

Introductory Note

Part I brought together materials on socioeconomic space and its transformations in the process of development. This space is not Perroux's "trivial" space of physical distance but the elastic space of human interactions where proximity and distance are functions of transportation and communication technologies, of culture, languages, and institutions, and of economic complementarities. Within this space, cities play a preeminent role as the nodal points in its structure, as the holders of power, and as the seedbeds of change. They are also seats of learning, engines of production, and confluences of power and control. In developed countries, which are predominantly urban societies, the cities relate primarily each to each; but developing countries are usually dual societies, where vast hinterlands are dominated by one or a few urban centers.

In view of their importance, we have devoted a special section to the role of cities in national development. Our central interest is the phenomenon of urbanization and the structuring of socioeconomic space by systems of cities rather than specific phenomena internal to cities. The six chapters that follow consequently respond primarily to questions on the role of cities in national development and attendant policies.

The brunt of several of these selections may be termed the confounding of accepted ideas about cities (that they become less efficient as they grow in size, that they lure migrants to conditions unfortunate to themselves and to others, that developing countries are overurbanized). Other common beliefs about urbanization, not represented in our selections for reasons of space, are also being challenged. They include the association of alienation with urban conditions, the morbidity of dense concentrations of population, and the reduction of agricultural production because of urban growth. Our selection of these pieces reflects a judgment on the quality of this research if not a conclusion about the validity of its findings and our opinion that most readers of this volume will already be familiar with the more commonly held beliefs and may find it interesting to have them challenged.

Robert Redfield and Milton Singer provide a sweeping historical perspective of "the part played by cities in the development, decline, and transformation of culture" (chapter 16). They are particularly concerned with the role of cities as moral, religious, and intellectual centers as distinct from their role as organizers of production and consumption, and wonder whether, in developing countries, cities can perform the former as well as the latter role.

Toshio Sanuki provides extraordinary documentation on the role of

information in the national system of cities based on Japanese data (chapter 17), following the stimulating original ideas of Richard L. Meier.¹ Although the details of Sanuki's analysis are not yet available, the regularity of the relations he displays is astounding. The implications he draws for policy are worth pondering, particularly as there is almost universal agreement that developed countries are now entering a new period, variously called a "service economy" or a "postindustrial society," based much more on information and social organization than on the mechanical aspects of material production. It may be observed that although there is almost universal agreement that this phenomenon is taking place, researchers seem to be tied hand and foot as to the urbanizing implications of this phenomenon and its policy correlates.

N. V. Sovani undertakes a critical exploration of the common idea that developing countries are "overurbanized" and concludes that there is no evidence for this assumption (chapter 18). In an analogous chapter, William Alonso examines the proposition that large metropolitan centers have grown beyond their level of efficiency, and he concludes that the evidence does not show this (chapter 19). Further, he expands the conception of the size of cities to include their proximity to other centers of population and concludes that "big and small must be qualified in their setting: whereas it may be quite good to be smaller in a dense setting, it may be quite necessary to be quite big in an isolated one. Policies for small and far, which are not uncommon, perhaps should be small and near, and big and far."

Joan Nelson looks at the political consequences of accelerated urban migration in newly industrializing countries (chapter 20). Does the apparent inability to absorb most of the incoming migrants productively forebode a period of threatening radicalization and political upheaval? A review of the literature fails to support this common contention. Nelson concludes, however, that the growing size of the urban proletariat and subproletariat may attract the interest of certain political groups in organizing and tapping the potential powers of the poor. The challenge, according to the author, is how governments will respond to the concrete and normally moderate demands of the dispossessed without sacrificing other development objectives.

John Friedmann and Flora Sullivan take a closer look at urban employment in developing countries (chapter 21). They propose a descriptive model of the labor market, as well as hypotheses concerning equilibrium unemployment, the pressure to subsistence in the urban economy, and the proletarianization of the urban labor force. A set of far-reaching proposals for policy conclude this chapter.

¹Richard L. Meier, *A Communications Theory of Urban Growth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1962).