giving service to the rich.

As time went by the interior improved very little. Absentee ownership, the use of slave or peon labor, the lack of local industry and local demand all impeded agricultural progress, despite the effort to raise commercial crops. In the absence of mechanization, human labor had to bear the burden of agricultural production.¹⁸ The competition with more mechanized and accessible agriculture in other continents, plus the peon system, drove rural "wages" down to virtual subsistence. To the agricultural worker

¹⁸There were in 1920, according to the census, some 141,000 plows in all of Brazil. There were six whole states with fewer than 100 plows each, and on the average only 15 per cent of Brazilian farmers possessed this elementary tool. There were 435 agricultural workers per plow. "Recent trips throughout the nation convince me that the same is true today." Smith, T. Lynn: *BRAZIL: PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS*. Baton Rouge, University of Louisiana Press, 1946, pp. 51-53.

almost any city wage looked attractive, and he filled the need of the aristocracy in the towns for "unspoiled" menial labor. There was thus a stimulus to cityward migration for both the laboring and landowning classes.

The emphasis upon urban dwelling among the wealthy meant that living conditions in cities were improved greatly, whereas little improvement was made in the country. Sanitation, education, utilities, and amusements were fostered in the city, but not elsewhere. The resulting gulf between city and country, still noticed by travelers and amply documented in rural-urban statistics, served to reinforce the initial preference for the city as a place to live. The idea of a quiet home in the country, far from the urban crowd—an ideal dear to the Anglo-Saxon—was not prominent in the Latin American mind.

The growth of cities was also fostered by political factors. Despite an expressed preference in the leading republics for federalism and decentralization, the Latin American countries have usually had centralized governments. Since everything, including economic advantage, political patronage, and cultural support revolved about politics, the capitals became the national nerve-centers. It is therefore no accident that in every Latin American country the largest city is also the capital.

In short, the rural-urban migration that has given rise to unusual urbanization has not been due to heavy industrialization, but rather to the peculiar institutions of the Spaniards and Portuguese and the environmental conditions in their part of the new world. Today there is the prospect that industrialization will play a greater role, and that some of the Latin American nations will carry urban concentration still further.

The Case of Argentina. The most urbanized of the larger republics, Argentina is experiencing a "de-peopling of the pampas." In 1930 the rural population (persons in places of less than 1,000) was estimated to be 3.58 million; by 1938, 3.32 million. (Figure

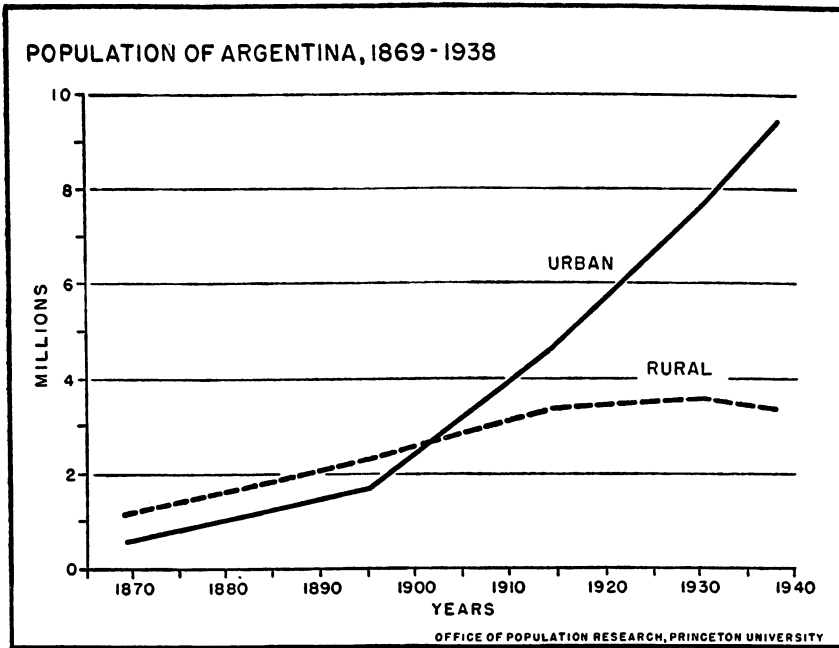


Fig. 4. Growth of rural and urban population in Argentina. (*Rural* is defined as places having less than 1,000 inhabitants.) Data from Bunge, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

4). In percentage terms, the rural population dropped during this time from 32 to 26 per cent of the total population.¹⁴ Since 1938 the rural population has probably declined still further, both in absolute and in percentage figures.

This rural decline bespeaks a huge rural-urban migration. Between 1930 and 1939, for example, an estimated 260,000 rural dwellers, or 7.3 per cent of all such dwellers, migrated to the towns.¹⁵ The rural exodus, plus foreign immigration, explains the phenomenal expansion of the urban population—an expansion that has exceeded the rate of rural growth since 1895.

It is primarily the larger cities that have gained. The census of 1914 showed 24 per cent of the total population living in cities of 100,000-plus, while estimates for 1943 place the figure at 34 per cent. "Between 1914 and 1943 the population of Argentina in-

¹⁴Bunge: *op. cit.*, pp. 156-158.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 165.

creased by 74.6 per cent, while the population of the cities that in 1914 had 100,000 or more inhabitants increased by 106 per cent."¹⁶ Greater Buenos Aires contains today close to 3.4 million persons, or above one-fourth of the Argentine population. It is, as Preston James points out, the largest city in the Southern Hemisphere and is second only to Paris among the world's Latin cities. Truly, for a predominantly agricultural country, Argentina is extremely urbanized. Its closest parallel is Australia, which is even more urban.

It is the organization of agriculture on the one hand, and the birth of industry on the other, that explains the Argentine phenomenon. Argentina resembles many another Latin American country in the concentration of land ownership.¹⁷ It has been estimated that almost half of Buenos Aires Province, by far the richest and most populous province, is controlled by not more than 3,500 people, or one-tenth of one per cent of the provincial population; and most other parts of the country are similarly controlled. Large *estancias* and *latifundios* dominate the agricultural scene. The holdings are organized along two different lines. Some of them (about 38 per cent) are run by their owners or by salaried managers; others (about 62 per cent) are cultivated by tenants, sharecroppers, etc.¹⁸ The class of persons who own their own farm and work it with their own hands is extremely small. Most of the big landholders are absentee owners—many of them being simply stock-holders in agricultural corporations.

Though resembling her neighbors in the concentration of land-

¹⁶Dirección del Censo Escolar de la Nación: "La distribución por zonas de la población argentina" (Buenos Aires, 1945, mimeographed), p. 20. All demographic figures for Argentina since 1914 are approximate only, with the exception of those derived from provincial censuses, but it is hard to reconcile our findings with the statement of Preston E. James that "in 1939, approximately two thirds of the population was in cities of more than one hundred thousand." *LATIN AMERICA*. New York, Odyssey Press, 1942, p. 281.

¹⁷Notable exceptions: Haiti, El Salvador, Costa Rica.

¹⁸Weil, Felix J.: *ARGENTINE RIDDLE*. New York, Latin American Economic Institute and John Day Co., 1944, pp. 94-95, 87-89.

ownership, Argentina differs from them in the degree to which her estates are mechanized and the need for manpower thus reduced. The equipment, even in the case of large estates, is often not owned by the cultivators; rather it is leased by the day from machine-renting enterprises. Moreover, livestock raising, which requires a relatively small amount of labor, has recently regained its historical dominance over other agricultural activities. The net effect of mechanization and livestock raising has been to reduce the amount of labor needed. Bunge points out that the per capita product of the agricultural population is in Argentina approximately four times what it is in France.¹⁹ Carl C. Taylor has given a graphic account of the labor force of a cattle *estancia*. This *estancia*, covering 50,000 acres, grazing about 32,000 head of livestock, and grossing approximately \$300,000 per year, had a permanent working population of 72 persons.²⁰

One might think that agricultural mechanization would make rural wages high. But such is not the case in Argentina, because the agricultural proletariat, as against the politically dominant landowning class, has little bargaining power on the *estancia*. It seems generally agreed that rural labor in Argentina is poorly paid and poorly housed, insecure and extremely mobile. If we add that the system of rural credit favors larger holders, and that the tendency toward concentration of ownership is increasing rather than decreasing, it becomes clear why Argentine agriculturalists should desire to leave the land.

At the same time, Argentine industry, concentrated in the cities, has been growing at a fast pace for several decades. It has drawn hard-pressed laborers and tenants from the pampas like a magnet. Thus there have been two forces—agriculture pushing and industry pulling—which have carried huge numbers to the cities.

¹⁹*Op. cit.*, pp. 162-163.

²⁰Taylor, Carl: Rural Locality Groups in Argentina. *American Sociological Review*, 9, April, 1944, p. 163.

The cities, in turn, are having a noteworthy effect on the country. Argentina is the first Latin American country to give promise of having a static population. As Figure 5 shows, the birth rate has been steadily declining as the country has become more urban. On the strength of this trend, Bunge has predicted a maximum population of only 13.7 million for Argentina (without immigration) by 1958, after which he believes it will slowly decline.²¹

The Value of the City. Our discussion may seem to imply that the fast and somewhat anomalous degree of urbanization in Latin America is harmful.

Such an opinion is held by some observers, who reason that the cities represent an excessive cost²² or that they are bringing about an unexpected and premature maturity.²³ One may argue, however, that it is not the cities themselves, but the peculiar conditions underlying their growth, that should be regretted. Though urbanization in the republics may not reflect as much industrial progress as elsewhere, there can be little doubt that the cities themselves are having a stimulating effect. Their inhabitants are ahead of the rural citizens in nearly every way. As the cities

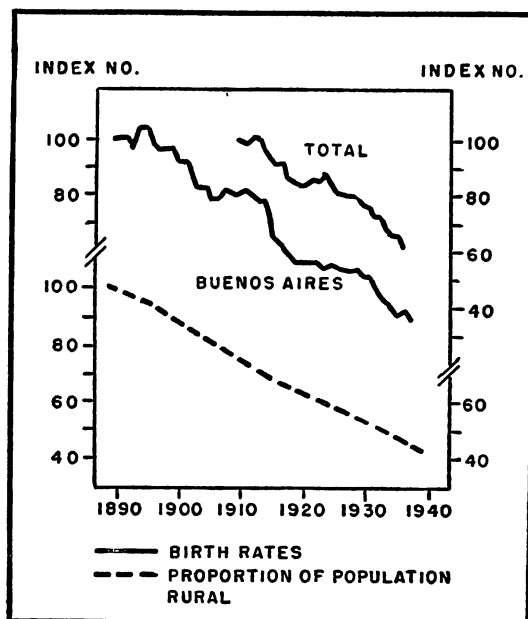


Fig. 5. The trend of fertility in the whole of Argentina and in the Capital, and the trend in the proportion rural (i.e. in places of less than 1,000). Data from Bunge, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 158; middle line from Bunge's chart, p. 106.

²¹*Op. cit.*, p. 117.

²²Schurz, Wm. L.: *LATIN AMERICA*. New York, Dutton, 1942, pp. 72-73.

²³Bunge, *op. cit.*, Ch. 4.

increasingly acquire an industrial base, as they link themselves more closely with the hinterland, as they spread out into suburban zones, their influence in the direction of modernization should increase. If they gradually promote a regime of low birth and death rates and thus halt the region's rapid population growth before it reaches a condition of oppressive density, this too will be a benefit. It is perhaps more, rather than less, urbanization that is desirable.