

BOOK REVIEWS

Johannes F. Linn, *Cities in the developing world: Policies for their equitable and efficient growth*, (World Bank, 1983), pp. xxi + 230, n/p.

Rapid urbanization, a by product of the process of economic growth, is a pervasive phenomenon in the developing world. The share of urban population has, in the last quarter of a century, grown from about one-fifth to over one-third; and populations of such metropolitan centres as Mexico City, Calcutta and Bombay compare in size with the national populations of several small and medium sized countries.

The pace of urban growth is also indicated by the fact that while in 1950 only one city in the developing countries had a population exceeding 5 million, some forty cities are expected to be at or above this size by the year 2000. Such a rate of growth presents innumerable challenges for national and local policymakers, particularly in the areas of urban employment, transport, housing, health and education.

The book under review deals with exactly the above areas. It is an excellent addition to the literature on urban economic policy and should prove useful to both the academic and the policymaker. It is not a pioneering contribution in the sense that it does not break new theoretical ground. However, it does provide some new insights into the policy dimension of urban analysis. Its usefulness lies in that it systematically brings together the results and conclusions of a wide range of analytical and policy studies on specific issues related to urban problems.

An outstanding feature of the book is that it cogently and effectively presents the case for urban policy to be so designed whereby efficiency and equity are complements, instead of in conflict with each other. In fact, the author's stress throughout is on an urban policy mix in which equity is the primary factor and efficiency the accompanying secondary or "residual" factor. This is a refreshing change from the traditional growth model in which the reverse is the case.

Another merit of the book is that it avoids the pitfall of generalizations on the basis of aggregate information. Its micro approach is demonstrated where it rejects the commonly held notion that the urban poor are poor

primarily because they are unemployed and instead postulates that the cause of their poverty is their low productivity. The marked difference in the diagnosis resulting from the two approaches has significant implications with respect to the success or failure of policy measures.

The book begins with a detailed overview of the various dimensions of the urban policy problem in the developing countries. This section is richly endowed with an array of tables containing a mass of cross country data. A brief conceptual framework for urban policy analysis is also presented.

Employment of the urban poor is dealt with in considerable depth, beginning with their employment characteristics and including urban labor market analysis, human capital formation and the impact of choice of technology and scale of enterprises on labor intensity.

The author rejects several myths about urban labor markets and presents several alternatives. The determinants of urban labor supply, including the dynamics of rural-to-urban migration, and urban labor demand is dealt with in some detail. The persisting phenomenon of increasing urban unemployment despite rapid industrialization and urbanization is attributed primarily to the capital intensive industrialization strategy pursued by most of the developing countries.

Urban poverty is held to be accentuated by policy biases against the poor and numerous cases are cited in this respect. Measures to alleviate urban poverty and raise the income of the urban poor through fiscal policy are outlined. The author, however, realistically notes the political obstacles in the way of measures to redistribute income by shifting the fiscal burden from the poor to the rich.

Transport plays a crucial role in urban development by linking residence and employment, and consumers and producers, and in the provision of civic amenities. The nature and pattern of the urban transport system also determines, to a certain extent, the land use pattern of the urban area which in turn has a direct bearing on employment and incomes of the poor.

The discussion on transport, as such, deals particularly with questions of investment, pricing and regulation. A restructuring of the transport pricing structure to include, in particular, congestion pricing of private transport and tax exemptions to public transport is recommended. Regulatory measures to limit the operation of private vehicles in city centres are also suggested.

Considerable space is provided to the problem of housing which is defined to include land, shelter and associated services, both on-site and off-site. The discussion includes issues relating to the demand and supply of housing and their interaction, regulation of the land market, provision of services, property taxation and user charges and housing regulations and controls.

Education and health have a direct relationship with income. The causality, however, runs both ways. This results in the poor being trapped in a vicious circle, whereby low incomes induce poor education, health, nutrition and family planning, leading, in turn, to low productivity and low incomes. Public provision of social services is, as such, of particular importance to the low income groups who are unable to acquire these services privately. The author uses a systemic approach to highlight the inter-relationships between and within income and the various social services and provides references to actual cases from the developing world.

Although the different sectors of the urban economy are dealt with separately, the book has an integrated approach since policies pursued in the areas of transport, housing and social services affect each other and, individually and collectively, have an impact on employment and poverty. Possibilities of a leakage of benefits to the urban rich from policies ostensibly designed for the poor are also highlighted at various points in the book.

The book's limitation lies in the virtually total absence of theoretical content. A brief section devoted to theoretical analysis at the beginning of each substantive chapter, i.e., employment, transport, and housing would have served well to outline the relevant theoretical basis on which subsequent policy discussion could follow. This would have enhanced the book's usefulness to the academic who has now to take recourse to the rather comprehensive list of references at the end of the book.

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Hassan Gardezi, and Jamil Rashid, (editors), Pakistan: The roots of dictatorship, (Zed Press, 1983), pp. xviii + 394, n.p.

It is indeed very sad that the first major collection of essays on Pakistan by Pakistanis, should be of such a poor quality. A book finally appeared which looked at Pakistan using "radical theoretical approaches", but unfortunately failed to live upto expectations.

The main fault of the book seems to lie with the editors and the publishers rather than (all) the authors themselves. The book seems to have been very hurriedly put together and it is also very poorly edited.

There are sixteen articles penned by twelve authors, which may well be the cause of the highly uneven nature of the overall work. There is excessive repetition and overlap. Most of the articles display a journalistic and polemical approach, as opposed to an in-depth analysis. Concrete and scientific theoretical foundations of the political economy tradition (which the authors espouse), are clearly lacking.

Hamza Alavi is possibly Pakistan's leading radical intellectual, and his stature is universally acknowledged. His recent works on peripheral capitalism and the state and class within it are proofs of his succinct and analytically rigorous writing.¹ However, it is rather saddening to reflect on the two articles by him in this book. Alavi's first essay entitled "Class and State" provides an endless stream of detailed historical information but lacks a clear analytical thread that could transform such information into a systematic argument. The fifty pages of the essay could easily have been summarised in half the number. What is written here is based upon his earlier and seminal piece on the theory of the post colonial state yet little mention is made of the more recent adaptation of this by Alavi within the framework of peripheral capitalism. The second essay by Alavi has been published in one form or another in various places.² The data are out of date, whilst the argument which was excellent when originally presented, has been superseded by more contemporary studies. It would have been far more interesting if Alavi had concentrated on the critical and contentious issue of the transition in modes of production in agriculture.

The articles by Zafar Shaheed (on the labour movement in Pakistan), Rashid Amjad (on the concentration of industrial power amongst the large finance houses within the corporate sector), and Shahnaz Rouse (a case study of a Punjabi village), are all worth mentioning and display a high standard. Rouse's essay lucidly explains the complexities of social relations amongst village classes. She rejects the arguments that liberal feudalism, or philanthropic landlords, will seriously improve the conditions of the middle and poor peasantry. Her work also provides fascinating details, at the micro level, of the transformation of traditional landlords, with the aid of the State apparatus, into profit maximising, entrepreneurial, capitalist farmers.

¹ Alavi, H., 1982, *The structure of peripheral capitalism*, and Alavi, H., 1982, *State and class under peripheral capitalism*, in: Alavi and Shanin, (editors), *Introduction to the Sociology of 'Developing Societies'*, London: Macmillan.

² Alavi, H., 1976, *The rural elite and agricultural development*, in: Stevens, et. al., (editors) *Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.

Very little has been written on labour policy from the perspective of the labour movement. Shaheed's work, based on extensive research, goes a long way to offset this shortcoming. His commentary on the struggles of the labour movement outlines how the trade union movement has been incessantly attacked by the State. Even under a supposedly populist government the aims and aspirations of labour have been tossed aside. In the interests of maintaining industrial profitability and a favourable investment climate the present regime has used various means to suppress labour's demands for higher wages and a better standard of living.

Amjad's article on the industrial houses shows how these family concerns consolidated their hold over the industrial and financial sectors of the economy. The rise of these houses is a phenomena in itself that deserves a detailed socio-economic study. Amjad outlines the role of the State in this by providing liberal incentives both directly and through the PIDC which led to exceptionally high rates of profits. Despite the setbacks suffered by these houses in the loss of the captive east wing market and the nationalization of the banking sector by Bhutto, the re-emergence of liberal policies for the industrial sector by the present military government has led to the restoration of much of their former prominence.

Aijaz Ahmad's previously published article on the Bhutto period is a good attempt to analyse the role of that regime. He links the downfall of Bhutto to the onset of economic crises most notably for agrarian capital and the industrial sector. The last essay by Haque deserves greater prominence. He outlines the usage of religion by the State and the dominant classes as a front behind which the existing forms of exploitation can prosper. Haque distinguishes between the original and the present "medieval" form of Islam. He notes the difficulties that the pursuit of scientific knowledge faces when confronted by religious dogma, but sadly does not develop this argument further.

Both the editors have written two essays each, and have co-authored another. Unfortunately, these are possibly the weakest part of the book. Both are written in a non-scholarly manner and like the work by Abdur Rauf (on Education), have used Marxist rhetoric just for the sake of jargon. The short article by Anis Alam (on Science and Engineering) is also a rather superficial attempt at analysis.

One is left with a distinct sense of disappointment after reading this book. A number of writers display a curious tendency of interposing their argument with poorly picked Marxist terminology in what seems to be an attempt to gain radical credibility. If the book has some merit, it is that it brings together a number of Pakistani radicals under one cover and for a wider audience. Its central contradiction however, is its inability to decide whether it is a political or academic volume. If it was meant to be a synthe-

sis of political and academic strains it fails to achieve either. One hopes that a more rigourous and serious approach will be adopted in future attempts to provide an insight into the nature of Pakistani society. Until those of the radical persuasion are clear on this the prospect for the success of political action remains gloomy.

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