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Review Of "Urbanization And Settlement Systems: International Perspectives" By L. S. Bourne, R. Sinclair, And K. Dziejowski

Frederic L. Pryor

Swarthmore College, fpryor1@swarthmore.edu

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Review

Author(s): Frederic L. Pryor

Review by: Frederic L. Pryor

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are you (and I) will find them in Maddison; I confess I have already marked the page where there are numbers I need for my next paper.

Notes

1. Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th–18th Century*, vol. 1, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).
2. Clarence E. Ayres, *The Theory of Economic Progress*, 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1962).
3. Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982).

L. S. Bourne, R. Sinclair, and K. Dziewoński, eds. **Urbanization and Settlement Systems: International Perspectives**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, for International Geographical Union, 1984. Pp. vii + 475. Index.

Frederic L. Pryor
Swarthmore College

The focus of this collection of essays is systems of urban settlements in different nations; analysis deals with such questions as city sizes and functions, trends in urban growth, population structure of cities, movement to cities (migration and commuting), economic functions of different cities within the system, administration of cities and regions, and various types of linkages between cities. To justify these 22 national case studies, each written by geographers from the country under analysis, the editors argue that a comparative perspective on urbanization is both challenging and rewarding for providing a perspective for a worldwide phenomenon that is ever increasing in importance.

Unfortunately, achieving such a perspective is very difficult, starting with the very definition of urbanization. Readily available statistics must be used cautiously, for the various national statistical agencies use quite varied criteria in defining it—that is, different cutoff points distinguishing urban and rural settlements, different density criteria supplementing the settlement size criterion, different decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of settlements without political unity (e.g., nonincorporated suburbs in the United States), and so forth. As an illustration, the 1980 U.S. census provides some interesting examples.¹ The Census Bureau defines the urban population as 167 million; unfortunately, it is unclear how this would differ if other definitions were used, but the specification of the subunits gives some idea of the problem. For instance, in relation to the total U.S. urban population, New York City proper comprises 4.25% of the total urban population; however, the New York City SMSA (standard metropolitan statistical

area) comprises 5.4%; and the New York City SCSA (standard consolidated statistical area) comprises 9.6%. If one wishes to measure "urban concentration" in terms of the percentage of the urban population living in places over 500,000 (a definition used in the book under review) this could be 17% (defining "places" only as areas within formal city limits); or 58% (defining "places" as "urbanized areas"); or 72% (defining "places" as SMSAs); or 76% (defining "places" as SCSAs and SMSAs, netting out the overlap).

Confidence in this book is not enhanced when the editors present in their introduction several tables comparing urbanization and urban concentration in various countries, which are compiled without adjustment from various national statistical sources. They "resolve" doubts, however, by declaring without evidence such data to be "consistent" and then proceed to draw a number of generalizations. Looking at the data for the United States, we see that they use the broadest definition of urban places as their definition (they also show that 12% of the U.S. urban population is in the largest "city," which seems to be an obvious error). However, it appears doubtful if such a broad definition is used for some of the other nations. Now the editors may well be correct in asserting that urban concentration is roughly the same in countries with high and low per capita GDPs and that urban concentration is less in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe than in the developed capitalist nations. But the data that they use should not be employed to prove these propositions.

Unfortunately, the 22 case studies also do not permit a worldwide comparative perspective to be gained. First, the essays focus primarily on OECD and East European nations, with studies only of Brazil, India, and Venezuela to represent the developing nations. Second, in their introduction the editors tell us that they resisted the "temptation to set out an explicit approach or epistemology [sic] for individual contributors or to impose, *ex post facto*, a single conceptual framework on the resulting papers." As a result, the 22 national teams of geographers present 22 disparate studies dealing with quite different questions; they apply quite different approaches and concepts and present almost no common points for comparison. Not to worry: the editors assure us that "this diversity speaks directly to the varied roots from which the phenomenon of global urbanization springs."

For the most part the studies are very descriptive, and, although tedious to read, they provide considerable information. However, most authors do not attempt to explore the various underlying forces except in a loose narrative fashion. This leaves the lines of causality (e.g., between increases in foreign trade and changes in the size distributions of cities) rather questionable. A number of the studies also pay some attention to governmental policy on urbanization, but we are given little specific information about the exact nature of these policies,

the means chosen for their implementation, and the results that can be attributed to these measures.

Several of the teams do attempt a deeper analysis, but such studies are marred because the space restrictions prevent the presentation of the requisite evidence to prove the various propositions. For instance, the study of the German Democratic Republic has an extremely interesting analysis of the types of economic linkages between cities. However, we become confused after reading that the “well balanced spatial and social structure” leads to less commuting than in many other industrialized nations (no data supplied) when we learn that one-quarter of the commuters to large cities travel more than an hour each way (p. 383), that 30%–40% of people working in agriculture are also commuters (p. 384), and that places of production are becoming fewer so that there is increasingly more commuting from dispersed settlements (p. 388).² In the same study we also read that in all parts of the GDR, one finds an equal, basic level of working and living conditions (p. 395); although this is the first time in history that such conditions have occurred, no serious evidence is presented to back up this point.

If one is looking for a factual survey of urbanization patterns in certain primarily high-income nations and a few developing nations, the case studies in this book provide a useful starting place. If one is searching for a study revealing general causal forces underlying urbanization in various parts of the world or well-tested hypotheses about various urban phenomena, one is advised to turn elsewhere.

Notes

1. All data in this paragraph are taken from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, April 1973), vol. 1, chap. A, tables 6, 29, 31, 35.

2. The author does not mention that commuting is related to the housing shortage in socialist nations and that in the GDR such shortages were alleviated in past years by emigration.

Pranab K. Bardhan. **Land, Labor and Rural Poverty**. New York: Columbia University Press; and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984. Pp. ix + 252. \$30.00.

Pranab K. Bardhan. **The Political Economy of Development in India**. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984. Pp. viii + 118. \$24.95.

George Rosen
University of Illinois at Chicago

In the introduction to *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Pranab K. Bardhan briefly describes the relationship between these