Urbanization in Developing Countries

Latin American Urbanization
Urbanization in Developing Countries

*edited by Kenneth Little*

V. F. Costello: *Urbanization in the Middle East*
Josef Gugler and William G. Flanagan: *Urbanization and Social Change in West Africa*
Hal B. Levine: *Urbanization in Papua New Guinea*
Malcolm Cross: *Urbanization and Urban Growth in the Caribbean*
Peter Lloyd: *The 'Young Towns' of Lima: Aspects of Urbanization in Peru*
Douglas Butterworth and John K. Chance: *Latin American Urbanization*
Latin American Urbanization

DOUGLAS BUTTERWORTH
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

JOHN K. CHANCE
University of Denver

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge
London  New York  New Rochelle
Melbourne  Sydney
Contents

Preface

1 The city in history
   Cities and civilization 1
   Pre-Hispanic cities in the Andes and Mesoamerica 2
   The Iberian conquest and colonization: an urban venture 8
   Europeans, Indians, and blacks 12
   The changing Latin American city 25
   The growth of cities 28

2 Why people move
   Definitions and concepts in migration 33
   General theory and methods 35
   Repulsion and attraction: the push and the pull 39

3 Who moves from where: selectivity and migration
   Selectivity by age 52
   Selectivity by sex 54
   Education and selectivity 59
   Migration differentials in employment, occupation, and social class 60
   Migration and the “dynamic personality” 62
   Ethnicity and differential migration 62
   Origins, routes, and destinations 64
   Choice of destination 66
   Distance and migration 69

4 Return migration, brokerage, and effects on the community
   Brokers and mediation 73
   The effects of out-migration on community of origin 79

5 Migrant adaptation: kinship, networks, and small groups
   Groups, networks, and relationships 93
   Kinship and the family 94
   Social networks and the rural–urban interface 98
   Determinants of urban adaptation 103
## Contents

### 6 The urban class structure
- Approaches to the study of class in Latin America: 108
- Economic classes and cultural sectors: 110
- Social mobility: 124
- Race and class relations: 128
- Migration and the urban class structure: 131

### 7 Voluntary associations
- Functions of voluntary associations: 136
- A case study from Mexico: 142

### 8 Housing, poverty, and politics
- The culture of poverty: 147
- Squatter settlements: 151
- The Turner hypothesis: 157
- Political involvement of the urban poor: 160

### 9 International migration
- International migratory movements: 168
- Intercontinental migration: 169
- Interregional migration: 170
- Migration from Latin America to the United States: 171
- Mexican migration to the United States: 173

### Conclusion
- Notes: 198
- References: 203
- Index: 216
Preface

Since the era of World War II the cities of Latin America have grown at an extremely rapid pace, and more people than ever before have made the decision to become urban dwellers. In this respect, Latin America conforms to the pattern found in many developing regions of the Third World, where opportunities for leading a satisfying life in traditional small villages and towns appear to many to be decreasing in direct proportion to the burgeoning development in the cities. That this continues to be true for many in the face of severe urban housing shortages, overcrowding, lack of public services, and often appalling health conditions is all the more remarkable. Rapid urban growth may be tapering off in North America and Western Europe, but in Latin America it continues unabated with no end in sight. Although Latin America’s total population increased approximately 2.8 percent annually between 1960 and 1970, rural regions grew by only 1.3 percent annually. During that same decade, urban population increased from 103 million to 158 million; as a percentage of the total, urban population rose from 48.4 percent in 1960 to 55.9 percent in 1970. These trends are discussed further in Chapter 1; suffice it to say here that the most important demographic fact in contemporary Latin America well may be the mass movement of people from rural areas to urban centers (Thomas 1973: i).

City life and the social transformations promoted by the urbanization process thus constitute one of the most formidable challenges to social scientists today. But the newness of many aspects of the mushrooming metropolises of Latin America should not make us forget that the urbanization process in this region has deep historical roots, in some areas reaching back into pre-Hispanic times. With perhaps some exaggeration, Friedmann and Wulff have charged that “historical studies are antithetical to the practice of contemporary social science with its self-confident commitment to the present” (1974: 2). Taking note of culture areas that once supported flourishing civilizations that ultimately perished, those authors submit that a view of the transitoriness of cities and the life they sustained provides us with a perspective on the period of social change through which we ourselves are passing.

In this book we try to show the relevance of the history of Latin American urbanization as unearthed by archaeologists, historians, and ethnohistorians to the more immediate concerns of social anthropologists, vii
sociologists, political scientists, economists, social psychologists, demographers, and geographers. In the most general terms, our point of reference is the broad field of urban studies, which is composed of contributions by specialists from all these disciplines. However, we wish to make clear at the outset that both of us are anthropologists. Although we draw on work done in other disciplines, this book is biased in favor of urban anthropology.

This, then, is a book about people. The reader will find that with the exceptions of the chapters on pre-Hispanic times, colonial cities, and social classes, most of the people dealt with in this work are poor. Many of them have only recently arrived from rural peasant and proletarian communities; very few of them have completely severed their ties with the country, even after many years of urban residence. While this bias toward the urban lower class has caused an unfortunate lag in studies of urban elites and the middle class, it is nonetheless readily understandable when one considers how anthropologists first became interested in urban studies.

Apart from the long-standing interest in the origins of cities and the rise of civilization, urban anthropology has been most concerned with the process of rural–urban migration and the adaptations of rural migrants to city life. This is, of course, a natural outgrowth of the long anthropological tradition of rural community studies, and one might say that anthropologists are still in the habit of seeing the city from the bottom up. In the case of Latin America, where most migrants come from peasant backgrounds and are rarely strangers to the city, urban research is often inseparable from the general field of peasant studies.1

Anthropological studies of urban social organization in Latin America are likewise most abundant for recently arrived mestizo and Indian migrants in the large national capitals, particularly Mexico City and Lima, Peru. The nature of the rural–urban interface and the concept of adaptation are important parts of all these studies. Neighborhoods or urban barrios and squatter settlements and shanty towns have also received much attention in Latin America. In these settings anthropologists are best able to employ their traditional methodology of participant observation and the community study approach. Underlying many of these studies are an interest in the grass-roots political organization (or lack of it) of the urban poor and a concern for the many problems they face in making a living and simply surviving in the city. Many urban research projects, therefore, have an applied aspect, and many others are designed with specific policy objectives in mind.

In general, anthropologists have been more concerned, for better or for worse, with the process of urbanization than with the nature of urbanism per se. “Urbanization” has two contrasting meanings. As used in this book, it refers to the progressive concentration of people and power in nucleated urban settlements and the attendant elaboration of city life styles. On the
other hand, urbanization may also refer to the spread of these life-styles and the technology and conditions that make them possible into the rural hinterland. We will consider one facet of this process in the chapter on return migration to rural villages, but in other respects this topic lies beyond the scope of this book.

While the concept of urbanization, however it is used, always implies a process of social transformation through time, the notion of urbanism refers to a state, without regard to the time element. “Urbanization” employs a processual, diachronic perspective to analyze the process of becoming urban, while “urbanism” is structural and synchronic and refers to what it means to be urban. We feel that Latin American urbanism has been relatively neglected by social scientists, particularly by anthropologists. Studies of migration and migrant adaptation to Latin American cities abound, but well-informed works on aspects of urban social organization, the class structure, and urban typologies and comparisons (see Rollwagen 1975) are in short supply. This imbalance puts the cart before the horse: Without a detailed understanding of what city life in its many facets is all about, it is that much more difficult to study the process of urbanization, of becoming urban. In the chapters on colonial cities and contemporary social classes we make an effort to correct these deficiencies, insofar as the data permit, and call attention to one important aspect of Latin American urbanism – social stratification – which deserves much more attention from social scientists than it has heretofore received.

There are, on the other hand, purposeful omissions and contractions in this work brought on by considerations of space, scope, and focus. Among these we might mention exclusion of coverage of the Caribbean area. We are concerned almost exclusively with Brazil and the Spanish-speaking mainland nations.

Given these limitations, we have attempted to pull together and synthesize a large number of studies dealing with a variety of facets of the urban experience. Throughout, we seek not only to synthesize and comment on what has been done, but also to note significant questions that have been raised and to draw attention to what has not been done.

It is well to stress at the outset that at present there exists no adequate “theory” of urbanization or urbanism that can explain the Latin American (or any other) case, nor is there likely to be one for some time. Urban studies ranks as one of the youngest academic fields of study, and it is still far from attaining any sort of theoretical maturity. Social scientists interested in urban phenomena today bring to their research a large variety of theoretical interests and methodological approaches. Except for a section on migration theory, we limit ourselves to the major paradigms in the field and emphasize those used in urban anthropology.

The first formulation of urbanism as a concept in the early years of
Preface

Urban studies in the 1920s and 1930s was but a step removed from the still popular (and ethnocentric) stereotypes of the city as a den of iniquity that inevitably corrupts and destroys, and the rural town or village as the bastion of human virtue. This negative value placed on city life (and the corresponding positive value associated with small rural communities) has a long history in Western thought, dating at least from the time of the ancient Greeks. Traces of this bias can be found in the works of the so-called Chicago School of urban sociology, which was instrumental in launching the field of urban studies in the United States. This point of view and related matters are discussed in Chapter 5.

Since the 1930s, much empirical urban research in Latin America and elsewhere has shown that, contrary to these stereotypes, urbanization does not always lead to the breakdown of traditional forms of organization, nor does it necessarily promote social instability or normlessness. Many of these findings are discussed in various chapters of this book. This rejection of some of the older notions about urbanism and urbanization, however, has left us momentarily in a kind of theoretical vacuum in which no comprehensive paradigm has yet appeared. In recent years, central place theory in geography has helped to instill an awareness that ‘cityness’ is a relative thing and that there are probably no cross-culturally valid measures for deciding what is urban and what is not. But we are still a long way from coming to grips theoretically with the varieties of the urban experience and the reasons behind it.

In this volume we employ a broad, relativistic definition of the city, specifically rejecting formulations that rely on population size or density (see Chapter 1). This is not a book on theory, however: We are more interested in interpreting processes of change in the cities of Latin America than in putting forth any theory of urbanization. Accordingly, important concepts and definitions are introduced and defined as they become relevant in different parts of the text.

Both of us regard urban studies – urban anthropology in particular – as one of the most exciting fields in the social sciences today. It has its growing pains like any young science, but these are more than offset by the joy of discovery that only pioneering research in a relatively new field can provide. With respect to Latin American cities, it is now clear that they are not likely to repeat the stages of urban industrial development experienced in Western Europe and North America. This possibility is effectively ruled out by Latin America’s extraordinarily high rate of population growth and the political and economic difficulties experienced by dependent nations vis-à-vis the dominant world powers of the United States and the Soviet Union. The future of the cities south of the Rio Grande is therefore unknown and presents a lively challenge to social scientists. Equally challenging are the human and social problems engendered by rampant
Preface xi

Urbanization where national, technological, and economic infrastructures are barely able to keep pace with the influx of bodies and demands for work. Urbanization in Latin America can be, depending on one's point of view, either highly fascinating or extremely vexing. We hope this book will serve as an introduction to the subject for people of both persuasions.

We wish to thank Joan Wells Lathrap for her assistance in many aspects of the preparation of this manuscript. She, Cheleen Mahar, and Iria d’Aquino helped with the organization of Chapter 8, “Housing, Poverty, and Politics.” Johnetta Pell Bohn contributed to the section on migrant adaptation and Marcelo Naranjo helped research this and other aspects of rural-to-urban migration. Finally, Kathleen Fine was invaluable in typing and editing, in addition to offering valuable comments, particularly those about women and urbanization. Ms. Fine also prepared the index.

D.B. and J.K.C.