

## URBANIZATION SANS DEVELOPMENT?\*

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### I

#### INTRODUCTION

The 1990 Census of Population and Housing reports the country's urbanization level, i.e., the proportion of the population living in urban areas, to be 48.7 percent. In 1980, the level of urbanization had been pegged at 37.3 percent, while ten years before that, it had been at 31.8 percent. The reported 1990 figure exceeds figures of around 43 percent for the same year as projected by Pernia (1986) and Cabegin (1993). Instead, the reported 1990 level corresponds more closely to these authors' projections of 48 or 49 percent for the year 2000. What this hints is that, during the last decade, the country experienced unprecedented growth of its urban population at the expense of the rural populace, and thus achieved a high level of urbanization in a shorter period than expected. The causes for such rapid urbanization are issues addressed in this paper.

The process of urbanization can be studied from various perspectives. From a demographic standpoint, urbanization means a percent rise in urban

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population measured in terms of (1) the rate of urban population growth or the percent change in the urban population from one point in time to the next, and (2) the tempo or pace of urbanization, which represents the difference between the urban and the rural rates of population growth. A related measure is that of urban primacy, which is the ratio of the population of the largest city in a country to populations of smaller cities. Almost all recent studies of urbanization in the Philippines rely heavily on the demographic approach (e.g., Pernia 1976a, 1978; NCSO 1982b; Mejia-Raymundo 1983; Cabegin 1993). Alternatively, urbanization can be studied from a sociological perspective, whereby changes in life styles are examined as they are reflected in physical and social infrastructures concomitant with an urban way of life. This socio-cultural approach is in line with the concept of "urbanism" as proposed by Wirth (1938). The only known study of urbanization in the Philippines of recent years which attempted to simultaneously apply both the demographic and sociological approaches is that of Costello (1990).

A comprehensive understanding of the process of urbanization evidently requires that the elements of both approaches, the demographic and the sociological, be taken into account. Realizing this, the then Bureau of Census and Statistics (now the National Statistics Office or NSO) revised in 1970 the Philippine definition of urban places to include not only demographic but also social features. To the demographic characteristics such as population size and density, on which the previous Philippine definition had relied, the current definition adds the presence of specific physical and social infrastructures important in the Philippine cultural context such as town hall, church, cemetery and school house among other modern facilities like street pattern, highway access, and the presence of commercial or manufacturing establishments.

The validity of the current definition of urban places has never been questioned by Philippine social scientists. One probable reason for this is that many studies which distinguished between populations living in urban and rural places have yielded significant behavioral differences between them. Is this faith in the Philippine definition of *urban* still justified when

its application yields an unexpected and unprecedented acceleration in the country's pace of urbanization? This question arises because, historically, rapid urbanization occurs in periods of social and economic growth. During the 1980s, neither social nor economic development in the Philippines has shown unexpected or unprecedented acceleration.

This paper attempts to take a closer look at what the Philippine Census defines as "urban." The first point to be emphasized in this connection is that the current definition specifies characteristics of urban *places*, not urban people. People are considered urban because they reside in urban places which are assumed to influence the behavior of their inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Expressed differently, when a locality is classified as urban, it is taken for granted that its residents are also urban. What this paper investigates is the character of urban places, more specifically, of administrative units such as municipalities or barangays to which the Philippine definition of urban is applied. What the paper questions is the ability of many such places, especially those that recently have been declared "urban," to change their inhabitants into urbanized people.

## II

### DATA AND METHODS

For the examination of urban barangays and their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, this study relies on two sets of 1990 census files made available by NSO:

- (1) a barangay file containing information on the population size of every barangay as well as its classification as either urban or rural, and
- (2) a file containing data on barangay facilities, services, economic establishments, and predominant type of labor force (i.e., agricultural or nonagricultural).

1. The relationship between urban places and people is a reciprocal one: urban places urbanize the behavior of their residents, and urbanized residents tend to enhance the urban environment.

For analyzing stratum changes of barangays and their populations from rural to urban between 1980 and 1990, barangay information on stratum and number of residents in 1980 extracted from publications of the 1980 Census was added to the 1990 files. The matching of the 1990 barangay information with that of 1980 proved to be a difficult task. On account of frequent renamings, splittings, or mergings of barangays between 1980 and 1990 — processes not adequately documented in publicly accessible census records — only 93 percent of the barangays enumerated in 1990 could be matched with corresponding data for 1980.<sup>2</sup> The matched barangays contain approximately 96 percent of the country's total 1990 population. For another 30 barangays with population information for 1980 and 1990, no socioeconomic data could be found. As a consequence, they likewise had to be excluded from the following analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Data analysis proceeds in two steps. First, the growth of the urban population between 1980 and 1990 is examined. Conceptually, urban growth may arise from

- (1) natural increase, i.e., the difference between the number of births and deaths;
- (2) net migration or the difference between the number of immigrants and outmigrants; and
- (3) reclassification of barangays from rural to urban. Because this study is limited to census data, a decomposition of urban growth into the

2. Data for 1980 were obtained from the 1980 Census Special Report Nos. 2 and 4. For two provinces, Eastern and Northern Samar, some pages of the census booklets were misprinted and do not contain the correct constituent barangays. The largest proportion of barangays that cannot be traced in the census records of both 1980 and 1990 (28 percent) is located in the most recently created region of the country: the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

3. In this study, the census data of 1980 and 1990 are accepted as is. No attempts have been made to assess their reliability. That there are doubts regarding the latter is indicated by the fact that, so far, NSO has issued three editions of the 1990 barangay file and is still in the process of correcting some of the socioeconomic information already published in the 1990 Census reports and computer files.

three above components cannot be undertaken.<sup>4</sup> The available barangay data permit only the measurement of change resulting from reclassification. Natural increase *plus* net migration is treated as residual.

The second stage of the analysis consists of an examination of barangay characteristics for the purpose of establishing the degree of urbanism at the barangay level. On the basis of urban criteria established by the census, comparisons are made between: (1) urban and rural barangays, and (2) old urban barangays (since 1980) and new ones (classified only in 1990). Accordingly, the paper presents the results of the analysis in two phases. An examination of the pattern and components of urban growth is provided in Section III, while a detailed examination of the urban characteristics of barangays is undertaken in Section IV. Implications of the findings are discussed in the final section.

### III URBAN POPULATION GROWTH

The barangay file of the 1990 Census contains information on more than 41,000 barangays located in some 1,600 municipalities or cities. Of these barangays, about three fourths are classified as *rural*, and the rest as *urban*. In 1980, there had been 40,162 barangays, of which 19 percent were urban. If urban-rural population figures are taken at face value, then they imply that 92 percent of all 1980 to 1990 intercensal population growth was produced by the urban population, and that the rural population had stagnated or, in some areas, even declined (Table 1). While such a situation is not impossible, it is rather unlikely.

Table 2 shows population growth rates and the number as well as percent of (matched) barangays and their populations by stratum classification in 1980 and 1990.

4. For a detailed explanation of the method of decomposing urban growth, refer to Pernia (1976b) or Cabegin (1993).

Table 1  
POPULATION GROWTH RATE BY STRATUM: PHILIPPINES, 1980-1990

	1980 Census		1990 Census		1980-1990 Pop. Growth (%)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total	Ave. Annual
	Total Population	48,098,460	100	60,559,419	100	25.9
Urban Population	17,943,897	37	29,439,930	49	64.1	5.0
Rural Population	30,154,563	63	31,119,489	51	3.2	0.3

Table 2  
POPULATION GROWTH RATE AND DISTRIBUTION OF BARANGAYS AND POPULATION,  
BY STRATUM CLASSIFICATION: PHILIPPINES, 1980-1990<sup>a</sup>

Classification Status	Stratum In		Barangays in 1990		Population in 1990		Average Annual Growth Rate (In percent)
	1980	1990	Number	Percent	Number <sup>b</sup>	Percent	
Old urban	urban	urban	7,391	19.0	22.4	38.5	2.4
New urban	rural	urban	2,462	6.3	6.1	10.4	2.7
De-urbanized	urban	rural	117	0.3	0.2	0.4	1.5
Rural	rural	rural	28,948	74.4	29.5	50.7	1.6

<sup>a</sup>Matched 1980-90 barangays only.

<sup>b</sup>In millions.

When populations are disaggregated by their 1980-1990 stratum classification, it becomes evident that growth of the 1980 rural population was not as negligible as the data in Table 1 seemingly imply. The population that remained rural in 1990 experienced an annual growth rate of 1.6 percent, while that which was reclassified to urban had grown by 2.7 percent annually. Figures in Table 2 further indicate that about six million persons in 1990 resided in urban barangays which, ten years earlier, had been classified as rural. When we apply this figure to the total increase of the urban population between the Census of 1980 and that of 1990 (11 million), then about *one half* of all urban population growth during the 1980s was the result of barangay reclassification from rural to urban.<sup>5</sup> What this means is that the high level of urbanization attained in 1990 is not the result primarily of natural increase or migration into the 'old' urban barangays but the consequence of the reclassification of a considerable number of erstwhile rural barangays into the urban stratum. Moreover, it is the fastest-growing barangays that were most likely reclassified into urban.

In Table 3, urban population growth is broken down by growth component and region. While for the country as a whole, barangay reclassification accounted for 56 percent of all intercensal urban population growth, the contribution of reclassification to the growth of regional urban populations varied from 48 percent in the Central Visayas to 90 percent in Western Mindanao.<sup>6</sup> With respect to persons residing in reclassified barangays in 1990, the regions bordering Metro Manila (Central Luzon and Southern

5. The proportion of 1980-1990 urban population growth resulting from a reclassification of barangays is especially large when compared to Cabegin's estimate of just eight percent for the 1970-1980 period (Cabegin 1993). In estimating 'net reclassification,' however, Cabegin took into account barangays that had been reclassified from *urban* to *rural*. Because, in 1990, these de-urbanized barangays constitute a mere one percent of the 1980 urban population, their exclusion from this analysis is not believed to make a perceptible difference in the figures cited.

6. If urban growth is calculated using data for all 41,180 barangays with stratum information for 1990 and not just the 93 percent of barangays with matching census information for 1980 and 1990, then contribution of "reclassification" to urban growth is approximately 52 percent.

Table 3  
URBAN POPULATION GROWTH, BY GROWTH COMPONENT AND REGION: PHILIPPINES, 1980-1990\*

REGION	Urban Population		Total Change	Change Due to Reclassification of Barangays	% of change due to	
	1980	1990	1980-1990		Reclassification	Increase Migration
PHILIPPINES	17,722,122	28,467,844	10,745,722	6,071,808	56.5	43.5
NCR	5,856,647	7,822,425	1,965,778	0	0.0	100.0
CAR	180,412	355,034	174,622	105,929	60.7	39.3
I Ilocos	680,233	1,333,130	652,897	556,938	85.3	14.7
II Cagayan Valley	325,466	522,657	197,191	164,916	83.6	16.4
III Central Luzon	1,982,686	3,660,136	1,677,450	1,272,965	75.9	24.1
IV Southern Luzon	2,230,985	3,895,973	1,664,988	997,268	59.9	40.1
V Bicol	736,393	1,162,281	425,888	329,013	77.2	22.8



Table 3 continued

REGION	Urban Population		Total Change	Change Due to Reclassification of Barangays	% of change due to	
	1980	1990	1980-1990		Reclassification	Increased Migration
VI Western Visayas	1,262,770	1,912,387	649,617	393,364	60.6	39.4
VII Central Visayas	1,212,734	1,847,340	634,606	303,886	47.9	52.1
VIII Eastern Visayas	557,977	866,299	308,322	239,395	77.6	22.4
IX Western Mindanao	350,109	799,260	449,151	407,240	90.7	09.3
X Northern Mindanao	738,054	1,504,840	766,786	547,950	71.5	28.5
XI Southern Mindanao	1,097,735	1,984,894	887,159	509,140	57.4	42.6
XII Central Mindanao	228,665	417,023	188,358	127,689	67.8	32.8
ARMM	281,256	384,165	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

\*Population of matched 1980-90 barangays only.

Tagalog) have the biggest number, followed by Ilocos in the north, and Northern and Southern Mindanao in the south.

A scrutiny of provinces affected most by barangay reclassification from rural to urban reveals that Bataan leads with 28 percent of all its barangays, followed by Rizal with 24, Bulacan with 23, and Pampanga with 17. All of these provinces are either bordering Metro Manila or close to it. What these percentages mean becomes clearer when they are compared with the national average of reclassified barangays for all provinces, which is only *six percent*. (However, this six percent contributed more than six million people to the 11 million by which the urban population grew.) The largest number of barangays in any province that were reclassified between 1980 and 1990 is found in Pangasinan: 231 out of a total of 1,354 barangays.

If we take only the urban growth that resulted from increase, natural as well as migratory, of the 1980 urban population, then the average annual growth rate of the country's urban population for the 1980s comes down to 2.4 percent, less than half of the figure of five percent shown in Table 1. In almost half of the country's regions, average annual growth rates of the 'old' urban populations were still smaller, in some instances considerably so, as evident from Table 4.

What has been demonstrated so far is that the rapid pace of urbanization experienced by the country in the 1980s is largely the result of reclassification of barangays from rural to urban. The question that arises now is: why were so many barangays reclassified between 1980 and 1990? Can one say that, during the last decade, the process of urbanization has accelerated, i.e., more barangays acquired social and economic characteristics associated with an urban style of living?

#### IV CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN BARANGAYS

The Philippine Census definition of urban, in use for more than 20 years now, specifies a number of criteria that have to be met by a barangay in order to be considered urban. These criteria can be divided into three groups:

Table 4  
 AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATES  
 RESULTING FROM NATURAL INCREASE AND NET MIGRATION,  
 BY REGION: URBAN PHILIPPINES, 1980-1990

Region	Annual Growth Rate (In percent)
NCR	2.9
CAR	3.3
I Ilocos	1.5
II Cagayan Valley	1.1
III Central Luzon	2.0
IV Southern Luzon	2.7
V Bicol	1.4
VI Western Visayas	2.0
VII Central Visayas	2.5
VIII Western Visayas	1.3
IX Western Mindanao	1.6
X Northern Mindanao	2.9
XI Southern Mindanao	3.1
XII Central Mindanao	2.4
ARMM	n.a.

(1) population size and density, (2) facilities and services, and (3) labor force.

In explicit terms, the Philippine Census defines urbanized areas to consist of:

1. In their entirety, all cities and municipalities having a population density of at least 1,000 persons per square kilometer.

2. *Poblaciones* or central districts of municipalities and cities which have a population density of at least 500 persons per square kilometer.
3. *Poblaciones* or central districts (not included in numbers 1 and 2), regardless of the population size, but which have the following:
  - a. Street pattern, i.e., network of streets in either parallel or right-angle orientation;
  - b. At least six establishments (commercial, manufacturing, recreational and/or personal services); and
  - c. At least three of the following:
    - i. a town hall, church or chapel with religious services at least once a month;
    - ii. a public plaza, park or cemetery;
    - iii. a market place or building where trading activities are carried on at least once a week;
    - iv. a public building like school, hospital, puericulture and health center or library.
4. Barangays having at least 1,000 inhabitants which meet the conditions set forth in number 3 above, and where the occupation of the inhabitants is predominantly nonfarming or nonfishing.

All areas not falling under any of the above classification considered rural.<sup>7</sup>

The listed criteria are applied sequentially, which means that the criterion gives first preference to size and density, presumably because of the assumption that large and densely populated places will tend to also have urban socioeconomic characteristics. In general, a locality that meets the minimum density requirement of either criterion 1 or 2 is no longer evaluated on the basis of structural characteristics enumerated under criteria 3

7. National Statistics Office, 1992. *1990 Census of Population and Housing*. Report No. 3, Manila: National Statistics Office. pp. xii-xiii.

and 4.<sup>8</sup> With regards to the urban classification of *entire* cities and municipalities that meet the density criterion, the definition also takes into account the symbiotic interactions between urban centers and their surrounding barangays. Concretely, however, it should be the facilities, services and labor-force criteria which more realistically depict the urban way of living. To what extent these institutional features are in fact present in high-density localities is explored in this section.

The barangay census data allow to validate a number of census urban criteria, i.e., *first* (city or municipal density), *third* (structural factor) and *fourth* (nonagricultural labor force). It is difficult to do the same for the *second* criterion (density of poblaciones or central districts) because the data do not include explicit identifications of *poblaciones* and *central districts*, and their densities can be estimated only on the basis of barangay area estimates provided by the census field supervisor. These administrative units are identifiable only on the basis of responses to the question: "Is your barangay a part of the town/city proper, or former poblacion of the municipality, or poblacion/city district?" It is doubtful that such a complex question can elicit accurate responses from persons not very familiar with the subject matter. Furthermore, experiences have shown that area estimates provided by local residents are often guesses way off the mark.

Under the assumption that physical and social infrastructures are more precise indicators of urbanism than population density, it is worthwhile to examine facilities, services and occupational structures existing in urban barangays. This set of characteristics corresponds to the *third* and *fourth* socioeconomic prerequisites prescribed by the urban definition. The availability of other services or utilities such as electricity, community waterworks system, and communication facilities (i.e., presence of postal, telegraph, or telephone system) is incorporated in this analysis on the

8. The reasons why four municipalities, viz., Imus, Cavite; Tiaong, Quezon; Madamba, Lanao del Sur; and Datu Piang, Maguindanao, with average densities of more than 1,000 persons in 1990 are not considered entirely urban by the 1990 Census are unknown. Neither can it be explained why 117 barangays that were urban in 1980 were reclassified as rural in 1990 (refer to Table 2).

assumption that they too ought to be present in an urban environment even though they are not part of the official definition of an urban locality.

In Table 5, the 1990 urban barangays are divided into *Old* and *New* ones. 'Old' barangays are all those that the 1980 Census already classified as urban, while 'New' barangays refer to all those that had been rural in 1980 but were reclassified to urban in 1990. The last column in Table 5 represents a subset of the new urban barangays that was reclassified solely on the basis of population densities of the cities or municipalities of which they are a part (cf. census definition, criterion 1).

Given that the procedure for reclassifying barangays from rural to urban emphasizes demographic requirements more than socioeconomic ones, it is hypothesized that the percent of barangays endowed with urban socioeconomic characteristics will be lower among the new urban barangays than among the old ones. Moreover, new urban barangays that were reclassified not on their own merits but solely on the basis of their location in a city or municipality with an average density of more than a thousand persons per square kilometer should display even less of such urban characteristics. The underlying argument for this differentiation is that demographic changes that had qualified a number of barangays to become urban have not actually been accompanied by adequate socioeconomic changes. This developmental lag should be most conspicuous among new urban barangays that were reclassified because the city or municipality to which they belong attained an average density of at least a thousand per square kilometer. Population concentration, not to speak of socioeconomic development, could be taking place only in the urban centers of these cities or municipalities and not in their outlying barangays. Among rural barangays, the proportion of barangays with any urban feature is expected to be very small.

In line with the hypothesis stated, the degree of urbanism is expected to vary among various categories of urban barangays. Variability notwithstanding, one should expect that *all* urban barangays of whatever category must have undergone at least some structural transformation from a rural to an urban community, if the census definition is to retain its credibility.

Table 5  
 BARANGAYS WITH SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS: PHILIPPINES, 1990<sup>1</sup>  
 (In percent)

Characteristic (Number of barangays)	Rural Barangays <sup>2</sup> (28,918)	All Urban Barangays (9,851)	Old Urban Barangays (7,390)	New Urban Barangays (2,461)	New Urban Barangays <sup>3</sup> (459)
Census criteria:					
3.a - street pattern	30.3	86.0	89.5	75.3	53.2
3.b - >5 establishments	33.4	81.7	81.9	81.7	62.3
3.c - >2 infrastructure nonagricultural	38.0 11.2	54.4 55.0	48.3 65.1	72.6 24.5	39.7 29.6
Additional characteristics:					
electricity	54.1	94.2	95.9	89.2	96.1
community water system	27.1	60.8	65.1	47.8	28.5
communication	12.2	68.7	75.8	47.3	43.6

<sup>1</sup>Excludes barangays without matching data for 1980 and 1990. About 80 percent of the excluded barangays belong to the rural stratum.

<sup>2</sup>Excludes 117 barangays which had been urban in 1980 but were reclassified as rural in 1990.

<sup>3</sup>City/municipal population density criterion.

The figures in the first two columns of Table 5 clearly point to pronounced differences in physical and social infrastructure between rural and urban barangays. Except for electricity, which is available in more than half of the rural barangays, some two thirds or more of all rural barangays suffer a shortage of basic amenities. By contrast, practically all urban barangays have electricity, and a majority of them can avail of other social and physical amenities as well.<sup>9</sup>

Table 5 further demonstrates that, with the exception of electricity, urban features are most in evidence in the old urban barangays and least in the new ones classified as urban on the basis of the densities of their municipalities as hypothesized above. However, the contention that types of infrastructure specified in the census definition of urban (listed under criterion 3c above) are best able to differentiate levels of urbanism needs to be qualified. The census has a rather loose definition of certain infrastructures such as chapel, plaza, cemetery, school building and health center, thereby allowing the inclusion of a wide variety of such structures. In the countryside, barangay halls, chapels, cemeteries and public plazas (usually an open field for basketball or volleyball courts) often come in rudimentary forms. Observing that these indigenous structures are not rare even among rural barangays, one begins to doubt that such crude structures are indeed accurate representations of urban living as the census definition implies them to be. In the cities, however, these structures take on grander features. There is thus little comparability between structures of such facilities from one barangay to the next. In addition, in crowded cities or poblaciones, these modern specialized infrastructures tend to serve large populations beyond the confines of a single barangay, making it unnecessary for the latter to construct their own. By contrast, isolated barangays scattered in the countryside need their own facilities. This explains why more new urban barangays — a number of which have been reclassified on the basis of the

9. It is important to point out that presence of electricity in a barangay does not necessarily translate to use among its residents. In the urban stratum, only 82 percent of all households in barangays with electricity actually use electricity for lighting. Among rural barangays that have electricity, the corresponding figure is only 50 percent.



facilities criterion — possess such infrastructure compared to old urban ones. The same is not true, however, for new urban barangays reclassified on the basis of municipal density. The expected dearth of such facilities in these barangays is evident.<sup>10</sup>

An indicator of urbanity that is closely linked to life style is occupational structure. A barangay whose residents are primarily engaged in fishing and/or agriculture cannot claim to be as urbanized as one whose people are employed in manufacturing and services. Table 5 shows that close to one half of all urban barangays have a labor force that is predominantly agricultural. This proportion is smaller (35 percent) among the old urban barangays but much larger (75 percent) among the new ones.

A closer examination of the figures presented in the last column of Table 5 brings into focus the deficiency of the census urban definition and criteria. In 1990, there were 459 barangays that were reclassified as urban because they were part of a city or municipality that had reached a population density of at least a thousand persons per square kilometer. These 459 barangays constitute some 18 percent of all the new urban barangays and 16 percent of the latter's combined population. The last column in Table 5 shows that, except for availability of electricity, this set of barangays is definitely less endowed with urban features when compared to the old urban barangays and, in most cases, even when compared to the rest of their new urban counterparts. In fact, a barangay belonging to this category bears closer resemblance to a typical rural barangay than an urban one (cf. also Table 7). It seems questionable whether this subset of new urban barangays has started to undergo any meaningful socioeconomic urban transition.

10. It is not always correct to assume, on the basis of geographic interaction, that facilities and services located in the central districts of densely populated cities or municipalities can reach out to the city's/municipality's outlying barangays. A case in point is the City of Cebu. All of Cebu City's 80 barangays are 'urban' notwithstanding the fact that more than one fourth of them are located in the rather low-density (50 to 300 persons/sq km) mountainous hinterlands of the City, many of them without direct road access to the built-up areas of the city, without electricity, communal water system, stores or other physical and social infrastructures associated with city life. The only claim to 'urbanity' of these barangays is their location inside the city limits.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the census and other socioeconomic criteria listed in Table 5. It enumerates the kinds of facilities and services that can be found in the different types of urban barangays. The importance of the table is that it accentuates the ambiguous position that urban barangays reclassified on the basis of city or municipal density occupy in the urban stratum. With respect to: (1) access to a national highway, (2) street pattern, (3) public park and cemetery, (4) secondary and tertiary educational facilities and a public library, (5) market place, (6) commercial and manufacturing establishments, (7) telegraph and postal services, and (8) community waterwork system, it is evident that the latter category of urban barangays is definitely found wanting in comparison with others. While it may be argued that the scarcity of some of these facilities is not a problem among this group of reclassified barangays because of their relative proximity to a densely-populated urban center (i.e., the poblacion or city center), there is no guarantee that such accessibility invariably exists and that, therefore, this class of barangays can be characterized as "urban."

It would have been helpful if the available data had permitted the disaggregation of new urban barangays also on the basis of the second census criterion: poblacion density. Perhaps a more definite conclusion regarding the role of density versus social criteria in the urbanization process could have been drawn. But limitations notwithstanding, Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate that the mechanism by which the present definition classifies barangays as urban inadequately addresses social and economic changes that should accompany the urbanization process.

Table 7 recasts, in a summary fashion, the data presented earlier in Table 5. Evaluating each barangay on the number of urban features it owns, two simple indices are constructed. For the first index, a score of one is assigned to the barangay for every type of feature that it has (i.e., criteria 3a, 3b, 3c and the nonagricultural prerequisite of criterion 4 of the census definition). The index represents the sum of this score. If a barangay has no urban feature whatsoever, its total score is zero. If it has all features, its score is four. The second index is an enlargement of the first. It adds to the census urban features two additional ones, communal water system and communication

Table 6  
 BARANGAYS WITH SPECIFIC TYPE  
 OF FACILITY/INFRASTRUCTURE: PHILIPPINES, 1990  
 (In percent)

Facility/Service/Infrastructure	Old Urban Barangays (7,390)	New Urban Barangays (2,461)	New Urban Barangays (municipal density criterion) (459)
Highway access	92.6	83.6	71.5
Street pattern	89.5	75.3	53.2
Barangay/town hall	69.8	75.5	71.9
Church/chapel	70.2	91.2	83.0
Park/plaza	39.2	53.2	27.0
Cemetery	18.8	32.8	10.0
Elementary school	50.9	85.3	79.1
High school	29.5	32.6	15.0
College/university	10.0	3.3	1.3
Public library	9.2	3.2	1.1
Hospital/health center	48.2	73.3	70.6
Market place	30.6	28.4	4.8
One or more stores	89.4	89.7	77.3
One or more factories	69.3	63.0	52.7
One or more repair shops	57.6	41.7	34.6
One or more personal services facilities	64.7	36.5	24.0
One or more hotels/lodging facilities	20.3	7.7	3.7
One or more recreational facilities	33.9	25.3	13.1
One or more financing/banking institutions	27.2	6.3	2.4
Telephone	53.4	18.0	22.9
Telegraph	27.8	11.7	5.9
Postal service	50.0	39.4	35.7
Community water system	65.1	47.8	28.5

Table 7  
PERCENT OF BARANGAYS BY SOCIOECONOMIC INDEX SCORES

Socioeconomic Index (Number of barangays)	Rural Barangays (28,918)	All Urban Barangays (9,851)	Old Urban Barangays (7,390)	New Urban Barangays (2,461)	New Urban Barangays* (459)
INDEX 1: (census criteria)					
Score 0	32.8	2.6	1.9	4.6	15.9
1	33.1	8.4	7.3	12.0	27.2
2	23.3	20.6	20.1	22.2	24.2
3	10.3	46.1	45.6	47.6	21.6
4	0.6	22.3	25.1	13.8	11.1
mean (standard deviation)	1.13 (1.00)	2.77 (0.97)	2.85 (0.94)	2.54 (1.02)	1.85 (1.24)
INDEX 2: (census plus additional criteria)					
Score 0	25.1	1.4	1.0	2.6	11.6
1	29.1	4.3	3.3	7.3	20.7
2	23.5	8.6	7.1	12.9	20.7
3	14.8	16.2	13.3	24.6	15.2
4	6.0	25.6	25.3	26.7	14.6
5	1.3	29.5	32.8	19.7	12.6
6	0.2	14.4	17.2	6.2	4.6
mean (standard deviation)	1.52 (1.26)	4.07 (1.41)	4.26 (1.35)	3.49 (1.42)	2.57 (1.72)

\* Municipal population density criterion

facilities. Electricity is excluded because it is almost ubiquitous in urban localities.

An examination of the proportions of barangays with the highest score (four) for Index 1 shows that only a quarter of the old urban barangays — assessed earlier to be the most “urbanized” — possesses *all* of the urban characteristics specified by the census. Among the newly classified barangays, only 14 percent can claim the same status, and among those reclassified on the basis of municipal density, only 11 percent qualify for inclusion. By relaxing standards to include a score of three as “sufficiently urban,” one finds that “urbanized” barangays constitute less than three quarters of the old urban barangays, less than two thirds of the new ones, and just one third of those reclassified on the basis of city or municipal density. If one adds more criteria as represented by the second index, then corresponding percentages for the highest score (six) are further reduced. All the above information makes one seriously question the meaning of “urban” as defined by the Philippine Census.

A point to be emphasized, when comparing socioeconomic characteristics of old and new urban barangays, is that the characteristics currently investigated are those extant in 1990. From the data, one cannot gauge what the socioeconomic status of an old urban barangay was at the time of its reclassification. Because reclassification gives more weight to demographic rather than socioeconomic characteristics, one may argue that the old urban barangays, at the time of reclassification, were in the same ‘inferior’ socioeconomic position as their new counterparts are at present. In other words, most of the urban characteristics found in the old urban barangays are recent acquisitions, i.e., after they had attained urban status. If such is the case, then there is more reason to believe that the demographic criteria of urbanization tends to undermine structural requisites. That “catching up” in terms of development may eventually occur in these fast-growing barangays cannot, however, justify categorizing them prematurely as urban.

Figure 1 compares the regions of the country with respect to the level of socioeconomic development of their urban barangays. It is not surprising that the urban barangays of Metropolitan Manila and neighboring regions,

Central and Southern Luzon, are the most urbanized areas of the country. The urban barangays of Regions VII and VI (Central and Western Visayas, respectively) are a close second. In all other regions of the country, truly urbanized areas are rare.

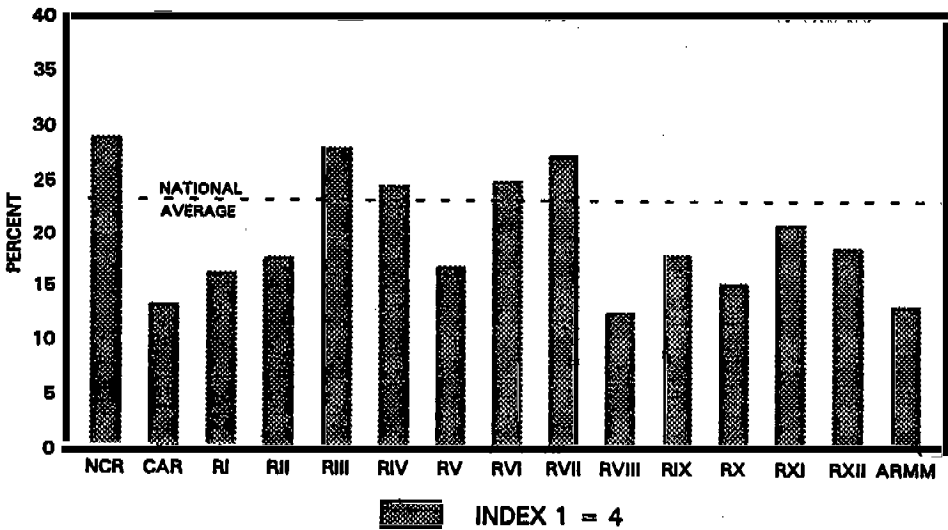
## V

### IMPLICATIONS

This brief analytical exercise demonstrates that, in the Philippines, urbanization as the census defines it, is foremost a function of population growth, and only secondarily of institutional or structural changes. Even if the current census definition of urban includes socioeconomic characteristics, the manner in which the various urban criteria are ordered places more weight on demographic than sociological characteristics. As a result, there are 'urban' areas with few or no urban features. One consequence of the manner in which the definition is applied is the exaggeration of the pace of urbanization in the country. Because of the wide variability of what is considered urban, the original distinction between urban and rural becomes increasingly blurred. At one end of the urban continuum are the core urban centers, which exhibit a high degree of urbanism, and which are mainly responsible for the observed disparity between the urban and rural strata in the country. This highly urbanized sector has been studied and addressed by public policy. At the lower end of the continuum are those deprived reclassified barangays which hardly can be called urban. It is this group that obscures the distinction between urban and rural. Like the rural barangays, these marginally urbanized barangays deserve special attention. There is understandable apprehension that, having been classified as urban when in reality they are not, these barangays are assumed to have reached a level of development they have not yet attained.

From a theoretical standpoint, the question has to be asked whether or not the census should retain its present definition of urban areas. At the very least, there is a need for a more meaningful integration of the structural, institutional and demographic criteria, if the term urbanization in this

Figure 1  
 PERCENT OF URBAN BARANGAYS  
 WITH SOCIOECONOMIC SCORE OF 4 (INDEX 1), BY REGION



country is to hold substantive meaning. With a continuing high population growth rate and an ever increasing population density, it can be expected that, if unchanged, the process which is turning barangays from rural into urban places will increasingly connote not changing livelihoods and concomitant life styles but simply greater population density. On the other hand, there is also the compelling argument of maintaining comparability of definitions across various censuses, past and future. In view of these considerations, it is therefore proposed that a two-tier urban definition be employed. For some time, the 'old' definition should be retained for purposes of trend analysis, while a 'new' definition, adequately addressing

socioeconomic concerns, should concurrently be instituted. Both definitions should be provided by NSO in its next series of publications. As suggested in this paper, the 'new' definition may include other urban features such as water and communication facilities. Likewise, care should be taken that structural prerequisites, which are to be applied in the new definition, be comparable across different types of barangays.

This study has confined itself to the analysis of social and demographic characteristics of the barangays *themselves*. There is need to further examine characteristics of the barangay residents as well. Urbanism, after all, connotes a way of life embodied in the material and the nonmaterial aspects of culture. It is important to know whether socioeconomic differentials measured at the individual level in various urban environments, as well as in the rural stratum, are consistent with those of the barangays themselves.



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