

THE MOUNTAIN PROVINCES AS A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AREA: REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR WHOM?

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Regional Development

One of the major objectives of the Development Plan of the Philippine Government is the promotion of regional development. To quote from the "Integrated Reorganization Plan" as prepared by the Presidential Commission on Reorganization:

It is declared policy that the socio-economic development of the various regions within the country shall be promoted by undertaking regional planning and development within the context of aggregative planning at the national level and specific planning and programming at the local level.

While regional development is therefore an objective of the development effort, it is also a strategy utilized to reduce disparities among regions and provide for a balanced economic and social progress of the country. In the desired shift from an agrarian to an agro-industrial economy, the intention is clear that regional development, in addition, is applied toward correcting an imbalance in development and redistribute the resources and benefits of progress to all other parts of the country. It is no longer a situation of opportunities, land wealth concentrated in one area, Metro Manila, sustained by resource areas. To quote the justification of the Four Year (1974-1977) Development Plan of the Philippine Government:

The imbalance in the progress of different regions needs to be corrected not only for reasons of equity but also for the expansion of the base which can subsequently support the expansion of industrial activities.

Regional development is an effective way of dispersing these benefits of development progress throughout the country. It is also helpful in accelerating rural development.

In 1972, the country was subsequently divided into 11, and later, 12 regions, namely:

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| 1. Ilocos | San Fernando
La Union | Ilocos Norte,
Ilocos Sur, Abra,
La Union, Benguet,
Mountain Province,
Pangasinan, |
| 2. Cagayan | Tuguegarao | Batanes, Cagayan
Isabela, Nueva
Vizcaya, Kalinga-
Apayao, Ifugao |
| 3. Central Luzon | San Fernando
Pampanga | |
| 4. Southern Luzon | | |
| 4A Metro Manila | | |
| 5. Bicol | Legaspi City | |
| 6. Western Visayas | Iloilo City | |
| 7. Central Visayas | Cebu City | |
| 8. Eastern Visayas | Tacloban City | |
| 9. Western Mindanao | Zamboanga City | |
| 10. Northern Mindanao | Cagayan de Oro City | |
| 11. Southern Mindanao | Davao City | |
| 12. Re-districting of the three Mindanao regions | | |

The old "Mountain Province" was then divided between Regions I and II.

The Mountain Provinces Region

Location. With the exception, perhaps arbitrary, of the province of Abra, the mountain provinces are equal to the Central Cordilleras. Towering over the narrow and lowland Ilocos Coast to the west and the extensive Cagayan Valley to the east, the region is what its name implies, the mountains. This identifying uniqueness of the region, is also its strongest argument for being, by its very nature setting it apart from the regions it is now divided into.

Significantly, it is both the watershed and mineral repository of the regions I and II. Clearly, then, it is a resource area.

People. Lumped arbitrarily under the curious classification of "Igorots" are the inhabitants of the Cordilleras, a planning nonentity who, nevertheless, are there. These are the Ibalois, Kankana-eyes, Bontocs, Kalingas, Ifugaos, Gaddangs, Tinguians and Isnags. Considered "Non-Christian cultural minorities", their national identifications speak for themselves. As of the 1970 Population and Housing

Census, they are a total of 583,233 inhabiting an area of 1,417 hectares with an annual growth rate of 3%, a labor force of 247,843 engaged primarily in the agricultural industry and with a literacy level of 73.2%. In comparison with both the Ilocos and Cagayan regions, it is noteworthy that the mountain provinces are of a low density — 40.7 (Ilocos — 108.9; Cagayan — 54.5), low labor population (Ilocos — 679,775; Cagayan — 528,840), and low literacy (Ilocos — 82%, Cagayan — 80.1%) levels. All these have a direct bearing on the planning and programming for development of the region.

Political Development. Except for "fringe" garrisons-commissionary posts, the Igorots kept their independence free of any meaningful Spanish governance. It is reported at the end of the last Spanish census that a whole one-third of these mountain peoples were outside any of the dozen military districts in the region, statistics then at best being an educated estimate. The advent of American administration "opened" the region and began its participation in national affairs. It is pointed out that, perhaps working out their guilt complexes as regards their own cultural minorities, the American Indians, the consistent policy of the American administrators was one of attraction, pacification and paternalism. To a large extent, coupled with American exploitation of natural resources, primarily gold, this historical accident helped shape the political culture of the Igorots.

Starting out as "special provinces" governed by Lieutenant Governors and under direct supervision of the Department of Interior, the mountain provinces remained basically one, its subdivisions corresponding roughly to its five major ethnic communities: Benguet, Ifugao, Bontok, Kalinga and Apayao. By 1900, these loose governmental set-ups were firmed by legislative fiat of the Philippine Commission.

Government in the hands of the Filipinos found the region as consolidated by Philippine Commission Act 1876 under the name "Mountain Province." It was then assigned three congressional districts roughly embodying Benguet, Bontok and Ifugao, and Kalinga and Apayao.

In a bid for more congressional representation, and subsequent "pork barrel" allocations, all three solons filed and had legislated into law in 1966 RA 4695 known as the Division Law that politically subdivided the region into what it is now: Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, and Kalinga-Apayao.

Crucial to the issue of this paper was the creation by the then Congress of the Philippines in 1964 of the Mountain Province Development Authority Act, RA 4071. Organized in October of 1965, the MPDA was arbitrarily abolished by Presidential Decree in June of 1974 as a curious "rider" in an ostensibly Igorot piece of legislation that granted natives the opportunity for "forest leases." Divided as it is into four provinces, the region was then divided into two Northern Luzon regions.

The issue for re-regionalization as Region XIV is a result of and a reaction to this division.

Regional Development Issues

Technical factors which guided the Reorganization Committee in determining the composition and boundaries of the regions were: (1) physical or geographic features; (2) administrative and plan implementation; (3) economic development; and (4) ethnic and socio-cultural factors. Region XIV will be argued along the same considerations.

Physical or Geographic Features. From either side of the Cordilleras, the location and physical-geographic features of the mountain provinces are distinct. They are, in short, in the mountains. This distinction sets apart the region in its total life-styles, economic pursuits, and indigenous structural units. Acknowledged in both the identification of development potentials and constraints of Regions I and II, this feature is further underlined by a reference to the "inaccessibility" of the "region" from its regional capital, in this case, San Fernando in La Union and Tuguegarao in Cagayan. No Igorot can quarrel with this claim.

Administrative and Plan Implementation. As early as 1900, the administrative network for the region was set up with the town of Bontoc as administrative capital, the Halsema-Mountain Highway designed to supplement this by a road system that traversed all present four mountain provinces, connecting at the same time, the sub-capitals for administration, namely: La Trinidad, Benguet; Kiangnan, Ifugao; and Lubuagan, Kalinga-Apayao. National, provincial and feeder roads were to criss-cross this main artery subsequently. The Division Law merely relocated the centers of the original administrative subdivisions in response to population pressures. Substantively, the plan remains valid. The snag in implementation is in the allocation of scarce national resources in gut support of avowed programs, or putting the money where it should be put.

Economic Development. Without any doubt, the mountain provinces are in dire need of economic development. By national standards, per capita income, a more meaningful measure of development, is far below an already low national figure. In this day and age, barter economy still exists in most of the mountain communities, an outcome of subsistence agriculture and utter lack of opportunity to enter the cash economy. This situation is compounded by the absence of social services, i.e. health centers, schools, government technicians; and infrastructure support in balanced proportion to the existent population.

Significantly, however, the region lacks for nothing in economic development potential. The Central Cordillera is both watershed and mineral chain for Northern Luzon. Plateaus such as Tabuk, plains such as lowland Apayao, pockets of fertile and watered valleys throughout the region, can support more than the resident population. The possibilities of highland citrus farming are amply illustrated with the apples and oranges of Kalinga-Sagada-Bauko and the coffee of Lubuagan-Lagawe-Kabayan. The development of the mining industry in Benguet has classified it among the top provinces in the country income-wise, and the forest lands of Apayao have given rise to a Cagayan-based economic-political power. The most controversial areas of hydro-electric dam construction, mineral wealth exploitation and forest concessions attest to the capacity of the region for sustained economic development.

So far however, the mountain provinces have supported national development but have not benefitted from the same, substantively.

Ethnic and Socio-Cultural Factors. It is in this factor that the planning authorities and decision-makers have perhaps overlooked or deliberately chosen not to see the point. Without belaboring the ethnicity and socio-cultural matrix of the mountain provinces it is stated that the mountain peoples are different as other ethnic groups, majority or minority, are different from one another. Despite retracted statements to the contrary, the same peoples do consider themselves "Filipinos." In the treatment of this particular factor, the following observations and arguments are advanced:

1. The world view of the Igorot is based on a reality he knows, circumscribed by his total experience. This does not necessarily mean a national consciousness. Thus, national priority programs such as mineral exploitation, hydro-electric dam construction and high-yield rice cultivation do not have any meaning to him.

2. Within his own cosmic reality, he has grappled with his unique situation and has built up a network of structures and institu-

tions that to date allow him meaningful existence and relationships with whatever he considers significant in his existence. He has learned the nature of ecological balance, translating the same into mountain terraces, family-owned forests and recycling. He has defined his territorial boundaries, political affiliation, inter-personal and inter-territorial relations.

It is primarily in consideration of the ethnic and socio-cultural factor as basic to all other three factors identified as criteria for regionalization that Region XIV is proposed.

Politicalization of Region XIV

It is to the credit of the mountain peoples that while they conceive of themselves as different from other ethnic groups, they do consider themselves part of the Philippines. To date, there has been no conscious or deliberate attempt to define themselves within a separate body politic.

Yet, like any other Philippine group that feels itself less equal to others, the mountain peoples have realized the inadequacy of the governmental structures that work against their interests and allow them no form of legitimate channel of expression while advocating precisely the same. The Division Law is a classic example of grasping at last straws in an attempt for greater representation that proves nothing except that government indeed is one of the majority. Divided as it is now into two regions, the minority vote is further divided.

Region XIV logically then could mean the politicalization of the mountain peoples in terms of providing a legitimate, and hopefully, viable structure within which they may determine their future, articulate their aspirations and receive government attention toward themselves their control over their destinies, it would be presumptuous to assume that the same mountain peoples can predictably relate to a national body politic.

Summary

Regional development planning, both as an objective and as an end, provides for the identification of a "spatial and locational" locus for national development goals and targets. Its identification of where government funds by way of investment may be directed does away with vague national priorities and unequal fund allocation. A separate and distinct Region XIV would specifically allow for regional underdeveloped areas a greater chance for attention, correcting

imbalances and negating planning on too narrow a scope, i.e. the province.

Familiarity of both planning and implementing arms of government with an area, Region XIV in this instance, would allow for the integration of all aspects of development: physical, social, economic, and financial. The human factor, in this case the Igorot, often bewailed as the biggest impediment to development, can then find more concrete translation as indeed a factor for development. For while significant changes may be readily obvious in other sectors, the parallel development of the individual and his entire and complex institutions is often understated with tragic results.

Most importantly, regional development planning, possible under Region XIV for the mountain provinces gives substance to the "planning from below" process. Previous speakers and almost all conferences of this nature have repeatedly pointed out the fallacy of long-distance, air-conditioned office, detached and "un-involved" planning. The concomitant price paid by way of unworkable government projects, misplaced and misused infrastructures, unacceptable programs are legion. Where people perceive avenues for participation, experience involvement in government and feel the impact on them of their own decisions, there can be no question of credibility.

Within the foregoing context, Region XIV becomes, for the mountain peoples, a truly viable channel for their participation in their own development. Perhaps this is not too much to ask. It cannot be.

COMMENTS

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Actually, I am not the original discussant assigned to react on Prof. Pawid's paper. Prof. Joel Delos Santos of PCAS as cited in the program was originally assigned; but unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances he was not able to come. Then, the Conference Chairman designated Prof. Clarita Carlos of the Department of Political Science U.P. Diliman to replace Prof. Joel Delos Santos. As a member of the Steering Committee, I was then given the task to look for Prof. Carlos who was nowhere to be found. To wit, I was given up to 12:00 noon to locate the lady professor and was made to understand that if I am unsuccessful I would have to take over the job. I was unsuccessful. As a consequence, I have to take over the job like a good soldier. I could only hope now that my superiors would come to my rescue when the tide of the battle has turned against me.

Here are my battle plans.

I. *First, the title is misleading*

When I first read the title of the paper more than an hour ago, the first thing that came into my mind was a discussion of how development is being pursued in the region and how the benefits of development are distributed to the various sectors of the population.

However, I found out to my surprise that the author did not discuss these crucial and controversial issues.

Well, she just presented a brief political and administrative history of the region and then proceeded to discuss the salient features of the four criteria used by the Reorganization Committee created by a Presidential Decree in June 1974 without even citing the number of the P.D.

From here, she singled out the socio-cultural factors which are unique to the region. She then proposed that these factors are the most important in the delineation of the future boundaries of Mountain Province. Prof. Pawid capped her arguments with a strong recommendation for the creation of a separate region for Mountain Province.

II. There seems to be a little confusion on what the author wants to study. And the confusion seem to lie on what she means in her sub-title: *Development for Whom*

Well, the phrase could be conveniently interpreted by using two levels of analysis.

First, one can interpret that the author is referring to the development of the region as a whole *vis-a-vis* other regions; that she is interested in the share of the region from the national government, and

Secondly, at a more specific level of analysis one can interpret that the author is concerned with the redistribution of development benefits for the different sectors of the population in the region.

III. I am of the impression however that Prof. Pawid wants to discuss the development of the sub-region of Mountain Province *vis-a-vis* other regions. Also, I strongly feel that she was advocating for a separate attention from the national government for Mountain Province because of what she posited as the distinct socio-cultural forces operating in the region.

I hope that she was not advocating here that the development of the region should be distinct, isolated and have no favorable and unfavorable externalities *vis-a-vis* other regions. You see, I am from down under: the province of Pangasinan. And I am a witness to the distressed condition of the mighty Agno River caused mainly by slit from tailings coming from mining companies operating in the Benguet Area which according to recent studies are operating inefficiently.

The forests of Mountain Province will also have a direct bearing on the plains and rivers of Pangasinan. I understand that what happens on top of the mountains here will directly affect even the sea. For example, I couldn't just imagine what would happen to Pangasinan (Region I) if the forest in this area are completely denuded by unscrupulous loggers and even Kaingeros. Definitely, it would have disastrous effects of unimaginable magnitude in Central Luzon.

IV. Speaking of the distributive impact of development to the various sectors of the population. I want to comment on one of the most important sources of income of the region namely; the mining industry.

But first, I would like to be clarified on certain points.

If my interpretation is right, the author seemed to be saying that the per capita income of the region is well below the national average. However she also claimed that because of the mining industry and perhaps the logging concessions located in Benguet and perhaps the other sub-provinces of the area, Benguet is classified as one of the top provinces in the country. Perhaps the author should clarify what I seem to see as a minor inconsistency. Specifically, she should clarify the disparity in the use of averages by citing clear-cut statistics. A graphical presentation would perhaps be enlightening.

A. Mining Industry

Supposedly, the mining industry contributes a large share to the improvement of the quality of life of the people in the region. But what I have been reading and hearing is that these mining companies exploit the people in the region and have more unfavorable externalities *vis-a-vis* other regions. I have heard from a high government official who is the famous husband of our own Dr. Loretta Sicat here that the mining companies here use very primitive methods of extracting the minerals in the mountains; that the laborers are paid starvation wages and have very few privileges. Besides, and perhaps more important they are not operating efficiently. They tend to generate more adverse externalities to the people of Central Luzon as well as within the region.

Lastly, I suggest that more intensive studies should be done on the development of the Mountain Provinces in relation to other contiguous regions.

Prof. Pawid (Response to the discussant)

I don't know if my paper is all that vague and hard to understand. The title is very simple and the proposal is for Region XIII. It is a simple case of an argument against internal colonialism. That is what we are speaking of this afternoon.

The discrepancy between low per capita income and a very high provincial income for Benguet is a point very well taken by the discussant of the paper. Three thousand pesos (P3,000.00) per annum is the average annual income (as reported by NEDA Region I) for three-fourths of the population of the Region.

We would just like to delineate what exactly we wanted to do. The foregoing discussion at the beginning of the paper on development are abstracts which we got straight from the government policy papers, primarily the Reorganization Committee report and the reports of the Region.

Along the same line we try to pose the same question as to using their own criteria. We could not possibly think of Region XIII as viable within their own definition. Over and above this, after 1969, there is no data whatsoever that corresponds to Region XIII. It is either is Region I for Benguet and Mountain Province, and in Region II for Ifugao and Kalinga-Apayao. So that to be able to discuss case by case studies as suggested earlier would be next to impossible.