URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

Internal Dynamics of Lahore, Pakistan

Mohammad A. Qadeer

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PREFACE

Urbanization has received considerable attention from scholars and international advisory circles in the 1970's as a phenomenon of increasing proportion of a country's population living in cities. For the Third World, alarm bells have begun ringing as its urban populations have started to increase rapidly. Whether the Third World will be able to control and guide the process of urbanization remains in doubt; but there is no dearth of recipes. The question, then, arises how Third World cities accommodate burgeoning populations and continual growth despite severe problems. To answer this question one has to turn to the study of urban development, i.e., the social, economic and physical changes experienced by those cities and forces shaping the changes. Some very illuminating theories about the Third World's urban development have come forth recently, particularly from the neo-Marxist scholars; but there are very few empirical accounts of what actually happens when a city expands five to six times over the span of two decades. This book is a modest attempt to provide, through the case study of Lahore, Pakistan, insights into structural and operational processes triggered in a city by the expanding population on the one hand, and by the deliberate policies of development on the other. It focuses on the post-Independence period (1947-1980), and its analytical sights are trained on the internal dynamics arising from the contemporary developmental ethos and prompted by the International order in which the Third World is presently encased.

This book offers a somewhat unusual view of the phenomenon of urban development. It attempts to look at the actual workings and operation of institutions, organizations and programmes and not merely at their existence or absence. It attempts to uncover the order underlying daily transactions, and to observe structures of operations. It documents how packaged policies based on clichés of the West, the East or the United Nations end up having more or less the same effects. It explores the reasons for the prevailing state of affairs which can be summed up as 'the more things change, the more they remain the same.'

Though this book is about a specific city, its findings have bearings on the abiding issues of national development, i.e., continuity and change; modernity and dependence; overdeveloped state and underdeveloped polity, etc. The probing of the city has turned out to be a vehicle for charting the national terrain.

Wherever required vernacular (local) terms have been used to describe a phenomenon. Meanings of these terms have been spelled out often in parentheses or can be inferred from descriptions. Another point worthy of mention is that percentage totals in some tables may not add exactly up to 100. Small discrepencies arise

from rounding procedures as well as inconsistencies of original data.

Lahore is my home city, so writing this book was, for me, an experience both deeply satisfying (for addressing the issues) and deeply painful (for uncovering unrelenting problems and inequities). Having lived through conditions described herein, I have experiential knowledge about the working of the city which has been very useful in this study. Yet my insights have been submitted to rigorous empirical criteria which hopefully will have eliminated any excesses of subjectivity. I believe that the outcome is a harmonious blend of tested hunches and objective knowledge which, if it raises questions about the current 'accepted knowledge' about the Third World's urban development will have fulfilled its promise.

For this study, I have received help, advice and encouragement from so many sources that I feel overwhelmed with intellectual and emotional debts. The initial idea for writing this book germinated in a series of lectures that Professor Robert Riddell invited me to give to the Development Studies Course at Cambridge University, England. I thank him for setting me on this path. Queen's University, my academic home, has been a very congenial place to pursue this study. Dr. Gerald Hodge, my colleague, friend, and Director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning, has been a continual source of encouragement and help. In the School's office, Mrs. Florence Gore and Mrs. Jacqueline Bell patiently bore my timely and untimely demands. Working in such a cooperative environment greatly facilitated my task. The Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research, Dr. Maurice Yeates, generously funded the production of this camera-ready copy. I am grateful for his interest as well as financial assistance.

On contracting to produce camera-ready copy for the publisher, I did not realize what I had undertaken. Mrs. Phyllis Bray's editorial help, mastery of the publisher's instructions and patient attention to detail, made it possible for me to produce an acceptable draft. I am very grateful for her help and guidance. Mrs. Deanna Speight meticulously typed the final copy on a word processor.

Professor Clarke Wilson, Mr. Wayne Myles, Dr. Mary Millar, Mr. Fayaz Baqir and Professor Elia Zureik of Queen's University reviewed drafts of various chapters and gave valuable suggestions. To Professor Azhar Zahar Butt of the Engineering University, Lahore, I am indebted in countless ways. There is much in this book that has been clarified and informed by his observations and explanations. He reviewed a few chapters of this book but his contributions pervade almost every section. Mr. Iftikhar Shabbir has been a source of continual moral and intellectual support, particularly on my field trips to Lahore. I also gratefully acknowledge the help of Professor Sattar Sikander, Mr. Abdur Rashid Shiekh, Mr. Tahir Rauf, Mr. Fazal Hussain and Mr. Inam-ul-Haque in collecting various bits of hard and soft data on which this book is based. Undoubtedly, I bear the responsibility

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for all the shortcomings of this book, despite such help from my friends.

My understanding of Lahore's traditions comes from growing up in the Walled City. Bazaar Sirianwala was an ideal neighbourhood to learn about the life in Lahore. I count myself extremely fortunate to have grown up in a family where traditions were appreciated, but change was not shunned. I acknowledge with love, the understanding and warmth of my mother, Maqbool Begum, brother and sister Mohammad Rauf and Khalida Zain, and of my father, Mr. Shamas-ud-din.

My wife and children prompted me to press on with writing both by their empathy and by frequent bursts of impatience. To them I owe much of what is valuable in my life.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	PREFACE	vi
	LIST OF TABLES	xiii
	LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES	xiv
1.	THE URBAN CRISIS OF THE THIRD WORLD	1
	TWO VIEWS OF THE CRISIS	3
	THE CONTEXT OF THE URBAN CRISIS	4
	ORDER AND CHAOS IN THIRD WORLD CITIES	5
	THE PUZZLE	5
	OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK	6
	THE CASE STUDY OF LAHORE	6
	NOTES	8
2.	INTERNAL DYNAMICS: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION	10
	DEFINING INTERNAL DYNAMICS	10
	THE FRAMEWORK OF VALUES: DEVELOPMENT	11
	CITIES AND NATIONS	12
	THE NATURE OF THE CITY	14
	Dependent Urbanism of the Third World	16
	Dualism	19
	BAZAAR VERSUS FIRM SECTORS	20
	Sectors and Circuits	23
	Economy of Illicit Activities	24
	DYNAMICS OF DUALITY	26
	Expansionism	27
	Modernization	28
	Reincorporation of Traditions	29
	Capitalist Transformation	30
	Privatization	32
	Decommunalization and Recommunalization	33
	Distribution of Power and Resources	35
	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	37
	NOTES	39
3.	THE SOCIAL ECONOMY OF PAKISTAN	44
	INTRODUCTION TO PAKISTAN	44
	POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	45
	SOCIAL STRUCTURE	49
	Social Classes	49
	Income Distribution	52

Chapter		Page
	Relative Gains and Losses of Various Classes	53
	STRUCTURE OF THE ECONOMY	56
	Modes of Operation	60
	Shadow Economy of Corruption	61
	INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION	62
	SOCIAL RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION	65
	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	66
	NOTES	68
4.	LAHORE: GROWTH AND CHANGE	70
	HISTORY	70
	The Muslim Rule	71
	The Colonial Period (1849-1947)	72
	After Independence (1947-)	73
	POPULATION GROWTH	74
	Lahore in the National Urban System	75
	Population Composition	75
	Fertility and Mortality	76
	Natural Increase versus In-migration	78
	PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	79
	Pre-British City	81
	British Contributions	82
	The Physical Developments Since Independence	83
	Commercial Areas	88
	Industrial Development	89
	Company Housing	90
	Reprise of Physical Development	91
	HOUSING CONDITIONS	92
	FACILITIES AND SERVICES	94
	Water Supply	94
	Sewerage and Drainage	95
	Electricity and Telephones	96
	Gas Supply	96
	Schools and Dispensaries	97
	Radio and Television	98
	Parks and Playgrounds	99
	CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTARY	99
	APPENDIX A POPULATION FORECASTS	102
	Projections Based on Moving Averages	102
	Graphic Extrapolation	104
	Regression Analysis	104
	APPENDIX B PAKISTAN'S URBAN SYSTEM	105
	APPENDIX C DETERMINING THE COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH: SHIFT-SHARE ANALYSIS	107
	NOTES	109
5.	THE URBAN ECONOMY	113
	ECONOMIC BASE	114
	MANUFACTURING	117

Chapter		Page
	Bases of Industrial Self-Sustenance	119
	Location of Industries	122
	Organization of Sectors	128
	Technology and Finance	130
	Sectoral Ecology	130
	The Government and the Two Sectors	132
	Reprise of Industrial Trends	133
	TRADE AND FINANCE	134
	Sectoral Organization	135
	Structure of Commercial Activities	139
	Sectoral Dynamics	139
	Firm Sector in Trade	144
	Summing Up: Structure of Trade	146
	SERVICES	149
	Sectoral Organization	149
	Organizational Changes in Service Activities	153
	CORRUPTION	154
	CONSUMPTION AND LIVING STANDARDS	159
	Household Incomes	160
	Social Class and Consumption	161
	Economic Effects of Consumption	164
	INFERENCES	166
	NOTES	171
6.	THE SPACE AND PEOPLE	175
	THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION	175
	The Walled City and Pre-Colonial Settlements	176
	The Civil Lines	180
	New Indigenous Communities	181
	The Planned Schemes	184
	The Cantonment	189
	Katchi Abadis (squatter clusters)	190
	THE LAND USE STRUCTURE	192
	Organizational Framework	193
	Neighbourhoods and Residential Densities	197
	Distribution of Commercial and Industrial Activities	199
	SUMMING UP	203
	NOTES	207
7.	THE WORKING OF THE URBAN SYSTEM	209
	TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION	210
	COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES	214
	Schools	215
	Hospitals, Clinics and Parks	217
	Water Supply and Waste Disposal	220
	LAND AND HOUSING	224
	Land Prices	228
	Coping with Housing Costs	230

Chapter		Page
	Land and Housing Policies	233
	Reprise of Land and Housing Analysis	236
	CITY PLANNING	237
	THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CITY	241
	Power Structure and Decision-Making	243
	Revenues and Expenditures	244
	FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS	246
	NOTES	250
8.	OVERVIEW	253
	LAHORE - A JUDGEMENT	254
	IMPULSIONS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT	254
	Development Without Social Progress	255
	Prepackaged Institutions and Policies	255
	The Preponderance of the State	257
	The City, the State, and the Market	259
	The Vitality of the Vernacular	260
	INTERNAL DYNAMICS	261
	Segmentalization	262
	Streaming and Tracking of Development	263
	INFERENTIAL PROPOSITIONS	264
	THE ATTAINABLE CITY	266
	Institutional Reorganization and Administrative Reforms	267
	Collectivization of Basic Services	268
	Indigenizing City Planning	269
	NOTES	271
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	272
	ABOUT THE AUTHOR	283

LIST OF TABLES

Number	Title	Page
3.1	Persons Below the Poverty Line	53
3.2	Structure of Output at Constant Factor Cost	58
3.3	Output of Selected Goods	59
4.1	Population Growth	74
4.2	Age and Sex Distribution	76
4.3	Place of Birth	79
4.4	Housing Conditions, 1961-73	92
4.5	Population Growth: Lahore	104
4.6	Rank Order Distribution of Cities in Pakistan	106
5.1	Distribution of Work Force	114
5.2	Non-Agricultural Labour Force Lahore, 1961 and 1977	116
5.3	Registered Factories in Lahore	118
5.4	Types of Factories by District, Lahore	126
5.5	Distribution of Shops in Lahore, 1964	137
5.6	Sectoral Composition of Services	150
5.7	Distribution of Workers by Type of Establishments, Punjab 1978	152
6.1	Land Uses, Densities and Public Utilities by Neighbourhoods	194
7.1	Residential Land Prices	231
7.2	Average Revenues of Lahore Municipal Corporation 1975-76 to 1979-80	245

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LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

Map Number	Title	Page
1.1	PAKISTAN: PROVINCES AND CITIES	7
4.1	PHASE ONE UP TO 1847. LAHORE	80
4.2	PHASE TWO 1847-1920. LAHORE	84
4.3	PHASE THREE 1920-1947. LAHORE	85
5.1	ANALYTICAL DIVISIONS: LAHORE	125
5.2	INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS AND COMMERCIAL MARKETS	140
6.1	THE WALLED CITY	178
6.2	NEW INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES	183
6.3	PLANNED SCHEMES	186
6.4	GENERALIZED LAND USE MAP	198
6.5	RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES	200
7.1	SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE	222
7.2	LAND VALUES 1980	229

Figure Number		
2.1	SECTORAL STRUCTURE	25
4.1	AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTIONS	77
4.2	POPULATION OF LAHORE 1901-1991	103

1
THE URBAN CRISIS OF THE THIRD WORLD

On the long list of crises purportedly threatening the Third World, a new item has appeared in the 1970s, the urban crisis. This problem is not new although it has received much publicity recently. Demographers, urban planners and development experts started talking about the impending crises of Third World cities in the late 1950s and early 1960s [1]. In the 1970s, these predictions were taken up by international agencies and the conference circuits. Now in the 1980s, the urban crisis of the Third World is no longer a forecast. It has arrived.

As in the case of other crises of the Third World, the West (the United Nations, the United States Agency for International Development, the World Bank, etc.) has been in the forefront in heralding the arrival of the urban crisis. Two United Nations conferences, one on the environment in 1972 at Stockholm, and the other on human settlement (HABITAT) in Vancouver in 1976, have finally put a seal on the urgency of the Third World's urban crises. Now, hardly any account of the Third World's situation is complete without mention of its burgeoning cities and miserable squatters. Yet the realization in the Third World that there is an urban crisis has primarily emerged because of this Western concern and discussion. The problem is no less real because of its origin.

Third World cities are large, sprawling, lacking in jobs, houses, public services, and poorly financed and organized. As if these burdens were not enough, the populations of Third World cities are growing by as much as 5 to 10 percent per year. Almost every newspaper reader is now familiar with the street sleepers of Calcutta, the cemetery dwellers of Cairo, and the favela people of Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, it is common knowledge that these cities severely lack the basic necessities of community life. It boggles the mind to imagine how almost half the population of cities like Karachi, Bombay, Mexico, and Manila live without piped water or even latrines.

Numerically Third World cities are beginning to outgrow most of the prosperous western metropolises. Mexico City, Calcutta, Cairo, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo are already rivaling New York, Tokyo and London in population. Barbara Ward estimated that by

mid-eighties, 147 of the 273 cities of a million or more population would be in the Third World [2]. The prospect of so many people without jobs, houses, transport facilities, and even water supply, triggers alarms of crises. The widening gap between the resources and the needs of these cities is the cause of international concern with Third World urbanization.

A World Bank report articulates this dilemma in the following terms:

> What most distinguishes the current urban problems of the developing countries is their scale and intensity. The severity of the problems reflects primarily the rapidity of overall population growth and acute shortage of resources with which to equip the additions of urban populations [3].

In order to appreciate the magnitude of the Third World's urban problems, a few key statistics may be examined. Out of eight million inhabitants of metropolitan Calcutta in 1971, 5.3 million (67 percent) lived in squatter and slum communities [4]. About 75 percent of Ibadan's, and 60 percent of Bogota's residents were living in slums in 1971. Karachi, Seoul, Jakarta, Cairo, Bombay, are not faring much better. According to the estimates of the United Nations about 25-40 percent of residents in these cities live in squalid conditions. These figures convey a more vivid account of the living conditions in these cities if they are converted into absolute numbers. Such computations reveal that Calcutta had a backlog of almost a million houses. About half a million people in Ibadan were making do without such elementary urban facilities as piped water, toilets, and paved streets. And these shortfalls are mere physical manifestations of urban problems. Employment, health, welfare, old age security, freedom from tyranny, and human rights are equally non-existent in these cities. A glimpse of the life in a Third World city is provided by an account of Cairo's situation by the Prime Minister of Egypt. On a tour of the city, he discovered: ". . . a forty percent failure in street lighting, rat infested refuse heaps, and overflowing sewers, pavements blocked by rubble, at one large hospital no running water, and reports of nurses being beaten by doctors" [5]. If conditions now are unacceptable to meet the basic needs in cities such as Calcutta, Karachi, and Cairo, what will it be like in a decade or so when their populations would have multiplied two to four times! This thought brings forth a feeling of alarm and a sense of impending catastrophe. It is not an issue any more that the cities of the Third World are in desparate straits. The question is how and why they have come to this fate. Some known answers to this question are briefly discussed below.

TWO VIEWS OF THE CRISIS

Third World cities have been extensively discussed and documented. There are two distinct streams of literature about Third World urbanism. One originates from city planners, administrators and other professionals of practical bent. Usually their writings are sponsored by an international agency of some kind. The United Nations alone had published 950 documents on building, housing, and city planning before even the outpourings from the HABITAT Conference (1976). The World Bank has come late into the field of urban development, yet its list of publications on housing and city planning already runs into scores of titles. Such reports and books present fairly reliable accounts of the poverty and misery in the Third World but are usually deficient in identifying reasons for the existence of these conditions. Generally the mood in this literature is gloomy about the present situation but eternally optimistic in suggesting solutions. There is also a tendency to examine Third World problems in the current idiom. Thus in the late sixties, when urban renewal was the main instrument of city planning, urban problems were attributed to decaying city cores. By the mid-seventies, sites and services programmes became favourites; squatters emerged as the cause of the Third World's urban crisis.

A second stream of urban literature emerges from the labours of academics and researchers. Geertz, McGee, Abu-Lughod, Friedmann, Santos are a few of the prominent contemporary figures in this stream [6]. Their line of inquiry is characterized by ideological and methodological skirmishes, and their writings range from ethnographic accounts of individual cities, to Marxian interpretations of the urban phenomenon. Some very exciting and discerning concepts have come out of these intellectual pursuits, such as the culture of poverty, urban dualism, marginality, dependence, etc. This literature is both rich and prolific. A not-so-recent review essay on Third World urbanism lists 450 titles under references [7]. On one point the professional and academic literature seems to agree that Third World cities have monumental problems. The idiom of crisis is not much disputed in any of the two streams of literature. They diverge from each other in the identification of causes and in judgements about the severity of the crisis. The official literature is more alarmist, but also, as Myrdal says, incurably optimistic (if only those countries would listen to the advice being offered!) [8]. The academic productions are more profound, often pointing to national and international factors complicating (or causing) the urban crisis, but usually devoid of workable strategies to alleviate these conditions. However, one fact is indisputable: that cities of the Third World have become intriguing and challenging phenomena for analysis, and they present colossal problems both for theoreticians and policymakers. At this point, let us briefly explore the context of these problems.

THE CONTEXT OF THE URBAN CRISIS

When 30 to 50 percent of a city's population lacks clean water or adequate shelter, it is a situation of crisis by norms of human survival and decency. Such conditions become all the more unacceptable if Hilton hotels, superhighways, suburban villas and Wimpy bars continue to multiply, while piped water or public transport remain in shambles. The cities of the Third World are not afflicted with inaction and absence of developmental activity. This point deserves to be noted because much of the literature originating from the aid-agencies tends to convey the image that little or nothing has been done to develop these cities. The facts do not bear out this assumption. These cities have not suffered from a lack of developmental efforts or planning and management initiatives.

Most of these cities have the appearance of a gigantic construction site. There are boulevards being cut through shanty towns, airports being expanded, skyscrapers growing up, and trenches being dug to put in water, sewerage or telephone lines. The experts from the World Bank or aid-agencies of the western countries are to be found in these cities, advising on traffic control, preparing master plans, computerizing local accounts, drafting legislations for property taxation, installing modern management systems, and so on. Almost every 'modern' institution and programme finds its way into the Third World, be it family planning campaigns, industrial research laboratories, atomic energy agencies, institutes of appropriate technology, or whatever else happens to be the fashion of the day. Most of this developmental activity has been promoted, aided (materially or conceptually) and applauded by the international agencies. Individual entrepreneurship is equally manifest in these cities. The poor manage to build themselves shelter, even if it does not meet housing standards. Millions have managed to scrape marginal livings through hawking, back yard manufacturing, recycling rubbish, etc. In almost every large Third World city, literally hundreds of thousands of new houses, streets and workshops have been built by the ordinary people, while the local development agencies were busy looking after the welfare of the privileged.

So despite these gigantic efforts, the results are disappointing, particularly in terms of the quality of life. Programmes are implemented and chalked up as successes in annual reports, yet the overall situation remains unaffected. New public institutions and organizations emerge, but few tangible results are visible. Administrative reforms are carried out, but bureaucratic inertia and corruption continue to increase. It is typically a situation where the more things change the more they remain the same: a phenomenon of changing parts but persistent system. Does this mean that these cities are in a state of chaos as many observers seem to think? Let us turn briefly to this question.

ORDER AND CHAOS IN THIRD WORLD CITIES

The idiom of crisis used in describing Third World cities tends to foster an image of pervasive chaos and disorder. This image is sustained by journalistic accounts and travellers' tales. Almost every newspaper reader (in the west) is likely to be familiar with accounts of buses bulging with chickens and commuters, telephones which maintain eerie silence, electricity that 'blacks out' at peak hours, traffic that observes no rules of the road, hospitals which are littered with garbage, and so on. These are typical descriptions of a Third World city. Foreign observers often find little order or reason in these situations. The civic life appears to be chaotic and unbearable. These conditions are undeniable. Yet life in these cities does have another side.

Third World cities are homes to millions of people. Hundreds of thousands converge on them every year from villages, with hopes of finding better living conditions. All this humanity could not be merely a rabble. Many of these cities are thriving centres of learning, arts and sciences. The point is that these are vibrant, pulsating and even innovative places in their own way. Such places could not be merely conglomerations of disorganized humanity. There is order and regularity; an order that may exact heavy social costs, yet order it is. The paradox of invisible order and visible chaos has not been acknowledged in the literature on Third World urbanism. For example, on the surface, the traffic in Tehran or Calcutta may look chaotic, but there are local rules of the road which escape a casual observer. In Tehran or Calcutta, one does not drive by traffic signals or by obligations to yield, but one drives by rules of precedence, i.e., who ever gets into a road space first proceeds first. To a local driver this order is obvious. This order may not be efficient or just, but that is another matter. The existence of an order cannot be denied. Thus, the first task for a researcher of a Third World city is to uncover the indigenous order and to outline its evolving form. Only by knowing the structure of a local social order can one begin to predict and direct the change.

THE PUZZLE

The foregoing brief discussion should dispel two common assumptions: first, that Third World cities are in a state of chaos; second, that they have not developed, and have suffered from public and private neglect. There is no basis for these assumptions on which Third World cities are generally judged. These cities manifest sustained and extensive developmental activity, yet their problems are multiplying geometrically. On questioning the validity of these assumptions, the focus of an inquiry in Third World urbanization shifts to the issue: why these cities are so burdened with problems despite extensive development

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