

MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION: Breaking New Ground

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- URBAN POVERTY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF COSTA RICA.* By BRUCE HERRICK and BARCLAY HUDSON. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. Pp. 188. \$22.50.)
- A HOUSE OF MY OWN: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN THE SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS OF LIMA, PERU.* By SUSAN LOBO. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982. Pp. 190. \$18.50 cloth, \$7.95 paper.)
- TOWARD A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBANIZATION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.* Edited by HELEN I. SAFA. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982. Pp. 315. \$9.95.)

By the mid-1980s, it is no longer necessary to underscore the importance of the study of migration and urbanization either in the Third World or specifically in Latin America. In the space of one generation, two hundred million people have moved from the countryside to the cities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while the number of Third World cities with populations of one million or more has grown from sixteen in 1950 to well over sixty today.¹ This phenomenon has stimulated the production of a vast literature that includes both in-depth monographic treatments and broad comparative work. Sketchy as they may sometimes be, the data available on poor urban communities in Latin America greatly exceed the material existing a decade or so ago, when the subject was first recognized as crucial. Now that scholars have more raw data, we are better able to focus on what analysts make of their material, how they manage or fail to fit it together in coherent explanatory models or useful theories.

The three books under review include two monographic studies of poor people, Bruce Herrick and Barclay Hudson's study of the *tugurios* of San José, Costa Rica, and Susan Lobo's work on the *barriadas* of Lima. The third volume, the collection edited by Helen Safa, is international in scope and includes the work of scholars from all parts of the Third World. It treats many aspects of urbanization including motives for migration to urban centers, assorted "coping mechanisms" employed by the new migrants (family and kinship networks, marriage

alliances, patron-client ties, small-scale enterprises), as well as collective action and protest (neighborhood movements and squatters' movements).

All three works are dedicated to debunking what Herrick and Hudson refer to as the "received wisdom in the field." Lobo seeks to dispel the "'negative picture' of urbanization viewed in terms of 'break-down,' 'disorganization,' 'marginality,' or a 'culture of poverty' model." Herrick and Hudson call into question policy planning that rests on a notion of "spacially bounded poverty areas," that is, ghettos. Safa strikes a blow against the pre-Frankian "dual economy" conceptualizations and goes on to dispense with some of the more simpleminded *dependista* formulations as well.

Reading these works in the mid-1980s, one finds that although a number of concepts under attack in the two monographic studies may have constituted the received wisdom a decade or so ago, today much of this wisdom is no longer received as enthusiastically as it was when these studies were first conceived. To be sure, delays in publication in both cases account for the awkwardness the reader feels when confronted with the authors' claims to have presented a bold new approach at a time when these perspectives have been converted into the current conventional wisdom on questions relating to migration and the urban poor. Youthful readers may in fact wonder what all the fuss is about and whether anyone ever really believed in dual-sector economies, cultures of poverty, single-factor analyses, and the rest.

But not so long ago, these now largely discredited concepts shaped the thinking of scholars—and to a large extent still shape that of planners—about the urbanization process. In this regard, there is much work still to be done, and the studies under review, although similar in their claims to have broken new ground, set somewhat different corrective tasks for themselves.

Herrick and Hudson's discussion of migration and urbanization in *Urban Poverty and Economic Development: A Case Study of Costa Rica* focuses on the phenomenon of poverty itself and the problems of identifying, defining, and dealing with it. Their central purpose is to demonstrate the inadequacy of what they call "traditional strategies of poverty intervention." The authors describe poverty as a "composite phenomenon operating simultaneously on multiple spatial levels, and involving a variety of intersecting processes." The problem, as they see it, is that for reasons of expediency, poverty analysis and poverty programs generally focus on circumscribed geographic units. This reductionist approach may even make sense in administrative terms. But insofar as the conditions that the program hopes to alleviate or eradicate are the result of "many social processes operating in conjunction," such a method is too limited. Herrick and Hudson believe that the

processes that generate and sustain poverty arise from forces that operate at not only the local level but also at national and international levels. For Herrick and Hudson, the effectiveness of "poverty intervention" programs depends on the ability of planners to take all of these levels into account.

To aid policymakers in this endeavor, Herrick and Hudson survey a number of analytic approaches that, when taken together, should provide the basis for formulating policy adequate to tackle the multiplex problems of urban poverty. To illustrate this method, the authors draw on statistics from Costa Rica, where the data provide an especially clear example of their central contention that poverty is neither spatially circumscribed nor a matter of processes operating within distinct territorial units at the level of neighborhoods, cities, or the country as a whole. In Costa Rica, rich and poor are found together in the same neighborhoods, and while the tugurios, or slums, of San José are geographically well defined, their income structures are not strikingly different from other urban districts.

Herrick and Hudson attribute Costa Rica's success in avoiding severe duality between rich and poor to the progressive social welfare policies in force since the 1930s. But the very fact that Costa Rica does not constitute a divided society with clear geographical separation between rich and poor poses a particular kind of problem for policymakers charged with providing technical and social assistance to the poor: "The poor are there, and many are truly poor, but they are hard to find and reach." The problem of locating and identifying (or "targeting" the poor, as the policy planners would have it) is made all the more difficult in a city like San José, where poor people do not necessarily cluster in densely populated, fetid slums that cry out for reconstruction or demolition.

The complexities of identifying and measuring poverty in Costa Rica provide Herrick and Hudson with the occasion to attack "the conventional and simplistic approach to the analysis of poverty" and to analyze the advantages and shortcomings of the standard poverty indicators. In three chapters that would make useful reading in an undergraduate course on development, Herrick and Hudson summarize and critique six approaches to "poverty assessment," which run from the standard per capita income and market-basket approaches, through slightly more complex income distribution measures, to approaches focusing on social indicators and access to social and economic capital. They conclude this section with a discussion of poverty in historical perspective, which they identify as a "more value-explicit treatment of poverty."

Herrick and Hudson allow that "public agencies find it difficult to apply the historical approach owing to its normative content." "His-

torical analysis is necessarily interpretive," they observe, "and interpretation is always premised, explicitly or implicitly, on value-based norms." Interestingly, Herrick and Hudson seem far less bothered by the value-laden assumptions that underlie the other approaches to poverty assessment that they previously examined. For example, they note that market-basket estimates focus directly on the material needs of poor people and require "a set of explicit value judgements." Are not these judgements as likely to skew the poverty assessment produced as dramatically as the norms underpinning the Marxist approach? Yet the authors are not especially uneasy about the obvious drawbacks of the market basket or even the "basic needs" analyses. In contrast, they become almost apologetic in chapter 7 when they introduce the Marxist perspective, hastening to reassure the reader that there is no "need to embrace the whole Marxist theory as a package." Still, the Marxist emphasis on processes of change and particularly on the "transformation of social institutions as a product of complex conditions and forces operating throughout society in its entirety" is an appealing advantage of this approach, one that Herrick and Hudson, whatever their general misgivings about Marxist theory, find impossible to resist.

Employing this variety of analytical techniques in *Urban Poverty and Economic Development*, the authors are able to draw some interesting conclusions based on the Costa Rican data. One is that the "negative characteristics" of urban migrants have been greatly exaggerated and that this exaggeration has led, in turn, to misplaced concern over the impact of the migration process. In fact, Herrick and Hudson find that migrants to San José do not differ much from the urban population they join in their level of education and general life prospects. Migrants do not reside disproportionately in urban slums nor are the unemployed concentrated in the tugurios. In San José, at least, the labor market operates at the level of the city as a whole, rather than becoming a series of spatially separated labor markets. All of these findings reinforce Herrick and Hudson's central point that policymakers must not restrict themselves to the analysis of spatially limited areas.

Herrick and Hudson's call for a more complex approach to the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies for its alleviation seems a modest enough proposal on the part of two experts, one an economist and the other an urban planner. But this rather straightforward, sensible appeal is repeated too often, and the authors are exceedingly cautious in stating their rather obvious conclusions.

Like Herrick and Hudson, Susan Lobo is also determined to correct some of the simplistic notions and persistent stereotypes that have blurred the general understanding of the urban poor. In *A House of My Own: Social Organization in the Squatter Settlements of Lima, Peru*, Lobo is above all concerned with examining the supposed disorientation and

disorganization that rural migrants are alleged to suffer in their attempts to adapt to urban conditions. Setting out to “correct the dearth of fundamental information regarding such vital areas of urban life as social structure, residence patterns, kinship, and values,” Lobo systematically studied two Peruvian squatter communities named Ciudadela Chalaca and Dulanto, both in the city of Callao in metropolitan Lima. Her observation has impressed her with the adaptability of the migrants, their motivation and substantial success in building a community in both the material and the psychological sense, and their positive self-image. She is also impressed by the high level of achievement of their well-defined goals of educating their children, increasing family income, and obtaining greater access to urban amenities.

Where past observers inferred that social “fragmentation” necessarily accompanied the physical disarray that met their eyes on entering the *barriada*, Lobo has uncovered highly organized, well-defined associative patterns based on kinship and *compadrazgo*. To be sure, the record of voluntary associations and top-down political mobilization in these two communities has not been impressive. Yet Lobo has found that networks and alliances based on more traditional links successfully insure order, trust, and reciprocity in the lives of the *barriada* dwellers as they face the challenges of settlement in the city. Thus while kinship systems remain central to social relations, the kinship system of the rural highlands is not transferred intact to the cities but emerges as a truncated version that is adapted to urban life. In this new urban version, the authority of elders is deemphasized while far greater importance is given to sibling relationships.

In her chapter on “economic strategies,” Lobo challenges what she regards as the myth of massive unemployment among rural migrants to the city. In this section, Lobo tackles a “methodological oversight” that leads analysts to classify as “unemployed,” “underemployed,” or “miscellaneous” those men and women whose occupations do not fit “preconceived or traditional occupational categories.” Furthermore, Lobo scores those studies that consider only employment remunerated in cash, thus overlooking exchanges of labor and goods. Another “methodological shortcoming” she identifies is the concept of yearly or monthly income, which ignores the seasonal nature of some work and the ways in which the urban poor themselves conceptualize their incomes. Throughout this chapter, Lobo draws on a variety of colorful examples from the communities under study to illustrate effectively the limitations of such preexisting concepts. This entire section appears to have been conceived well before the notion of the “informal sector” gained the widespread acceptance that it currently enjoys.

In a chapter on values, Lobo strikes another blow at the myth of rural migrants as depressed, disoriented, often violent individuals.

Drawing on her close observations of life in the two communities, Lobo shows that migration itself is viewed as positive and that the act of moving from a rural to an urban setting “represents to most migrants their power to effect sweeping and what they consider to be positive changes in their lives.” Thus most of the migrants see themselves as having succeeded in taking control of their lives, creating new opportunities, and objectively improving their condition. Even the density of settlement in the *barriadas*, which is viewed by outsiders as another aspect of their squalor, is considered a positive feature by the recent migrants, who focus primarily on the opportunities for lively social interaction that such crowding affords.

High density, according to Lobo, offers these settlers other advantages because the large kin networks and *paisano* groupings serve as buffers and deterrents to overt hostility and violence both within and among groups in the community. Here the author draws a picture of a community in which “loud or annoying personal habits are avoided and care is taken to be nonintrusive with others.” Apparently absent from these *barriadas* is the kind of inter- and intrafamily strife that dominated the lives of Oscar Lewis’s Mexican and Puerto Rican subjects.² In contrast, among Lobo’s subjects, “conflict is held at a tolerably low level Within the household, squabbling among children is not tolerated and rarely presents itself as a problem because siblings from a very early age are taught the necessity of sharing with one another and getting along with others in the family.”

Finally, with respect to the system of values underlying life in the *barriadas*, Lobo observed no disdain for manual labor. On the contrary, the rural migrants view industriousness and perseverance as the key elements that account for success in life. Far from uncovering the fatalistic attitudes sometimes ascribed to the urban poor, Lobo finds that the concept of “fate” plays virtually no role in the minds of these people.

Some of these observations seem a little hard to swallow, even if one is eager to join Lobo in laying to rest forever all notions of the poor as hopelessly bound up in a culture of poverty (as if it were not enough that they are poor—they must also be pathological). However cheering it is to read these observations and their positive implications regarding the nature of human beings and the limitless potential of the Latin American masses, it is difficult in 1982 to sustain the claim that this perspective is particularly new. The critique of the concept of the culture of poverty has been available almost since the day that Oscar Lewis first set out his fuzzy hypotheses,³ and since that time, numerous studies have demonstrated that this pessimistic view of the actual and future behavior of Latin American slum-dwellers was ill founded.⁴

These observations are not meant to detract from the value of Lobo’s study, which is very well written and provides a great wealth of

the liveliest sort of ethnographic detail. One area in which this anthropologist is able to provide a striking new perspective is that of gender relations. Lobo shows that women in the new squatters' communities, while retaining some of their traditional prerogatives, have emerged from the subordinate place they occupied in Andean highland villages to take on a series of new and significant roles. The literature in the field of "women and development" has generally indicated that modernization tends to deprive women of their traditional guarantees while failing to provide them with alternative sources of security. But Lobo's study demonstrates that the modernization process need not bring about such a result. The women Lobo encountered in her fieldwork continue, as in Andean communities, to trade in the market. Moreover, they retain control over the distribution of food within the household. In the city, however, they also become earners of cash income and are often social leaders and organizers within paisano groupings. Finally, the relationship between spouses is described by Lobo as "strikingly egalitarian" when compared not only with life in the highlands but also with middle-class urban Peruvians.

Entirely different in scope is the collection edited by Safa, *Toward a Political Economy of Urbanization in Third World Countries*. The product of a panel on urbanization in developing areas at an international anthropological conference held in India in 1978, the book covers a broader range of topics than the two monographs; however, it also offers a cross-cultural look at some of the same issues tackled by Lobo and by Herrick and Hudson.

The approach to the study of urbanization common to the articles in this volume is labeled by Safa as "a political economy approach." The focus of this political economy perspective turns out to be fourfold: first, the dependent nature of capitalist development, above all the external forces that shape the growth of cities; second, the historical processes at play, especially the move from precapitalist to capitalist modes of production; third, class structure, in particular the way that the working classes subsidize the formal modern sector of the economy by providing their labor power; and fourth, the role of the state, which in this analysis is seen not as a neutral or autonomous force but as a tool in the service of the "elite" and the "formal modern sector."

If the common intellectual perspective that informs the work of the contributors to this volume is its focus on questions of historical process, modes of production, class, and the role of the state, one wonders what makes this a "political economy approach" rather than a "Marxist analysis." Does a reluctance to label one's own work and that of colleagues as "Marxist" spring from a desire to protect Third World collaborators? Is it a response carried over from the days of McCarthyism? Is it a reflection of new fears that arise today in the current politi-

cal climate of the United States? Or is it an indirect criticism of the quality of the work that has been produced in recent years by scholars who have identified themselves as Marxists?

Whatever the label applied to it, the point of departure for the contributors to this book has much in common with what is generally understood as a dependency perspective. The integration of Third World countries into a global capitalist system is taken as an assumption. In this respect, the emphasis in Safa's collection is on the broadest of the levels that Herrick and Hudson were anxious to consider; the central focus here is on the impact of international economic forces on events at the community, local, subnational, or national levels. By no means are internal structures ignored. But these structures—kinship networks and alliances, small-scale enterprise, and the like—are viewed in terms of the macro political and economic forces that reinforce or undermine them.

The articles comprising *Toward a Political Economy of Urbanization in Third World Countries* illustrate clearly the impact of exogenous factors on the family units, communities, cities, and countries under study. This generalization holds particularly because they are drawn from different areas of the Third World, where the process described above has proceeded at different rates. The contributions on Latin America are especially noteworthy, not only because they provide a point of comparison with the other works reviewed in this article but because the penetration of capitalist relations has reached a more advanced stage in Latin America than elsewhere in the Third World. As a result, cases based on the Latin American experience are instructive for any student of urbanization who wishes to predict the eventual outcome of forces at work elsewhere in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East.

Writing on Mexico, Lourdes Arizpe examines the notion commonly held by dependency thinkers that the rural sector supports the urban by sending capital and labor to the squatter settlements. While Arizpe agrees that "peasant societies the world over are losing resources constantly through price mechanisms, taxes, interest on loans and other channels," it is also true that the declining peasant community is sustained by the contributions of those who have moved to the cities. The rural migrants do not necessarily sever ties with their village; rather, they fulfill a role assigned to them within the division of labor of the peasant household. Through a system of "relay migration," rural families combine urban wage occupations with agriculture. First the father and later sons and daughters in the order of their birth are sent to the city to work for a time in salaried employment. Although some remain in the city, others return to establish their own households in the countryside, where the pattern of temporary migration is repeated. In this way, the peasant village becomes a kind of proletarian suburb,

and the social costs of reproduction of an agricultural work force are in fact subsidized by those who have moved to the cities. Uncovering this pattern of relay migration enables Arizpe to explain the persistence of high birthrates in declining peasant communities as well as the endurance of the subsistence agricultural economy.

The contributions on the informal sector in this volume go well beyond the generalizations offered in the other two books under review. Lisa Redfield Peattie's study of shoe manufacturers in Colombia illustrates the interdependence between large- and small-scale enterprises. In this example, a system of small workshops subcontract work from larger shoe firms. The case not only shows the links between formal and informal sectors but also suggests that the level of articulation between the two increases with the level of capitalist development. This dynamic becomes particularly clear when Peattie's study is compared with the findings of Dorothy Remy on the relationship between the state and both formal and informal sectors in Nigeria, and the work of Shanti Tangri on family-run bicycle manufacture in India. All of these studies provide explicit or implicit policy recommendations based on the authors' belief in the importance of the informal sector to the process of economic development.

Two of the most interesting contributions in the collection are studies of collective protest among the urban poor that are drawn from Latin America, where the process of mass mobilization in squatter settlements has gone well beyond the experiences that have been documented in Africa and Asia. Paul Singer, writing on Brazil, and Manuel Castells, writing comparatively on Peru, Chile, and Mexico, both deal with protest and political movements demonstrating that the urban masses are not necessarily passive spectators to history, nor are they concerned only with formulating individual strategies for survival based on family, kinship, or personal alliance networks or on patron-client relationships.

Looking at the *barrio* movements in São Paulo, Singer traces the history of urban mobilizations from their beginnings in the 1950s as mutual solidarity groups dedicated to self-help projects. When these self-help organizations were unable to provide essential services through their own initiatives, they increasingly recognized the need for state action to create the basic infrastructure for the new urban settlements. The need to pressure public authorities directly for the expansion of services placed these popular movements in a position to be "captured by politicians of the party in power who, not coincidentally, belong to the dominant class." Attempting to consolidate an electoral base, politicians who sought municipal power during the 1950s and 1960s transformed the self-help groups into bases of support for their personal political ambitions. Furthermore, because the barrios were not

homogeneous in class composition but included middle-level entrepreneurs and petty bourgeois elements, middle-class individuals often assumed leadership roles and were able to institutionalize links with national parties representing not popular, but middle-class, interests. Singer shows how this history of the takeover of popular urban movements by the middle classes continued as a pattern of Paulino politics through the 1970s. Even those groups attempting to go beyond mobilization for services to include forms of political education and consciousness raising did not dare to challenge the legitimacy of the political system.

Finally, Castells highlights the crucial differences among genuine grass roots organizations, popular movements that at some point are taken over and manipulated by outside political forces, and urban organizations mobilized from above. Focusing on the three countries where squatters movements have reached the highest level of development (Peru, Chile, and Mexico), Castells notes that Peruvian squatters have been organized by international agencies, by churches and humanitarian organizations, by a military government in search of popular support, and by political parties ranging from right to left. "The dominant trend in the history of Peru's urban movements," writes Castells, "is that of a manipulated popular crowd changing from one political ideology to another in exchange for the delivery (or the promise of delivery) of land, homes and services."

In the case of Chile, Castells notes that both the development and the eventual decline of the urban movements were closely linked to the overall process of class struggle in that country. The political strategy of the Christian Democratic party, the Communists, the Socialists, and parties of the right conditioned the form that mobilization took within the *campamentos* to the point that "actions of the squatters were entirely determined by the political orientation of the settlement which, in turn, was the result of the internal dynamics of the party dominating each campamento." Tight links to parties of the left led to the eventual savage repression of the *pobladores* as the squatter movements were no better able than the unions or other forces on the left to resist factional infighting when the Allende regime was challenged from the right.

In the case of Mexico, Castells highlights the urban movements that have successfully overcome the tendencies (intrinsic to the Mexican political system) toward mediation of popular demands by *caciques* or cooptation and absorption of popular movements by the PRI. The author focuses on urban movements in Monterrey, where the proletarian and student organizers managed to exploit the contradictions between the "Monterrey Group," the conservative and modernizing industrial and commercial bourgeoisie that dominates that northern industrial city, and the fraction of the bourgeoisie that controlled the state

under Luis Echeverría (1970–76). In this case, clever tactical decisions enabled the leadership of squatter settlements to sustain a clearly radical populist position while avoiding the associated threat of cooptation (that is, integration into the official party system) or eventual repression.

In the cases he examines, Castells finds, as did Singer in Brazil, that an urban movement is more likely to become an instrument of social integration and subordination to the existing political order than an agent of social change. Furthermore, he stresses that such subordination of the movement can be brought about by political parties representing the interests of different factions of the ruling class, by the state itself, or by a combination of the two.

Of the three books reviewed, the conference volume edited by Helen Safa best fulfills the claim to offer fresh insights on migration and urbanization. Quite able to stand on their own, many of the contributions in *Toward a Political Economy of Urbanization in Third World Countries* offer the reader new and often counterintuitive ideas. But reading the articles in groups, as Safa has arranged them, reminds one of just how stimulating and helpful a genuinely comparative analysis can be.

NOTES

1. Joan M. Nelson, *Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 3.
2. See especially Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez* (New York: Vintage, 1961); *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); and *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York* (New York: Random House, 1966). In this regard, it is also interesting to see the firsthand account of interpersonal relations in a Brazilian *favela*, which sometimes varied from quarrelsome to violent. Carolina María de Jesús, *Child of the Dark* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1962).
3. Lewis's hypotheses are set out most clearly in the introduction to *La Vida*, xlii–lii, and in "The Culture of Poverty," *Scientific American* 215 (1966):19–25.
4. Compare *The Culture of Poverty: A Critique*, edited by Eleanor Burke Leacock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971); Charles Valentine, *Culture and Poverty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), and Valentine et al., "Culture and Poverty: A Critique and Counterproposals," *Current Anthropology* 10 (1969):181–201; Janice Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976); and Helen I. Safa, *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico: A Study in Development and Inequality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).