



Pampa de Comas barriada, Lima, in 1962
Photo Alberto Rojas. Courtesy JNV

Lima barrios today

The unaided self-help solution: a demonstration of the common people's initiative and the potential of their resources

Stages of settlement: invaders—squatters—city dwellers

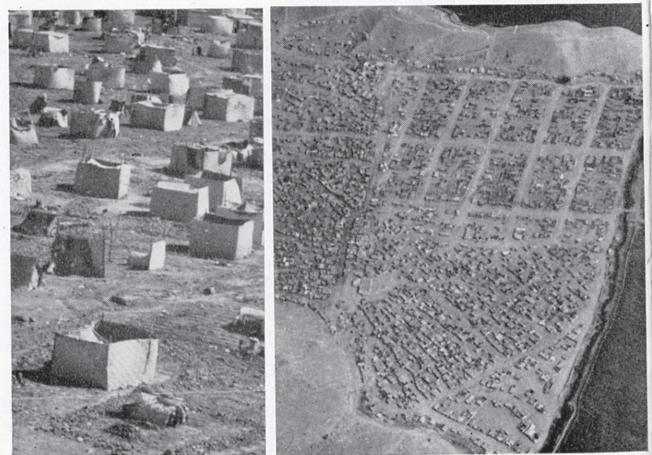
Below: air views of first stage of settlement of barriada land after invasion by squatters. The huts (left), of cane matting and poles, are a first declaration of land occupation
Photos John Turner

Pampa de Comas, the built-up area in the photograph above, is a squatter settlement with a present population of about 30,000. It is part of the Caraballo group of barrios which has a total population of about 100,000. Comas was the first to be established in this area; the initial invasion was carried out in 1957 by a group of families evicted from a slum in the centre of Lima in order to make room for an office and apartment block which, as a matter of fact, is still largely unlet.

No positive government intervention was made until 1961 (this is described on page 377) and the entire development was organized and carried out by spontaneously formed associations of lower-income blue- and white-collar workers along with their families in much the same way as that described by Mangin on page 366. The majority of the dwellings in Comas are in the second and third stages of development. There are no public utilities (though these are now being installed) but there are a few schools and other basic community facilities.

The un-built-up area in the lower part of the photograph is a legal, commercially financed, speculative development complete with all public utilities and with made-up roads.

Pampa de Comas is typical of the Peruvian squatter settlements in which 8-9 thousand people live at the time of writing. Other types are illustrated in the photographs opposite. On page 365 we show the type which has grown on the hillsides near the centre of Lima in much the same way as the 'ranchos', 'callampas' and 'favelas' have grown up around





Caracas, Valparaíso and Rio de Janeiro respectively. Though all barrios are without services, or were so until very recently, most are capable of considerable improvement and will, eventually, become integral parts of the cities they adjoin, as is already happening on a large scale in Lima itself. Some, however, are slums that cannot be improved owing to their extreme disorderliness and overcrowding.

If 'housing' consists of three distinct elements—land, shelter and utilities, Pampa de Comas goes a long way towards solving the problem. The family has a plot of land—normally about 2500 sq. ft.—and has at least a temporary shelter, or a half-built house, either of which is an improvement on the slum the family occupied before moving out to the barriada, and both of which will, eventually, be converted into a proper house built of brick and concrete. But, except for a deficient, part-time and extremely expensive supply of electric current from some neighbour with a generator, it has no laid-on services at all, the streets are unpaved and even interrupted with huge boulders and great natural depressions, there is no garbage or sewage disposal (but, fortunately, very little garbage to dispose of and in most barrios the majority use latrines) and community facilities are in even shorter supply than in the city itself. But, if there is a good chance that these deficiencies will be made good, the family will wait. For the time being a major part of its problem has been solved, at least to its members' satisfaction: the family has carved a place out for itself (literally if it owns a hilly site), it has the security of a *de facto* property, it has a better and healthier shelter than before and, usually, it has a bigger savings margin, as well as something to invest in.

Visually the barrios are dramatic, especially if seen from a helicopter, but otherwise they are shocking to the outsider; the ordinary inhabitant, on the other hand, has a different point of view: he sees it as the architect sees his building in the delicate stages of its birth—not as a present mess and, for the uninitiated, an apparent chaos, but rather as the promise of things to come, and, above all, as an achievement whose existence is self-justifying and whose appearance is irrelevant.

The sheer achievement of these 'barrios' is astonishing; the area shown in the map surpasses, in built-up area and population, the second city of Peru, Arequipa, and not one house is more than 15 years old. The vast majority of the builders are ordinary working-class families with, by Western standards, extremely low incomes and very little opportunity of any kind. Yet they manage to produce these planned, though admittedly primitively designed, areas, on a city scale, and build tens of thousands of acceptable permanent structures—more than has been or even could be, at present, provided for them by the State or commercial enterprise. And, in most barrios, the inhabitants have also laid the foundations for a strong community organization. Socially and quantitatively, even if not architecturally speaking, the barrios are, undoubtedly, the most effective solution yet offered to the problem of urbanization in Peru.

New temporary invasion April, May 1963. Approx. 1000 families

El Carmen, invasion Jan. 1961. Approx. 2000 families

Señor de los Milagros, invasion Oct. 1959. Approx. 2000 families

Santa Rosa y Uchumayo, invasion Oct. 1959. Approx. 970 families

Pampa de Comas and others, invasion Sept. 1958. Approx. 5900 families

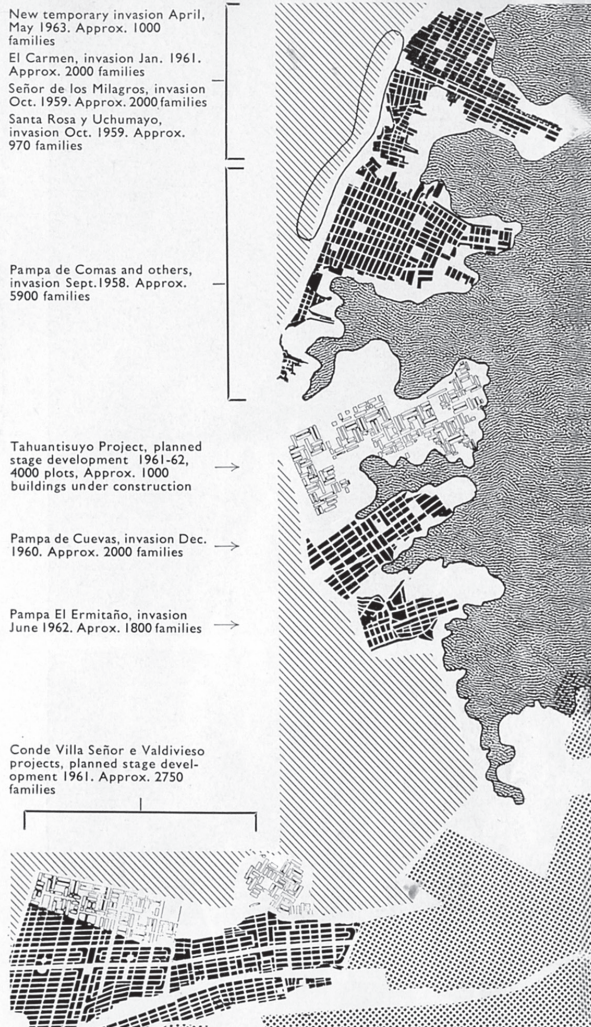
Tahuantinsuyo Project, planned stage development 1961-62, 4000 plots, Approx. 1000 buildings under construction

Pampa de Cuevas, invasion Dec. 1960. Approx. 2000 families

Pampa El Ermitaño, invasion June 1962. Approx. 1800 families

Conde Villa Señor e Valdivieso projects, planned stage development 1961. Approx. 2750 families

Martin de Porres and others, invasions 1950-52. Approx. 15,940 families



Above: map of barrios to the north of Lima (see map on page 364) showing age and population of each. Dotted area indicates fringe of city; diagonally hatched area, irrigated farmland; and dark grey area, foothills.

Below: Pampa de Cuevas, March 1962, 16 months after the initial invasion; in this case there was little delay in allocating the plots and construction is going ahead fast—the majority of the squatters have put their foundations down, at least, and many have masonry walls completed. Virtually all the roofs, and many dwellings, are of woven cane mats

Below: San Martín, April 1963, ten years after the invasion (of that particular sector). Many plots are still in the same condition as in the Pampa de Cuevas and few dwellings are even nearly finished. Close study of the designs will show that the majority follow the 'callejon' or typical slum plan (ref. Conclusions, p. 389). Until 1962 there were no public utilities in this area, but they are now being installed

Below: a typical lower-middle class street in Lima, identical with the barrios—except that most of the houses are complete, at least the ground floor, and for the public utilities and paving. This development is about 20 years old

