

City Development in Emerging Economies: The Case of the Philippines

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The Philippines is rapidly-urbanizing as evidenced by the growing number of cities and urban population. At present, there are 144 cities and half of the population lives in urban area. While there is significant increase in urban activities, the primacy of Metro Manila still remains. This paper aims to explore the development of cities in the Philippines. This paper also discusses the characteristics of the cities and identifies significant spatial patterns. This study also analyzes two selected development issue related to cities: primacy of Metro Manila and city conversion. This study found out that there has been significant increase in number of cities from 1990 due to the enactment of Local Government Code of 1991. The urban primacy of Metro Manila offers both advantages and disadvantages, and thus economic differentiation that ensures the benefit of the entire system of cities is needed. The city conversion has both economic and political rationale. The Local Government Code of 1991 allocates larger fiscal transfer and wider taxing power cities. City conversion has enabled extension of term of office and maintenance of power within political clans.

1. Introduction

Cities are the epicenter of economic, political, and social development in a country across history. In recent decades, urbanization level has been expanding rapidly. Some cities have evolved to mega-cities with total of 10 million population and more new cities are being created over the past decades. Some cities have become more powerful both in economic and political affairs than their national economies which led to the advent of the “world of cities.” Some authors also assert that city is a more accurate economic unit than country.

While the importance of cities is drivers of growth and change is undeniable, the rapid expansion of cities also poses some significant development challenges such as the widening spatial disparity. In the case of the Philippines, while new cities have sprouted over the years, the dominance of Metro Manila still prevails. Given the archipelagic geography, the Philippines have continued to grapple with spatial inequality and unbalanced growth.

This paper aims to explore the development of cities in the Philippines from post-war to recent times. This study examines the characteristics of cities and identifies significant

patterns. This study also discusses two selected pertinent issues to the development in cities in the Philippines: the urban primacy of the Metro Manila and conversion of municipalities into cities.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the characteristics, pattern, and development of cities in the Philippines; Section 3 analyzes two relevant issues to city development in the Philippines; Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Development of Cities in the Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelago located in the Southeast Asia. It is composed of 7,107 islands which totals to 300,000 square kilometers, the second biggest archipelagic country in the world. The Philippines is a country with a big population and yet a modest size of the economy. In 2010, the country has 93.26 million making it the 12th largest country in the world in terms of population. Gross Domestic Production (GDP) at current US dollar is valued at 199.59 billion in 2010. Annual growth rate was at 4.4 percent in 2000 but jumped to 7.6 percent in 2006 and continues to gain steady growth in recent years. It is one of the newly-industrializing countries which are transitioning from agricultural-based economy to manufacturing-based and service-based economy. The services sector, fuelled by the recent growth in BPO businesses, contributes more than half of the economic output. The manufacturing sector accounts for 30% of the national output.

2-1 Definition

The Philippines is a republic with presidential form of government. The Philippines is divided into three main islands; Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao. The country is divided further into 17 regions, 80 provinces, 144 cities, 1,496 municipalities, and 42,025 barangays. The 144 cities are classified into three categories: highly-urbanized cities, independent component cities and component cities. There are 34 highly-urbanized, 5 independent component city, and the rest are component cities of their respective provinces and defined as follows:

Highly Urbanized Cities - Cities with a minimum population of two hundred thousand (200,000) inhabitants and with the latest annual income of at least 500 million pesos based on 2008 constant prices. Highly-urbanized cities are autonomous from provinces.

Independent Component Cities - Cities of this type are independent of the province, and as such their charters ban residents from voting for provincial elective officials (although some are allowed to participate). Cities with a minimum population of 150,000 and earns at least 350 million based on 2008 constant prices.

Component Cities - Cities which do not meet the preceding requirements are deemed part of the province in which they are geographically located. If a component city is located along

Table 2-1 Definition of Cities in Selected Countries

Countries	Definition
United	Places of 2,500 or more inhabitants and urbanized areas
Japan	50,000 or more inhabitants with 60 per cent or more of the house located in the main built-up areas and 60 per cent or more of the population engaged in urban type of business
India	having 5,000 or more inhabitants, a density of not 1,000 persons per square mile, and at least three fourths of the adult male population employed in pursuits other than agriculture
Mexico	localities of 2,500 or more inhabitants
France	communes containing an agglomeration of more than 2,000 inhabitants living in contiguous houses
Spain	localities of 2,000 or more inhabitants
Canada	places of 1,000 or more inhabitants, having population density of 400 or more per square kilometer

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2003, Demographic Yearbook 2001, New York: United Nations cited in Chen (2008).

Table 2-2 City Income Class

Class	Average Annual Income
First	P 400 M or more
Second	P 320 M or more but less than P 400 M
Third	P 240 M or more but less than P 320 M
Fourth	P 160 M or more but less than P 240 M
Fifth	P 80 M or more but less than P 160 M
Sixth	Below P 80 M

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB).

the boundaries of two or more provinces, it shall be considered part of the province of which it used to be a municipality.

The definition of cities in the Philippines varies significantly with the definition of cities in other countries. As the urban system in every country is different, there is no standardized international definition of a city.

The cities are also categorized according to their average annual income. There are six class of cities in the Philippines as shown in table below.

In order for a municipality to be converted into a city, the municipality must satisfy the following requirements:

- Locally generated income of at least 100 million pesos (based on constant prices in the

year 2000) for the last two consecutive years, and

- a population of 150,000 or more, as certified by the (NSO); or a contiguous territory of 100 square kilometers.

2-2 Spatial Pattern of Cities in the Philippines

Half of the highly-urbanized cities are located within the National Capital Region (NCR), while the rest are scattered across different regions. Region 4A (Calabarzon) has the most number of cities with 18 cities; 2 highly-urbanized and 16 component cities. Region 6 (Western Visayas) and Region 7 (Central Visayas) are also home to the many cities with 16 cities each. Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), both regions which are located far from the capital have 2 cities.

National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) identifies 12 major metropolitan areas in the Philippines. These metropolitan areas are composed of different component cities and have different policy and management structure. Metro Manila is the biggest

Table 2-3 City Status

Region	Highly-urbanized	Independent Component	Component
NCR	16	0	0
CAR	1		1
Region 1-Ilocos		1	8
Region 2-Cagayan Valley		2	2
Region 3-Central Luzon	2		12
Region 4A-Calabarzon	2		16
Region 4B-MIMAROPA	1		1
Region 5-Bicol		1	6
Region 6-Western Visayas	2		14
Region 7-Central Visayas	3		13
Region 8-Eastern Visayas	1	1	5
Region 9-Zamboanga Region	1		4
Region 10-Northern Mindanao	2		7
Region 11-Davao Region	1		6
Region 12-SOCCKSARGEN	1	1	3
Region 13-CARAGA	1		5
ARMM			2

Source: NSCB.

metropolitan areas followed by Metro Cebu and Metro Davao. Seven out of the twelve metropolitan areas are located in the main island of Luzon.

As some cities were created before the enactment of Local Government Code, some of them did not satisfy the population requirement. For the purpose of comparison, cities were grouped according to population size: small (less than 150,000), medium (151,000–200,000), and large (201,000 and above). Based on the graph below, large cities are concentrated within three adjacent regions of National Capital Region (NCR), Region 3 (Central Luzon), and Region 4A (Calabarzon). While many of the small cities are located in Region 6 (Western Visayas) and Region 7 (Central Visayas).

There are four distinct patterns that can be observed based on the classification of cities according to size: Big cities regions, Small cities regions, and Primary cities regions. All of the 16 cities in NCR, except San Juan, are considered large with Quezon City as the biggest city with 2.8 million population. Majority of the cities in Region 3 and Region 4A are comparatively larger than other regions in the country. San Jose del Monte is the biggest in terms of population with 454,553 residents in Region 3, and other hand, Palayan City in Nueva Ecija is the smallest with 37,219 residents, this figure is smaller than the present population requirement for cityhood. Antipolo is the biggest with 677,741 residents in Region 4A, while Tagaytay is the smallest with only 62,030 residents. While these two

Table 2-4 Metropolitan Areas in the Philippines

Rank	Description	Island Group	Component cities/municipalities
1	Metro Manila	Luzon	Manila, Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, Pateros, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, Valenzuela
2	Metro Cebu	Visayas	Cebu City, Carcar, Compostela, Consolacion, Cordova, Danao, Lapu-Lapu, Liloan, Mandaue, Minglanilla, Naga, San Fernando, Talisay
3	Metro Davao	Mindanao	Davao City, Digos, Panabo, Samal, Santa Cruz, Carmen, Tagum
4	Metro Cagayan de Oro	Mindanao	Cagayan de Oro, Alubijid, Claveria, El Salvador City, Gitagum, Jasaan, Laguindingan, Opol, Tagoloan, Villanueva]
5	Metro Angeles	Luzon	Angeles, Bacolor, Mabalacat, Porac, San Fernando
6	Metro Bacolod	Visayas	Bacolod, Bago, Murcia, Silay, Talisay
7	Metro Iloilo-Guimaras	Visayas	Iloilo City, Guimaras Province, Leganes, Oton, Pavia, San Miguel, Santa Barbara
8	Metro Naga	Luzon	Naga, Bombon, Bula, Calabanga, Camaligan, Canaman, Gainza, Magarao, Milaor, Minalabac, Ocampo, Pamplona, Pasacao, Pili, San Fernando
9	Metro Baguio (BLIST)	Luzon	Baguio, La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, Tuba
10	Metro Batangas	Luzon	Batangas City, Bauan, San Pascual
11	Metro Dagupan (CAMADA)	Luzon	Calasiao, Mangaldan, Dagupan
12	Metro Olongapo	Luzon	Olongapo, Subic

Source: NEDA.

Table 2-5 Regions and City Sizes

Regions	Land Area	GRDP (%)	GRDP Per capita	City Size			
				Small	Medium	Large	Total
NCR	636	35.73	183.75	1		15	16
CAR	84	2.20	73.57	1		1	
R1-Ilocos	12,840	3.07	39.81	7	2		9
R3-Central Luzon	21,470	9.21	55.07	5	1	8	14
R4A-Calabarzon	16,229	17.39	82.39	4	1	13	18
R5-Bicol	17,632	1.97	22.31	3	3		
R6-Western Visayas	20,223	4.11	35.56	10	4	2	16
R7-Central Visayas	14,891	6.30	56.51	11	1	4	16
R8-Eastern Visayas	21,432	2.29	34.31	4	2	1	7
R9-Zamboanga Region	15,997	2.09	37.28	3	1	1	5
R10-Northern Mindanao	14,056	3.80	53.63	5	2	2	9
R11-Davao Region	27,141	3.84	52.20	3	1	2	6
R12-SOCCKSARAGEN	14,373	2.73	40.04	2	1	2	5
CARAGA	18,847	1.23	30.95	5	0	1	6
ARMM	11,608	0.76	14.32	2			

*Land Area(sq.kms.), Population (2007) in thousand, GRDP (2012), GRDP per capita(2012) in thousand pesos

Source: National Statistical Office (NSO).

regions have similar city system pattern, their economic structure is slightly different. These regions have second and third largest regional economy, respectively Region 4A relies primarily on the industry sector; while Region 3 is mainly based on both industry however it services still sources 16.8 percent of its regional output from agriculture.

Region 6 and Region 7 are considered as small-cities regions with majority of the cities have a population of less than 150,000. Bacolod and Iloilo are the only two large cities in Region 6 while the rest are small with Carlota as smallest with 63,852 inhabitants. On other hand, Region 7 has four large cities and all of which are located in Cebu Province: Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue, and Talisay. However, 10 out of 16 cities have a population smaller than 150,000 with Canlaon as the smallest with 50,627 inhabitants. In terms of economic structure, these two regions are quite different. Region 6 is 5th biggest economy and Region 7 is the 4th largest economy. While both regions are primarily based on services sector, Region 7 source 37 percent of its output from industry sector, more than double compared with 18

Figure 2-1 Big Cities Regions

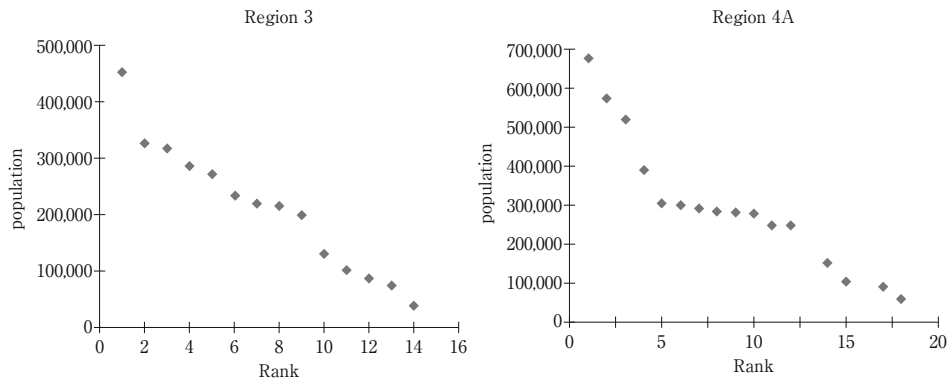
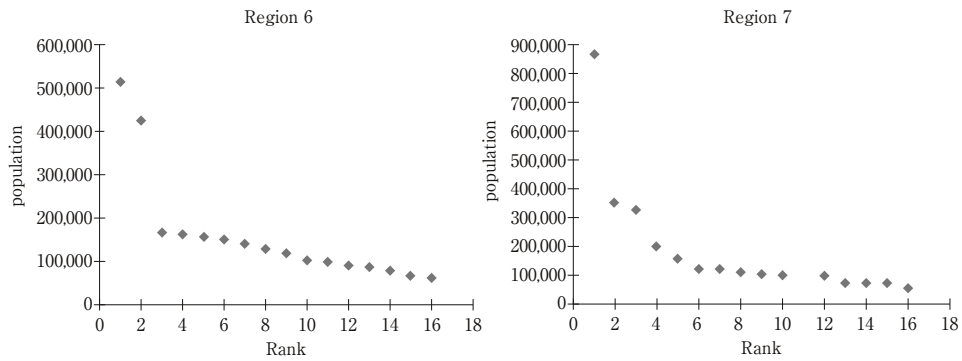


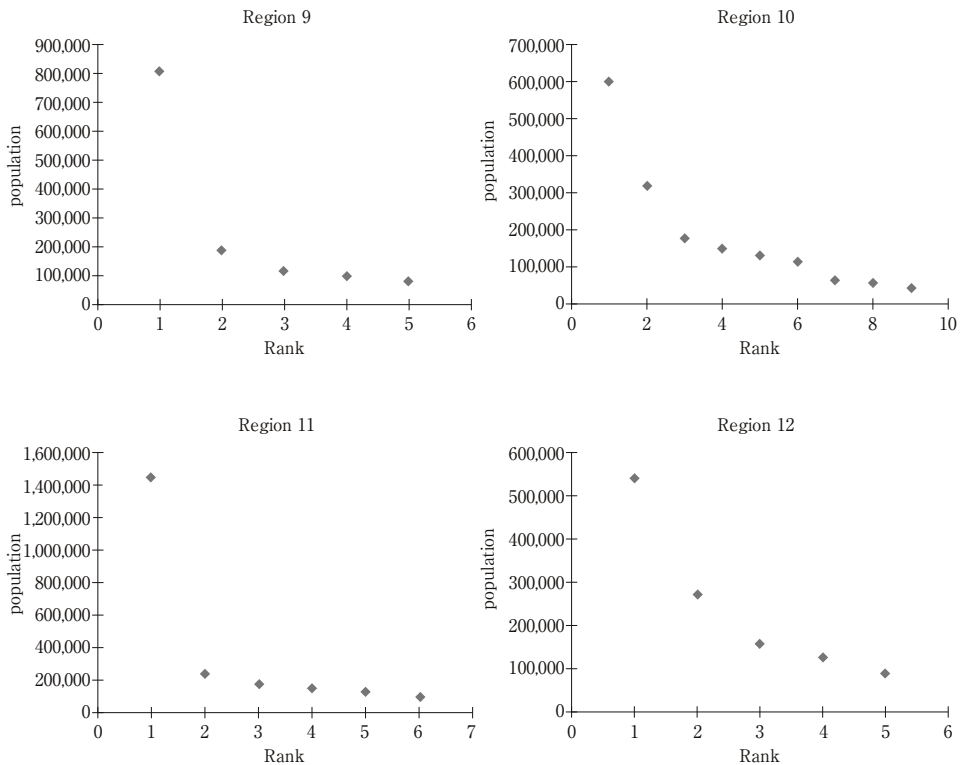
Figure 2-2 Small Cities Region



percent of Region 6.

Meanwhile, a number of regions fall under the category of primary cities wherein one or two cities are considerably larger than the rest of the cities within the region: Zamboanga city in Region 9, Cagayan de Oro in Region 10, Davao city in Region 11, General Santos in Region 12. Interestingly, these regions also exhibited similar economic structure. Services sector accounts for 39-45 percent of total regional output, and industry sector contributes 28-39 percent. Region 11 is the only region with more than 50% of its output comes from services sector.

Figure 2-3 Primary City Regions

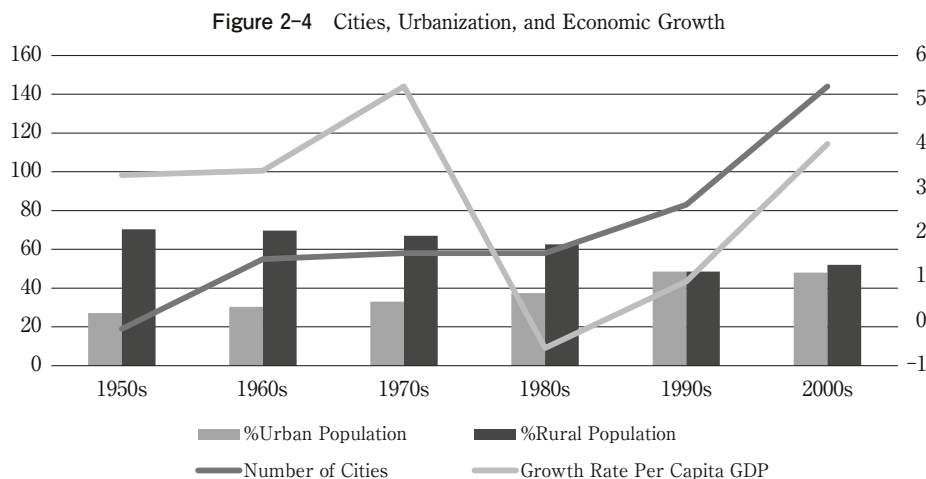


2-3 Historical Development of Cities

The Philippines was captured by foreign powers for more than 400 years. The Spanish conquest lasted from 1521–1898, the American conquest from 1901–1946, and the Japanese occupation from 1942–1945. However, prior to the coming of the Spanish in 1521, the Philippines is composed of independent kingdoms or states, often referred to as barangays. These independent states had long-established relations with other kingdoms in China, India, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

During pre-colonial period, the settlements are largely concentrated along coastal areas with access to external trade. In 1565, Spanish had formally colonized the Philippines¹⁾ with the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in Cebu. In 1571, Manila was established as the capital of the colonial government. The urban clusters during Spanish period were established not only as trading centers but also defensive post from which control of indigenous population is

1) Spain was not successful in subjugating the whole archipelago, particularly the Muslim-areas in Mindanao.



possible. As typical of any colony, the Philippines served primarily as a source of raw materials, thus the economic activities are largely concentrated within traditional agricultural regions of Visayas, Bicol and Ilocos (Pernia, 1982). Doepper (1972) cited in Antipolo (2010) identified the hierarchy of settlements during the Spanish era: 1. Capital City with Manila; 2. Provincial Centers (Ciudades and Villas) - center of military, political, and ecclesiastical control (Cebu, Naga, Nueva Segovia, all ciudades and villas in Pany and Fernandia (Vigan); 3 Central Church Villages or Cabeceras- focal points of activity and cultural change. This uneven distribution in urban center will persist over the next centuries.

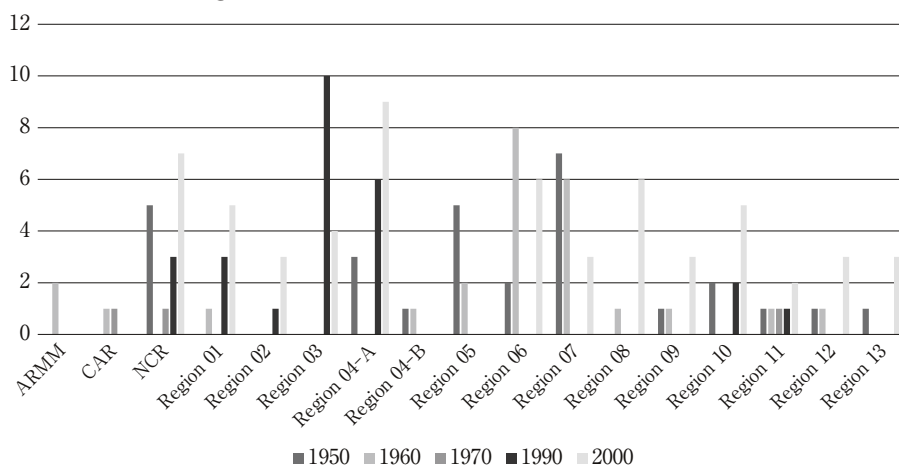
During the post war period in 1950s, there were only 18 cities in the country and almost 70 percent of the population still lives in the rural areas. It was in this period that Philippines pursued import-substitution-industrialization (ISI) in response to balance of payment crisis and the depletion of foreign exchange reserves. Another factor that led the country to adopt ISI strategy is budding economic nationalism sentiment in the administration, most notable of which is the “Filipino First Policy” of President Carlos P. Garcia, which gives preferential treatment to locals over foreigners. Sicat (1968) argued that ISI favored the capital-intensive industries over the resource-based industries and as a result capital-rich regions of Metro Manila and Southern Luzon have significantly prospered (cited in Mercado, 2002). The shift of population and economic activity in this period from the traditional agriculture regions to Metro Manila left a huge imprint in the spatial structure of the urban areas.

The momentum of urban growth continues until 1960s wherein 36 new cities were created but later slowed down in 1970s-1980 wherein only 3 new cities were established. As the growth gained during the ISI were not sustained, the policies have shifted to economic liberalization in late 1960s. Mercado (2002) argued that it was during this period (late 1960s-

onwards) that the government have started to pay attention to the spatial aspects of development. Improvement of rural areas and dispersion of industries away from the capital surfaced as the one of the main goals of the export-oriented economy. The Agricultural Land Reform of 1963 was implemented to abolish the shared tenancy system in the hopes of revitalizing the agricultural sectors and addressing the rural-urban gaps. The Republic Act No. 5186 or Investment Incentives Act of 1968 was enacted to give incentives and guarantees to investments and to create the Board of Investments (BOI), the lead government agency for promotion of investments. The first export processing zone (EPZ) was established in the province of Bataan in 1972. A National Physical Framework Plan which espouses the growth center approach to infrastructure development was conceived in 1970. The government have prohibited the establishment of new factories or plants within 50km radius of Manila in 1973. However, due to the agglomeration economies benefit derived from the economic concentration built in 1950s-1960s, these attempts to diffuse economic activities have met with few success. It should be noted that these developments were pursued under the Martial Law regime which Marcos declared in 1972.

The significant growth in the number of cities that have occurred from 1990s coincides with the remarkable increase in population. There were 91 new cities that were ratified and almost half of the population are now living in the urban areas. Two decades of Marcos dictatorship and the disappointment over the “trickle-down” development strategy have prompted the government to shift power close to the people and allow them greater participation in the development process through the enactment of the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991. The code devolves functions and responsibilities to the local government units (LGUs), particularly with the delivery of basic services. The code has

Figure 2-5 Location of Cities Created from 1950s-2000s



Source: NSCB.

increased the share of the LGUs in the national taxes or the internal revenue allotment (IRA) from 11% to 40%.

3. Selected Issues in Development of Cities in the Philippines

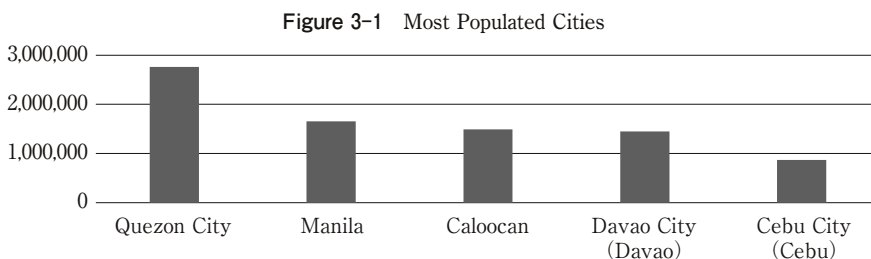
There are various issues related to the development of cities in the Philippines, however, this study will only discuss two issues: Primacy of Metro Manila and City Conversion.

3-1 Primacy of Metro Manila

The primacy of Manila dates back during Spanish era when it was established as the seat of the Spanish government in 1571. However, the present-day Metropolitan Manila was formally created through the Presidential Decree No. 824 in 1975. It is originally composed of City of Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan, Pasay, and 13 municipalities of Las Pinas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Paranaque, Pasig, San Juan, Taguig, Valenzuela, and Pateros. All of the municipalities except for Pateros were converted into independent chartered cities. These local government units have administratively equal status to the provinces and independent to each other. The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) was created to assist these separate local government units in planning and implementing development plans.

Three out of five most populated cities in the Philippines are located within Metro Manila, namely, Quezon City, Manila, and Caloocan. The other 2 cities are located in Visayas (Cebu), and Mindanao (Davao city). Quezon City is the most populated city with 2.8 million inhabitants and Palayan City in Central Luzon is the least populated City with only 37,219 people.

The same pattern can also be observed with the population density. The top-five most densely populated cities are all located within Metro Manila. Manila has the highest population density with 43,000 people per square kilometers. This is significantly higher than the national average of 330 people per square kilometer and with least dense city of Puerto



Source: NSCB.

Figure 3-2 Population Density

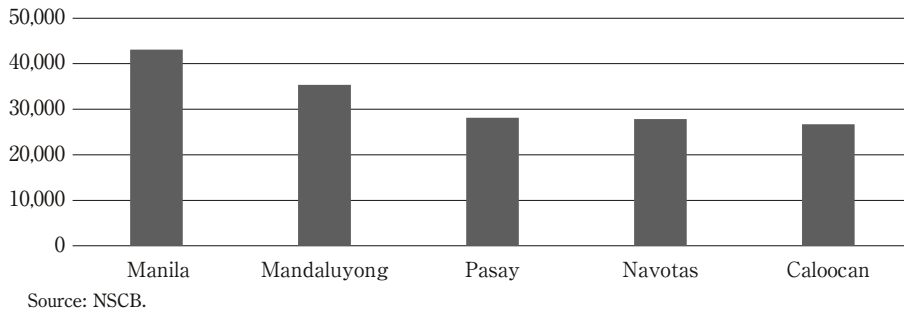
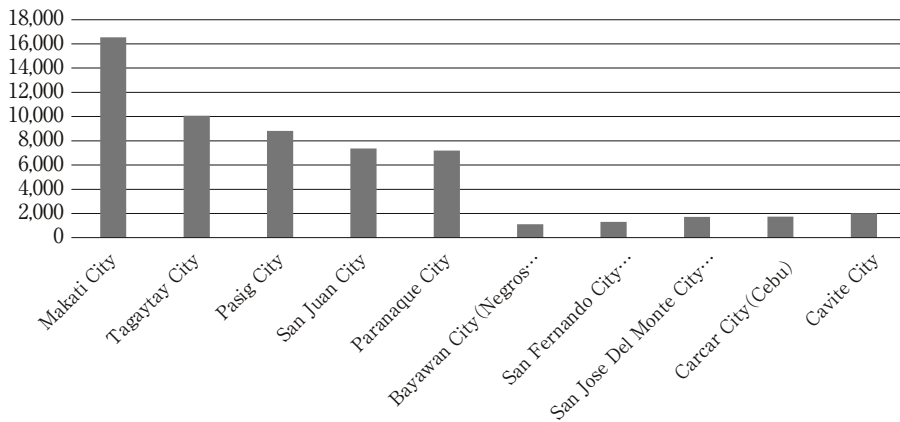


Figure 3-3 Income Per Capita (2009)



Princesa in Region 4B with only 93 people per square kilometers.

In terms of economic development, the richest cities are also found within Metro Manila. Makati City has the highest income per capita in 2009 with 16,535 pesos which almost four times the higher than the national average of 3,951 pesos. On the other hand, Bayawan City in Central Visayas and San Fernando in Central Luzon have the lowest income per capita.

As discussed in the previous section, the government have attempted to disperse economic activities away from Metro Manila starting from late 1960s Metro Manila have evolved into mega-city status in 1990 with almost 9.4 million population and expansion have increased with no close competitors or what some authors call, “missing middle.” However, the urban primacy and the widening gap between cities can brought about some economic inefficiencies and stalls the pursuit of equitable and inclusive growth and development. The World Bank Report 2015 (East Asia’s Changing Urban Landscape: Measuring a Decade of Spatial Growth) emphasized the importance of economic differentiation between cities of different to ensure the whole system of cities can benefit. The report suggested that a system

of cities in which the large cities focus services and high-technology industries with small and medium cities concentrate in lower manufacturing and agriculture-related industries is more economically efficient. In addition to this, economic differentiation have become feasible with the advent of fragmentation and outsourcing wherein firms can chose to locate and operate in a cities which they determine could bring them optimal profits.

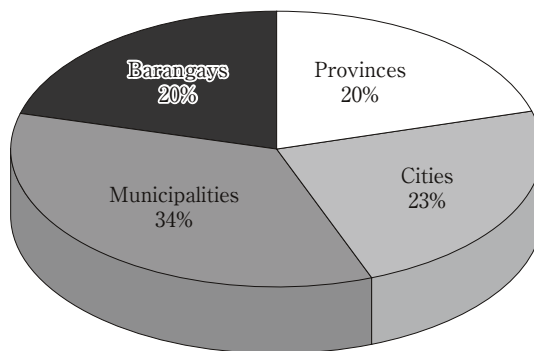
3-2 City Conversion

As shown earlier in the previous section, the number of cities has steeply increased from 1990s which coincides with the enactment of Local Government Code of 1991. The Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 is a landmark piece of legislation in local development. The Code aims to infuse growth and development to the local government units by shifting power to local government officials given the assumption that due to proximity and familiarity, these local officials know what's best for their constituencies. The code devolves the responsibility to deliver basic services to the local government units. The code also aims to improve the fiscal conditions of the local government through the increased automatic appropriation of 40% of national revenue to the local government or the internal revenue allotment (IRA). Across the local government units IRA is distributed as follows: 20% to provinces, 23% to cities, 34% to municipalities, and 20% to barangays.

This IRA allocation has encouraged the conversion of many municipalities into cities (Capuno, 2013). As compared to 1,496 municipalities sharing in their 34% IRA, it seems rationale to convert into cities as there are only 144 cities sharing 23% IRA. Furthermore, the local government code has provided the cities wider tax base almost similar to the tax base of the provinces.

With greater IRA share and higher revenue through wider tax sources, cities are more capable to perform its functions as evidenced by expenditure in basic services. There is a

Figure 3-4 IRA Distribution per Local Government Unit



Source: LPGMS.

Table 3-1 Tax Assignment in Cities, Provinces, and Municipalities

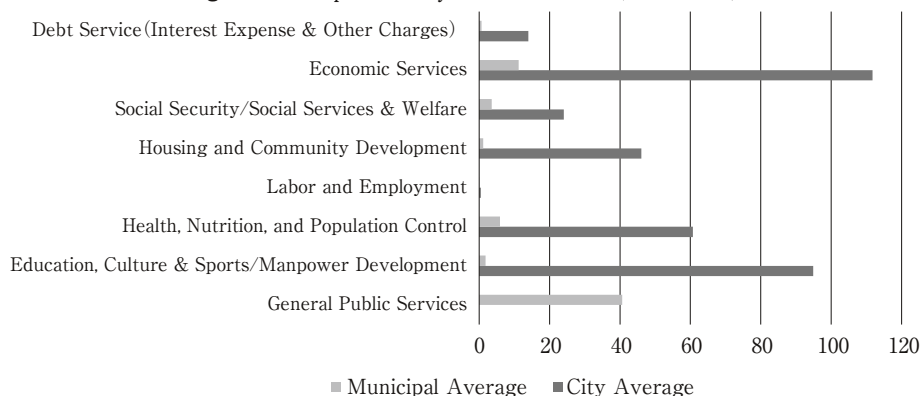
Tax Bases	Cities	Provinces	Municipalities	Barangays
Real Property Transfers				
Business of Printing and Publication				
Franchise				
Sand, gravel and other quarry resources				
Amusement places				
Professionals				
Real Property				
Delivery Vans and Trucks				
Idle Lands				
Business				
Community Tax				

*shares in the proceed of levy of provinces

Source: Llanto, 2009.

huge disparity in average spending on basic service between cities and municipalities. Cities are able to spend more essential services that vital to development such as health and education. With better services and living standards in the cities, more people are encouraged to move into the cities.

Aside from economic rationale, conversion into cities has underlying political motives. Capuno (2013) found out that incumbent mayor's re-election or having another member of the same political clan elected to the same position drives the creation of new cities. A city that was converted from a municipality was deemed to be essentially a different local government unit. Thus, municipal mayor's term of office may be extended should they wish to run and win in newly-converted cities. Furthermore, mayors who initiated the city conversion are often succeeded by their clan members and effectively preserving the political dominance in the area. Given the fact that politics in the Philippines is a family affair and majority of politicians belong to political clans, there are more cities will be created primarily due to rent-seeking. There are various proposals and bills filed to address the unabated city conversions. Most of these proposals seek to reform the fiscal transfer program and change the criteria for cityhood.

Figure 3-2 Expenditure by Function in 2010 (PhP million)

Source: LPGMS.

4. Concluding Remarks

This paper have reviewed the development of cities in the Philippines has evolved over the past 50 years. This study also presented significant characteristics and spatial patterns of urban system in the Philippines. This study have shown that significant economic policies pursued during the post-war period have shaped the urban system of the country with Metro Manila continues to the primary center for economic and social activities. The numbers of cities and urban population have grown prominently since 1990s after the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991. The conversion of many municipalities into cities has underlying economic and political rationale. The higher fiscal transfer and wider tax base motivated many cities conversion. Possible extension of term of municipality mayors and preservation of power within the political clans also drive the conversion of cities.

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