

THE URBAN EXPLOSION IN LATIN AMERICA

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Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1967
xx + 360 pp. \$9.75

The book contains articles presented at the conference on "The Role of the City in the Modernization of Latin America," which was held during the Cornell Latin American Year 1965-1966. The task accomplished by Beyer is praiseworthy. He not only combines the articles but presents the discussions and comments of them in an integrating way. The book concerns how urbanization, related to modernization, is achieved in Latin America, and the purpose is to present the analysis of this subject from the points of view of different professions, such as history, demography, economics, sociology, politics and city planning. This objective is achieved, and it contributes to the value of the book. Given the diversity of viewpoints of the contributors, the book succeeds in presenting the urbanization process in its complex structure. The reader, even when he might not agree with all the discussions presented, will understand perfectly that urbanization is not only an economic, or a demographic, or a social phenomenon, but the result of several causes and factors that are considered for several disciplines.

Although the articles of the book were presented at a conference in which the focus was on "positive functions performed by the city in the modernization process, instead of on the usual 'urban problems,'" part of them are devoted to the urban problem. In the book, as its name suggests, not only is the role of the city in the process of modernization considered, but also the urbanization in Latin American countries from several standpoints.

The book is divided into eight chapters and an appendix. Chapter I, the introduction, is a paper by Luis Alberto Sanchez, who presents a general view of the evolution of certain Latin American cities and a comparison of them with some European cities. Sanchez, who is a writer and a politician, presents this paper as a literary piece, but he does not completely leave his political background behind. This fact may explain certain parts of his paper, for example the part subtitled "The Birth Rate Is Not the Problem," where the author, without any proof, makes some statements that show his political, rather than his scientific side.

Chapter II presents two papers: "A History of the Long-Term Development of the City," by Bert F. Hoselitz, and "The Peruvian City of the Sixteenth Century," by Ralph Gakenheimer. Dr. Hoselitz gives a good world historical review of the city evolutions. He analyzes the cities, their sizes and their populations for periods of time, from as far back as possible to the present time. He points out that there is no doubt that the concentration of population in cities has been advantageous for these populations economically, culturally and educationally, but he also affirms that in the big cities the problems are increasing—not only social problems, but also the big one of renovation that old cities should face in the next generations. On the other hand, Gakenheimer presents in his paper a specific study of Peruvian cities in which he considers the purposes and objectives—religious, military, economic and so on—of the establishment of towns. Dr. Beyer adds to this chapter a good summary, especially the part concerning the causes of malfunctioning of cities.

In Chapter III the urbanization of Latin America is analyzed from a demographic point of view. Harley L. Browning in his paper, "Urbanization and Modernization in Latin America: The Demographic Perspective," gives a good discussion of the urban phenomenon. Referring to primacy of cities, he comments on the problems for small and large countries. For small countries a relatively big primate city might not be a problem; rather, it could be favorable. But for a large country he concludes that "high primacy becomes increasingly a negative factor . . ." He also relates urbanization to other demographic variables, such as migration, mortality

and fertility. His paper is a general description that gives a very good idea of the Latin American situation in relation to urbanization. Browning concludes that the problem is not urbanization itself, but rather the uncontrolled and nonplanned growth of certain cities. Beyer presents his discussion of this subject stressing that “. . . rural-urban migration and the associated urban problems of high primacy, growth of slums, transfer of under-employment . . . are the most conspicuous features in the rapid growth of urban areas in Latin America . . .”

Chapter IV is an economic view of urbanization in relation to modernization. Benjamin Higgins in his study, “Urbanization, Industrialization, and Economic Development,” analyzes the relations between the factors named in the title. The author notes that “while it would appear that significant industrialization is not possible without some accompanying urbanization . . . it is less clear that urbanization is impossible without industrialization,” especially in Latin America. Later he concludes that “to deal effectively with problems of urbanization and economic development our schools of planning must themselves be redesigned.” He claims that a higher intercollaboration of the sciences is needed to make possible the handling and solving of rising urban problems and to provide for successful city planning.

Chapter V deals with the city as an integrating mechanism of the country's population. This subject is considered by Gino Germani in his paper, “The Concept of Social Integration,” where he infers that the city, under certain conditions, could serve as an “integrating mechanism for the rise of a modern, well-developed national society . . .” He advocates more research on the marginal sectors of the population living in slum areas, where integration, principally cultural, does not seem to exist. Beyer concludes this chapter by discussing whether or not cities in Latin America can be considered as factors of modernization.

In Chapter VI the cities are analyzed as a crucible for political action. The paper, “Electoral Politics, Urbanization, and Social Development in Latin America,” by Irving Louis Horowitz, is presented. He describes the urban and rural participation of people in

national politics. The author notes that the rift between urban "classes" and rural "masses" is so wide that the rural population virtually does not participate in the nation's politics. Urbanization (assuming migration) could raise the proportion of the population which will participate. Horowitz mentions that this fact, because of the strong association between urbanization and politicalization, would cause changes in power relations and balances. He stresses that urbanization would serve as a process of political integration and political reforms. In the editor's summary to the chapter, the lack of national political integration and the political aspects of marginality in these Latin American countries are the principal topics.

Chapter VII is an attempt to list the desirable goals of urbanization. Jorge E. Hardoy in his paper, "Suggested Goals of Urbanization Related to Modernization," considers in a general way the principal aims that urbanization should realize in relation to modernization, such as national integration, a better coordination and a better use of natural resources, and a better national policy.

Chapter VIII is a summary made by the editor of the book. In the Appendix in his paper, "Urbanization on an Ad Hoc Basis: A Case Study of Caracas," Dr. Tomás José Sanabria discusses how and why the city of Caracas has been growing since its founding.

In each chapter of the book the editor has presented the discussion of the subject with the opinions of the conference participants. In general, throughout the book, the need for a stronger collaboration among professionals from different sciences is emphasized to increase the possibilities for successful planning. The book also stresses that one of the goals of the cities must be to contribute to the modernization of the country without creating new problems, such as that of slums. All together, it is a good book, and one in which Beyer has done an excellent job of assembling and commenting on its different parts.

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