

MAX M. HOFER: *Entwicklung und Verstädterung*. Zürich: Verlag der Fachvereine, 1978. 230 pages, DM 20.-

For some time past social scientists, economists, architects, urban planners and international organizations have perceived the complex problems of the rapid urbanization process in the Third World. In the meanwhile, the disciplines involved in investigating the effects of this process have produced a deluge of technical literature. A further study entitled "Entwicklung und Verstädterung" (Development and Urbanization) was published by the Swiss architect Max M. Hofer in 1978. Because of its self-willed, critical, complex and interdisciplinary way of representation, and the fact that general analyses of this important field of research in the German language are very rare, the study deserves a special appreciation.

The first section of the tripartite study is concerned with general problems and functions of development policies in underdeveloped countries. The normative premise of the author is his claim of "solidarity with the underprivileged of the world".

The study under review differs from the majority of literature on urbanization, in that it does not tackle the problem of explosive urbanization and its social, economical and political consequences as an isolated part of developmental problems. On the contrary, the author tries to elucidate the complex interrelations and dependencies between the general development problems of these countries and the process of rapid urbanization.

The centre-periphery-model of Galtung serves as a methodical framework for the role underdeveloped countries play in the international structure of dependence. The problem of urbanization is also seen within this theoretical model. The urban agglomerations in developing countries are comprised as centers, which are more closely connected through their political and economical elite with the western capitals than with their own hinterland. These urban centers in which most of the countries' political, economical, social and cultural activities and facilities are concentrated exist as islands of modernity at the expense of the periphery. The latter consists of the agrarian hinterland and the marginal groups (ethnic minorities, unemployed, slums and squatter settlements).

In the second part of his analysis Hofer investigates the process of urbanization as seen in ten South- and Southeast-Asian cities. The cities analyzed are Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Dacca, Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Chandigarh.

In keeping with the theoretical reflections in the first chapter of his study, the author examines the individual cases in the context of the general development situation in the region of South- and Southeast-Asia and of the respective countries.

Besides the demographical dimension of the urbanization process, the author's interests are primarily directed towards the social problems deriving from the desolate housing conditions in the cities. In his case studies of Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Dacca and Bombay Hofer analyzes the extent of slum formation and the growth of illegal squatter settlements as well as the urban planning activities set up to eradicate the inhumane living conditions of a growing percentage of the urban population. Detailed tables give complex data elucidating the structure of the slum areas and squatter settlements under study. Excluding Singapore and possibly Hong Kong, the numerous public housing and slum improvement programs are unable to solve the existing problems. Slum clearing and low-cost housing are not implemented in accordance with the social and economic needs of the population concerned and do not benefit their target groups. Officially organized resettlement programs undertaken without consultation with and the participation of those concerned, thus constraining them to live in peripheral sites or in newly established satellite towns after relocation, have destructive effects on the modest successes of self-help groups in many cases. With method and skill the author describes single urban projects in the cities studied to show the reader, by the analysis and description of urban micro structures, the distressful and inhumane living conditions of a numerically large percentage of the urban population.

The third part of the study contains an appendix comprising a list of sources, a glossary of special and technical terms and a list of international organizations.

Apart from the theoretical reflections on relations between the urbanization process and general problems of underdevelopment, the value of this book consists, above all, in its empirical complexity. A host of data, tables, graphs, diagrams, plans and illustrations give the reader an insight into the urgency of solving the explosive urbanization process. Gratifying is the fact that the data presented are based on recent statistics. In this context should be mentioned the author's critical position towards the available statistical sources, which very often are founded only on forecasts and estimations or are politically manipulated, and sometimes differ considerably from source to source.

The self-willed manner of representation, combining as it does an empirical, scientific analysis with vivid impressions of the living conditions in the cities studied is the real characteristic of this book. The author achieves his aim of presenting genuine and critical information as a

contribution to creating insight into problems of development, especially those of urbanization. The appended glossary, the definitions of important technical terms and the fascinating manner of representation make this book readable not only for experts in development studies but also for the layman.

The only reservations apply to the uneven quality of the individual case studies. The analyses of Bombay and Dacca, and particularly of Hong Kong, Manila and Singapore are commendable; whereas the others are neither as complex nor come properly to grips with the empirical material.

Further more, the arrangement of certain points does not seem consistent to the reviewer.

In spite of these criticisms, Hofer's study of the urbanization process in South- and Southeast Asia should be read not only by experts, but also by everybody interested in the problems of underdeveloped countries.

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