

REVIEW ARTICLE OF:

URBANIZATION AND URBAN GROWTH IN THE CARIBBEAN

by Malcolm Cross  
Cambridge University Press. 1979

For any student of Caribbean affairs the title of Malcolm Cross's book is one to whet the appetite. Outside of Colin Clarke's various studies of Kingston, Jamaica, and a few research monographs there has been very little written on this topic, and certainly not promising the scope suggested here.

Unfortunately our hopes are soon dashed. This is not a bad book in many ways, but it is certainly not a book of any description dealing with urbanization and urban growth. Within the framework of the normal disciplines this should be a geographical study, and it is in this field that Mr. Cross is at his weakest, as is demonstrated almost at once in his introduction.

His first task is in describing and defining his area of study. 'Lava icebergs' is no way to describe the volcanic Windward Islands, and Mt. Pelee certainly does not 'tower' in any fashion over St. Pierre, even 'restlessly'! It is also hard to imagine what was 'quixotic' about the 1902 eruption.

On Barbados the description is really appalling. Quite how a 'flat featureless plain' can rise to 1100' (the height of Mr. Hillary in central Barbados) certainly needs some explaining. Geologically his description is also nonsense, for Barbados is in fact a breached coral cap on top of various marine sediments, which is exactly the opposite of Mr. Cross's own statement.

The exclusion of the Bahamas from the region of study is not surprising, few writers seem to know whether to include it. It is, however, inexcusable among them in most cases, and also here, given the book's purpose. It is worth considering this issue in some detail.

First, the Bahamian economy is based on tourism, which is the single most important Caribbean force today. The Bahamas is a member of Caricom, contributes to the University of the West Indies, and has a U.W.I. campus. It belongs to many other Caribbean regional organizations.

Physically it is related to the Turks and Caicos Islands and to other shallow banks islands like Barbuda and Anguilla which are presumably included. It is a scattered nation posing many problems of equable development such as are also faced by the other Caribbean nations, and its archipelagic nature is not unique, being present also in the Virgin Islands and the Grenadines, for instance.

It has not had the same history of agricultural plantation development, but it has had plantations in the past and is still an important agricultural producer. The Cayman Islands would not qualify, among others, if this was the criterion.

Freeport-Lucaya is the prototype new town of the Caribbean, a unique experience at present, but a lesson for all future developments and already being duplicated at various scales elsewhere, such as for a tourist city in St. Kitts.

Nassau is a classic example of the Caribbean city-port. It has a well documented historic growth, and its structure and evolution are well exhibited, in fact to such an extent that it would be an excellent model with which to explain many of the forces present in other West Indian towns and cities but in which they are not so well developed.

Socially the mix of population, especially of Turks and Caicos Islanders, Haitians and Jamaicans, makes it typical of the mixed societies found throughout the region.

The omission of Nassau and the Bahamas reveals a fundamental lack of knowledge of regional history and social development that bodes ill for the rest of the book. This view is regrettably reinforced by Table I, reproduced here with one (Table II) used by the reviewer for the last two years, and taken from the most readily available sources. Why was nothing better produced?

Leaving the introduction much about the book is interesting, and one supposes that Mr. Cross is really an economic and social historian somewhat out of his depth with geography, and, as it appears later, with political economy (Chapter 7). (He is noted as being a lecturer in sociology at the University of Surrey, England).

There is a useful synopsis on social diversity (somewhat reflective of David Lowenthal's exemplary study — Professor Lowenthal is a geographer!), and the section on Urbanization and Urban Growth points up some crucial issues. The chapter on theories of urbanization and dependence is good and interesting, and chapter five gives some coverage on social structure in cities. Despite this, little of the book is on the subject matter of the title and it even appears that the author does not know the difference between 'Urbanization' (the process of increasing the proportion of the population living in urban areas) and 'Urban Growth' (the growth of urban areas whether urbanization is present or not), as he uses them interchangeably. The absence of noted authors in this field in the bibliography is the probable explanation — Peter Hall, Ceri Peach, Brian Robson, Harold Carter, and Brian Berry, for instance.

Descriptive and misleading errors abound. On page 33, Antigua is quoted as largely dependent on sugar — none has been cut since 1970! Many modern developments are ignored, such as sea island cotton in Barbados, and maize/beef in Antigua. Land lease in Jamaica has not been a notable advance in agricultural land use, although it may one day become so. The use of estimates for 1970 makes rural and urban population figures in tables 1.2 and 1.3 very misleading, and particularly annoying when it is realised that the 1970/71 census data has been available for at least five years.

Overall the book is a fair social and economic study of post-war trends related to historic antecedents and applied to urban social structures. The consideration of the Spanish speaking nations is especially rewarding. As a study of urban growth and urbanization it fails through its totally inadequate knowledge of the geography of the region and the literature of the subject. Urbanization is merely, and only, a backdrop to the rest of the text.

Neil E. Sealey

TABLE I (M. Cross)

Commonwealth Caribbean (1970)

Jamaica	1,848,512
Trinidad and Tobago	938,506
Guyana	701,718
Barbados	236,891
Belize	120,670
Leeward Islands	
Antigua	64,794
Montserrat	11,498
St. Kitts/Nevis	45,327
Virgin Islands (British)	9,765
Windward Islands	
Dominica	70,214
Grenada	93,622
St. Lucia	100,583
St. Vincent	86,944
Bahamas	169,000
Cayman Islands	10,087
Turks and Caicos Islands	5,584

US Virgin Islands	71,000
Cuba	8,663,000
Dominican Republic (1970)	4,011,589
Haiti	4,856,000
Puerto Rico (1970)	4,856,000
French Antilles	
Martinique	352,000
Guadeloupe	339,000
Netherlands Antilles	220,000
Surinam	403,000
French Guiana	41,000
Total	26,182,337

Source: Commonwealth Caribbean, 1970; Dominican Republic, 1970; Puerto Rico, 1970; other estimates for 1970 from Davis, 1969.

TABLE II (N. Sealey)

NATIONAL AND URBAN  
POPULATIONS IN THE WEST INDIES

CUBA		ANTIGUA	
1972 — 9.2M		1975 — 70,000	
Havana (1970)	1,735,000	St. Johns	13,000
Holguin	422,300	Also	
		Barbuda	1,000
S. Clara	331,600	BARBADOS	
Santiago de Cuba	276,000	1974 — 245,000	
Cienfuegos	225,600		
Camaguey	196,850	Bridgetown	88,000
Matanzas	131,500		
		ST. VINCENT	
		1975 — 100,500	

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

1970 - 4.0M

Santo Domingo	823,000
Santiago de los Caballeros	351,700
San Cristobal	360,300
La Vega	295,000
Duarte	214,000
Sanchez Ramirez	145,276
El Seibo	144,500
Puerto Plata-	192,170
Peravia	135,000
Espailat	141,350
Maria Trinidad Sanchez	135,000
Azua	102,400
Barahona	102,500

HAITI

1975 - 2.1M

Port au Prince	458,700
Cap Haitien (1970)	30,000
Les Cayes	14,000
Gonaives	14,000
Jeremie	12,000
Port de Paix	6,500

JAMAICA

1975 - 2.1M

Kingston 117,400

Kingstown 22,000

Also Grenadines

ST. LUCIA

1975 - 114,000

Castries 45,000

DOMINICA

1976 - 78,000

Roseau 10,150

(Includes 500 Caribs all of mixed blood)

ST. KITTS

1976 - 36,000

Basseterre 15,000

NEVIS 12,000

Charlestown 1,500

ANGUILLA 6,500

GRENADA

1975 - 108,000

St. George 30,000

Also Grenadines

GUYANA

1977 - 818,000

Georgetown (1975) 108,000

(Includes 40,000 Amerindians)

BELIZE

1975 - 150,000

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

1974 - 1.07M

Tobago (1971) 39,000

Port of Spain	62,700
San Fernando	37,000
Arima	11,600

BAHAMAS

1978 - 225,220

Nassau (1970)	71,500
Freeport	15,300

PUERTO RICO

1976 - 3.2M

San Juan	471,400
Cayamon	180,800
Ponce	176,000
Carolina	142,700
Caguas	111,600
Mayaguez	93,900

U.S. VIRGIN IS.

1970 - 63,200

St. Thomas	29,600
Charlotte Amalie	12,370

St. Croix	32,000
Christiansted	3,000
Frederiksted	1,500

Belize City	39,250
Belmopan	40,000

(This is the new capital since 1970, a new town commenced 1967 and moved 50m inland from Belize City)

BRITISH VIRGIN IS.

1975 - 10,030

Tortola	8,900
Road Town	3,500

(Also Virgin Gorda, Jost van Dyke and Aneuada.)

MARTINIQUE

1971 - 342,000

Fort de France	97,000
----------------	--------

GUADELOUPE

1974 - 307,000

Pointe a Pitre	29,500
Basse Terre	15,700

FRENCH GUIANA

1971 - 49,000

Cayenne	24,500
---------	--------

(3,000 Tribal Amerindians included)  
Also Les Saintes 3,300.  
St. Barthelemy 2,300  
both these still inhabited the white descendents of Normans and Bretons who came in the Mid 17th century

St. Martin	5,000
------------	-------

This is two thirds of the island shared

St. John 1,700

SURINAM

1976 - 414,000

Paramaribo 151,500

(39,000 Bush Negroes, 10,200  
Native Amerindians)

CURACAO

1974 - 155,000

Willemstad

1974 - 62,000

Also St. Maarten 10,300

Bonaire 8,400

St. Eustatius 1,421

Saba 950

With the Dutch St. Maarten

Desirade 1,600

Marie Galante 15,000

These 5 are dependencies of  
Guadeloupe

TURKS AND CAICOS IS.

1970 - 5,675

6 inhabited islands: Gd Turk 2,500

Caicos 2,775

Salt Cay 400

CAYMAN IS.

1978 - 15,300

Includes: Grand Cayman (1970) 8,750

George Town 3,800

West Bay 2,700

Cayman Brac 1,300

Little Cayman 20