

UTOPIA OR DYSTOPIA: MAN AND ENVIRONMENT IN METROPOLITAN MANILA*

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Modern Cities as Systems

"It's the system that's all wrong!" This is the battle cry of Filipino urbanites impatient for change. The words refer to a dissatisfaction with political, economic, and social structures seemingly unresponsive to the needs of our time. Yet there is another complex of systems that affects their lives even more directly, if less openly. I refer to those sets of arrangements that make life in cities possible—electric power, water supply, garbage and sewerage disposal, transportation, communication, and the like.

November 19, 1970 will be long remembered as Metropolitan Manila's day of reckoning. It was on that date that typhoon Yoling's destructive fury asserted beyond a doubt the importance of coordinated urban systems. How? By irreverently disrupting them. The enforced throwing of Meralco's master switches cut off not only electricity but water, as well. Even homeowners confident in having one-upped the Nawasa by constructing their own backyard wells stood by helplessly as electric pumps failed to operate. The disruption in water supply left restaurants

with mounds of soiled dishes, hospitals progressively more unsanitary and foul-smelling, and householders wondering how to dispose of human waste ordinarily discarded with a mere flick of the toilet flushing mechanism. Health authorities warned of possible cholera and typhoid epidemics, or at the very least a rash of gastro-enteritic disorders. Assessing the extent of the catastrophe beyond one's immediate neighborhood was complicated by the scarcity of public transportation and by the few radio stations left broadcasting, if one had a transistor radio to receive the news at all.

Even behavioral patterns were affected by this massive breakdown of Metropolitan Manila's systems. Neighbors who normally never spoke to one another pooled their efforts to clear the debris. Drove of young people flocked to relief centers to offer their assistance or to donate food and clothing. On the darker side, looting flourished with the disappearance of adequate security measures. Televisionless families regained the lost art of conversation. Housewives recalled wartime innovations for preserving perishable foods. People went to bed soon after sunset and got up at the sound of the first tricycle beep crowing the coming of day. While Yoling left tremendous damage in her wake, she also served to remind us of the Filipino's ability to cope creatively under stress.

But her wild visit brought an even more beneficial, if sobering, message. She showed us that modern city living is possible only if we appreciate the close linkages inherent in it. The larger, the denser, the more complex the population

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clustered in one place, the more intricately intertwined become the systems that make this combination viable. In turn, urban residents in search of comfortable lifestyles come to rely more heavily upon the efficient functioning of these systems. A malfunction in one area spreads to other parts of the system. A breakdown in one can effect a breakdown in the whole.

If we Metropolitan Manilans truly want to live in a satisfying city, then we must make our own (1) an understanding of the systematic interplay inherent in the complex organization of a metropolis, and (2) an appreciation of the aesthetic component in developing an urban life of quality. These are the two concerns around which this presentation revolves. I start with an approach common enough among Manilans, namely, a litany of complaints about our metropolis. I ask why the dystopia – Doxiades' (1970:396) term for the big city that lacks quality. Then I review Manila's more praiseworthy aspects. More important, I ask what potential our city has for approaching utopia, that dreamed-of great city of high quality.

Metropolitan Manila as Dystopia

To say that Metropolitan Manila has a good deal wrong does not set it apart as unique. All the world's great cities have been subjected to similar scrutiny – and found wanting. Yet it is precisely because their critics *prefer* to live in the city that they vociferously protest against its undesirable features. Manilans should do no less.¹ The stream of migrants flowing into Manila and the thousands reluctant to leave, whether they be squatters clinging to their hard-won land or junior executives unhappily reassigned to provincial cities, all testify to Manila's magnetism. A city should foster this attraction rather than repel it.

Why, then, has living in Manila become the frustrating experience it is? We can cite at least four major reasons, namely: (1) the imbalance between resources and population; (2) environmental pollution; (3) unaesthetic features; and (4) the cultural values and behavior of Manilans.

The imbalanced population-resources ratio

Only 70 years ago, the City of Manila had a population of some 220,000 people, slightly more than Iloilo City today. This figure had by 1970, grown to 1.3 million, an increase of over 500 per cent (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1971b:Table A-1). For Metropolitan Manila, the preliminary 1970 figure is 3.2 million (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1971c:Table 3). Should one accept the new concept proposed by the Bureau of the Census and Statistics, defining the Manila Metropolitan Area in such a way as to add to the 3.2 million Manilans above the residents of 20 contiguous municipalities socially and economically integrated with Manila and suburbs, then the 1970 Metropolitan Area population figure jumps to 4.4 million (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1971c:1 and Table 3).² If this growth rate persists there will be an estimated 11.7 million of us by 2000 A.D. (Institute of Planning 1968:Figure 1).

Yet, taken by itself, population growth does not constitute the problem, no matter how great the increase. For one can evaluate its significance only in relation to the resources of the affected community. A comparison of the growth of urban services, jobs, and housing accommodations in Manila dramatizes the crux of the problem: these community resource elements have not grown with corresponding rapidity. The result is a dangerous imbalance between population and urban resources, the strain of which substantially increases the discomfort, indeed stress, of Manila living.

A number of scientific studies conducted in the United States and Europe give us an inkling of what may be in store for us with increased urbanization. Observing perspiring Manila commuters forced to tolerate two-hour rides in packed busses and jeeps, one recalls John Calhoun's behavioral sink. This set of psychological data indicates that rats crowded beyond their normal density lose interest in courtship and mating. A drastic fertility decline ensues (Hall 1966:24). Lest population advocates see a favorable side to this, they should also know that

rats have been found to turn against their own species under severe conditions of crowding. This does not mean that man will follow suit, of course. Nonetheless, one wonders just how *homo sapiens* will react under similar strains present even now in some parts of the city.

Psychological studies conducted in American cities reveal that urban residents adapt to the overload of too many people, and therefore possible human interactions, in several ways. Among them are the devoting of less time to each personal contact, the disregard of low-priority contacts (the drunk lying in the street), the blocking of the contact before it can be made (as in the use of unlisted telephone numbers, or simply looking forbiddingly aloof and avoiding eye contact), and the creating of specialized institutions to absorb these inputs (as in having a social welfare department take care of the destitute who would otherwise make a direct personal appeal; Milgram 1970:1462).

Nor can job opportunities match the number of job seekers, as shown in Manila's October 1968 unemployment rate of 8.8 per cent, compared with the 9.0 national urban rate, 7.4 rural rate, and 7.9 per cent overall Philippine unemployment rate (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1971a:XV and Table 39).³ One adaptation appears in the proliferation of personal service workers — for example, barbers, manicurists, and waiters receiving a basic salary but heavily dependent on tips for their total earnings. Others create their own occupations — the sidewalk vendor, watch-your-car boy, ambulant peddler, and the like. Stymied in their attempts to land a regular job, or stimulated by the desire for independence, they roam Manila's streets further congesting them. Still other single individuals willing to leave their parental homes find that the domestic service route offers some possibilities. Nonetheless, 105,000 Manilans seeking work out of the 1,198,000 in the labor force did not find it in 1968.

Relatively well-off employees in industrial, commercial, and government establishments are the envy of many a low income, self-employed worker. For in contrast to the latter, the em-

ployee receives generally higher wages regularly paid, fringe benefits, long-term job security, and probable membership in a labor union organized to protect his interests. Yet, only 65 per cent of the City of Manila's labor force is made up of wage and salary workers, leaving a substantial proportion of the remaining 35 per cent in the economically insecure category (Bureau of the Census and Statistics 1971b:Table A-5, 38-4).

The burden placed on the city's resources by this heavily dependent poor is self-evident. As in other Asian cities, the presence of large masses of unskilled labor and the inadequate supply of job opportunities, skilled or unskilled, makes mere existence an overriding goal for many. Hence, tens of thousands have to live in slum or squatter communities where bare subsistence is characteristic lifestyle. City schools have to turn away droves of children every year for lack of classroom space. Garbage remains uncollected because trucks are insufficient or broken-down. Patients seeking medical attention through hospital care overflow into corridor beds. Even the spiraling prices that so dismay the urban housewife have their partial source in the magnitude of the supply problem, given so large a demand. The list goes on and on. Nor will it become shorter until the population-to-resources ratio shifts drastically. There must be either more resources effectively delivered or fewer people drawing on them, or both. Only then can Manilans hope for a life of quality.

Environmental pollution

Anti-pollution demonstrations have not yet assumed in the Philippines the serious proportions they have in the United States. Our activists probably reason, and rightly so, that in the immediate scale of priorities, reform aimed at income redistribution and social justice must take the lead. Yet if reformers really wish to champion the rights of the poor and the future they will inherit, they might well add to their numerous causes protests against Manila's contaminated air and waterways.

It is after all the poor who suffer most from pollution. They constitute the prime absorbents

of smoke-belching jeepney and bus exhaust. They inhabit the ramshackle shanties along sewage-filled Manila Bay and the esteros of the Pasig River. They form the bulk of those jammed into the tiny accesorias of Tondo near the ever-burning garbage dump on Balut Island. Yet they can least afford the medical care and nutritional components that increase resistance to illness and death. The poor compose the bulk of inner-city residents. Not for them the daily escape to the suburbs to breathe what is left of our fresh air before suburban industry and transport foul that up, too. Instead, they spend 24 hours a day "in a sea of carcinogens," as an environmental cancer specialist in Maryland has put it (Gordon 1963:65).

Reflecting on the hazards posed by factory pollution, one wonders if our low level of industrialization may have a positive side to it after all. Take the case of heavily industrialized Birmingham, Alabama, where the mere process of breathing may cause the intake of as great a quantity of cancer-causing substances as the smoking of two packs of cigarettes a day. Upon hearing this one Birmingham commentator wryly informed his smoker friends wrestling with the fear of cancer that they could now stop worrying, just relax, keep breathing — and get lung cancer without any effort at all (Gordon 1963:66).

City residents under 10 and over 45 years of age seem especially susceptible to respiratory illnesses, like chronic bronchitis, influenza, pulmonary tuberculosis, and arteriosclerotic heart disease, fostered by polluted air. Nor are the middle generations exempt. Almost daily they sit in a jeepney or bus trapped in a sea of un-moving vehicles, inhaling clouds of carbon monoxide exhaust. It is sobering to reflect that in Los Angeles 75 per cent of mice painted with a solution of particles and gases taken from smog developed skin cancer (Gordon 1963:63).

As if this were not bad enough, Manila Motorists aggravate already high noise levels by incessantly blowing their horns. One recalls the scientific finding associating long and frequent

exposure to noise with hypertension, mental strain, endocrine imbalance, and ear defects (Manila *Chronicle* 1970:D quoting Dr. Chauncey Leake, University of California Medical Center).

No scientific research is necessary to understand the hazards of uncollected garbage. Yet Manila pedestrians have grown accustomed to picking their way around offensive mounds of fly-specked refuse strewn on the muddy, uneven strips that we dignify with the term sidewalks. Murky esteros and open canals dare one's body to retain its state of wellbeing. Pollution has become a byword of the modern city. In Manila it assaults all the senses with gay abandon. As mortality and morbidity statistics indicate, it exacts its toll.

But the worst is yet to come. Biologist Rene Dubos (1968:237) feels the real threat lies not so much in mortality or acute disease rates resulting from a contaminated environment; these still remain relatively modest. Rather the danger lies in the cumulative effects on people of continuous exposure to low-level pollutants. Since man adapts, he can live on to middle and old age before he starts reaping the long-term effects of chronic pulmonary diseases or debilitating illnesses of various kinds. Nor has sufficient research been done on the delayed and indirect consequences of *early* exposure to conditions of industrial, urban pollution. Once the rural-to-urban migration subsides, most people will be born in the city, and live and reproduce under urban conditions. The effects of this restricted urban setting on the unborn fetus, the infant, and the young child cannot as yet be predicted. But effects there will be.

Stressing the importance of the early developmental cycle of the child, Dubos (1968:238) states, "Environmental stimuli determine which parts of the genetic endowment are repressed and which parts are activated at any given time." He is referring here not only to pollutants, but also to the stimuli provided by nutritional patterns, education, land topography, and religion as significant influences on man's genetic make-

up. Unless Manilans see to it that pollution is controlled for better living, they will continue to suffer its discomforts and eventually even its more lethal qualities.

Unaesthetic features

Gertrude Stein is reputed to have described Oakland, California as a place that "when you get there, there is no there, there" (Chermayeff and Alexander 1963:50). While Manila boasts enough historic variety to make it an interesting and notable place, instead of a mere space like Stein's Oakland, we cannot say that our city has developed a happy image. From a charming settlement fronting the bay at the mouth of the winding Pasig, the Pearl of the Orient has deteriorated into the Wild, Wild West of the East. The latter phrase refers primarily of course to the state of law and order, or more precisely, the lack of it. But it might also be stretched to include related comparisons. Like the cowboy movie set we too have the muddy rutted streets, the garish signs planted haphazardly along main roads, and the small, shoddy buildings in monotonous rows. The few attractive commercial centers, like Makati and, to a lesser extent, the Escolta and Ermita, only serve to emphasize the seedy quality of the rest of the downtown shopping district as well as such hastily erected and already deteriorating crossroads centers as Cubao in Quezon City.

To make matters worse, Manila is dirty. If one gauge of a city's attraction is the ability to walk around in it and imbibe its essence, the pedestrian will, alas, have to conclude that Manila's essence is a composite of the stink of garbage, the sputum of people who prefer gutters to handkerchiefs or tissue, the sludge of open canals and dank esteros, and the litter of discarded paper, broken glass, and seeds or skins of the fruit in season (lanzones time is particularly appalling).

The traveller who in Europe takes delight in pursuing interesting-looking alleyways to find a charming antique shop or discover a flowerbed in bloom soon learns in Manila to spend his lei-

sure hours in other ways — unless of course he is seeking human-interest stories about how Asia's poor live. Closer investigation will yield the information, to his probable amazement, that in a city predominantly peopled by non-car owners, the interests of the walking majority have been cast aside for the minority motorist. Sidewalks, where they exist, are narrow and largely appropriated by vendors, rubble, or both. The numerous plazas which dot Manila and which were built to give residents a sense of place, a hint of grandeur as they promenaded about in it, have now taken on the aesthetically deadening function of a traffic interchange. Even those plazas that have trees and benches hardly encourage the passing pedestrian to linger: the view, the noise, and the smell dissuade him.

The more residential parts of the city fare somewhat better, depending on the quality their residents have imparted to the neighborhood. Districts like Sampaloc, Santa Cruz, Malate, and Santa Ana boast a number of picturesque settings, usually where the old blends in with the new. One's eye stops with pleasure at the occasional genteel house of another era set in between undistinguished stores. At least some meaningful variety confronts the interested passerby.

Ironically, the scourge of the modern city comes in the most recent addition to our urban landscape, the rows upon rows of identical box-like houses that fill private subdivisions or low-income government projects in the suburbs. Produced according to the principle of least-cost, they stand as symbols of modern man's willingness to sacrifice creativity and individuality to financial economy. Yet this dichotomy has been shown to be a false one. Other builders have exhibited greater ingenuity by distributing two or three basic designs on a large tract of land, often giving the buyer his choice. Or, a single design structure is oriented in different ways on a lot or at varying distances from the boundaries. Or the community layout is done in irregular cluster patterns instead of the monotonous grid.

How ironic that a society which not even the

Japanese Imperial Army could discipline has allowed the architect to straightjacket him into a style of housing most kindly described as California-bungalow-concentration-camp-moderne. A recently moved-in resident in one of our more progressive suburban subdivisions complained that only one thing really bothered him about his new house. And that was his having had to drive around the block three times one evening before he could figure out which of the identical units was his! Fortunately, Filipino individualism being what it is, the householder blunts the dull and depressing monotony of this style by adding the distinctive touches that separate his house from the next fellow's — a bank of flower pots here, a garden swing there. For while, on the one hand, people seem to like living in socially and economically homogeneous communities, this preference does not extend to physical design. Nor is the distaste for rigid discipline and the utterly uniform in one's aesthetic conception unique to the Filipino. In Charles Dickens' *American Notes*, the author comments that Philadelphia is handsome but "distinctly regular. After walking for an hour or two I felt that I would have given all the world for a crooked street" (Briggs 1968:87).

If the Manilan cannot find much in his city that appeals to his aesthetic senses, then one can hardly blame him for not caring much about it. The undistinguished commercial centers where residents gather, the dirty streets and byways, and the oppressive dullness of multiplying accorias and the new ticky-tacky suburbs combine to counteract the more humanizing effects the city also offers. One can regain a sense of beauty after a sunrise stroll along the Bay, a visit to Luneta Park with its folk art features, an occasional excursion to the surrounding countryside of green rice stalks, trees, and grass. But such places are too few and often too distant for the average city dweller. We need more of them "Beauty is a public good and a formative influence for good," said those who restored Warsaw to its old, pre-war beauty despite the great cost (de Jouvenel 1968:116).

Because beauty cannot be quantified, many

urban planners set it aside as secondary, a desirable but non-utilitarian asset. Yet treating it this way is apt to breed a generation of correspondingly second-class citizens intolerably ignorant of or uncaring about the joys of aesthetic fulfillment. Perhaps the generation referred to has already been born. When asked to describe their concept of the ideal park to student researchers of the Ateneo de Manila, several hundred average Manilans in 1970 could dream no further than the image fashioned by the Luneta. Crippled by the lack of examples, their imaginations rarely transcended their experience. Asa Briggs, the historian, has put it well (1968:80), ". . . so many people have become so well used to the actual environment they live in that they are starved and deprived in the employment of their senses, unable not only to compare or criticize, but more seriously, to appreciate."

The beauty and cleanliness of our city deserve much more attention than they have received from us. Attractive, satisfying surroundings will not only appeal to our personal aesthetic sense. They have a pragmatic effect too in generating among the citizenry more care for their physical setting. Some will argue that for a city government to advocate amenities like clean air and parks, when the bare minimum of material sustenance has not even been met for all, smacks of a bread-and-circuses mentality. Yet, improving the quality of the environment for all Manilans may reduce the strain inherent in grinding poverty and deflect despair. Struggling for sheer survival is less taxing when one can look up once in a while and find beauty around him.

Cultural values and behavior of Manilans

Every city bears the stamp of its residents. San Francisco holds the unofficial title of most cosmopolitan city in the United States. New York represents the financial center of bright lights, good for a visit "but would you want to live there?" Tokyo mirrors an alluring combination of industrial genius (clouded by pollution) and artistic sophistication of the highest order. The shoppers' paradise for Filipinos and world travellers remains Hong Kong.

Manila too has its image, the hospitable city if one listens to the tourism promotion staffs, a dangerous city insist visitors and residents alike. Most of us know the truth lies somewhere in between. While the exuberant press may have something to do with the negative side of the image, we might pause to consider what qualities in the Manilan himself have given his city an ugly taint.

One of them certainly is the low value given to order, to disciplined behavior in crowds. Waiting one's turn in line and first come first served are not notable urban Filipino traits. Rather, the game of *lamangan* marks the daily urban round. The player who bests the other contestants by getting in ahead of them is the admired victor (Stone 1967:58). This applies to taxi drivers weaving in and out of traffic. It is also reflected in the jeepney driver caught in a traffic jam who speeds ahead on the wrong side of the road. He expects eventually to squeeze back into the right-hand lane when forced to by the oncoming traffic. This is of course a short-sighted view, and innumerable traffic jams have resulted from it. The amazing side of all this, however, is that the supposedly erring driver is usually allowed in by the apparently less impatient or needy vehicles 10 car-lengths ahead. As I have indicated elsewhere (Hollnsteiner 1969:162-165), need and power apparently outrank order in the value scale.

The distinction between the treatment of private and public space is most vividly emphasized in residential neighborhoods, especially in *accessorias* and multi-storey apartment buildings. Individual dwelling-units are maintained and beautified. The adjacent public space, however, belongs to everyone and no one. Everyone has access to it as a free good. But no one accepts responsibility for keeping it in presentable condition, except perhaps the government, which cannot cope with a problem of such magnitude. The resulting litter and image of disorder pervades virtually every sector of the metropolitan landscape.

Even in privately owned buildings, however,

another cultural value intrudes. The frontage and other sections visible to the public remain presentable. But go behind them and you will often find unkempt surroundings. The same observation holds for repairing buildings. Facades are modernized but the interior remains in a state of decay.

Another feature of Filipino space use relevant to Manila's condition emerges in the apparently high toleration for crowding. Filipinos have a propensity to fill in empty spaces, as art, living room, and park layouts indicate. The space bubble that E.T. Hall (1966) tells us surrounds every human being, keeping others at a respectful distance, is apparently not quite so large around Filipinos as it is for North American and Europeans. (On the other hand, the requirement for Filipinos is apparently larger than for Chinese, if housing densities are an indicator.) The Filipino temperament can therefore accept as comfortable densities that Westerners would find unbearable.

The same holds true for toleration of high-decibel noise levels. Even before the advent of electronic hard rock music, normal listening level in a household was of such a volume that it allowed the sharing of one's radio or television with the entire neighborhood. Urban planners might well take into consideration the difference this means in terms of Philippine building codes adopted directly from American ones. Filipinos have so accustomed themselves to large families living in one household with high noise levels that housing design can so be modified.

The concept of ingroup solidarity also has a bearing on the efficient rendering of urban services in its effect on the bureaucrat's performance. His government position automatically gives him claim to its power potential, should he care to activate it. This advantage he is expected to share with his close friends and relatives. One must show loyalty to his ingroup and expect the same show of solidarity from them. But every time a narrow road to a politician's house is paved while a major street lies muddy, pot-holed, and untended, the entire

urban mass is prejudiced. Every incompetent political recommendee placed in the bureaucracy reinforces the low level of urban services delivered to Manilans. Manila's undesirability owes much to this perversion of the normally laudatory Filipino concept of solidarity.

High crime rates further reflect this motif. The slum criminal victimizes neighborhoods other than his own, but zealously guards his home territory from trouble-seeking outsiders. *Palakasan*, or testing the power of one's ingroup against competing groups, finds further expression in the willingness of security forces to let through carefully guarded barriers those close to a powerful person, even though others have waited patiently to see him for hours. This applies whether the situation entails circumventing a typhoon-victim relief line to obtain one's allotment first, or maneuvering for a closer vantage point to view the Pope.

To imply that all of these cultural values characterize all Manilans is, of course, ridiculous. Yet because they are widespread and do affect the character of our city, they bear scrutiny. The priority given to need over order, lamangan behavior, the facade inclination, high tolerance for crowding and noise, the filling in of empty space, and ingroup solidarity over service to the impersonal outgroup of citizenry deeply affect the quality of Manila life.

One further disclaimer is called for here. We have already said that not *all* Manilans exhibit these cultural values. We must also add that Manilans are not the *only* urbanites that display them. Each cultural pattern mentioned may be found in one or more other cities of the world. The point to remember is that the particular combination we have described and the relative importance of each value vis-a-vis the others in the total context do place a characteristic stamp on Manila. Like it or not, they foster our sense of well-being or malaise, an orientation which affects our image of the metropolis.

*Toward Utopia: Developing the Manila
We Want*

The attributes of Metropolitan Manila

Reciting Manila's deficiencies reveals one side of her nature; listing her attributes exposes the other. And attributes Manila has in abundance. On the scenic side, we live in a city of picturesque variety, where the old blends in with the new. The untended ruins of Intramuros, the many plazas with their massive, antique churches, and the occasional 19th century elite residence that suddenly juts out as one unsuspectingly turns a corner in a once-genteel section of Quiapo or San Nicolas districts — all imbue us with a sense of history. They remind us somewhat wistfully perhaps of an era when the "very noble and ever loyal city" was not so frenzied, when residents had time to chat with friends met on the street, or stop in the midst of whatever they were doing in obedient response to the bells tolling the Angelus. The ultra-modern against the traditional backdrop suggest an interesting and complex mixture of people, the kind of setting conducive to excitement, new ideas, and great human achievement.

Nature, too, has bestowed her blessings on our city. Manila Bay sunsets and moon-drenched nights delight promenading Roxas Boulevard tourists and natives alike. Rizal Park at one end affirms the conviction of its planners that urban Filipinos can and will voluntarily keep a public space clean and attractive, if it appeals to their aesthetic sense and needs — and provides sufficient depositories for refuse. The potential of the Pasig River traced back to its chief source, Laguna de Bay, might once again be realized if riverbank squatters were rehoused or relocated and dredges put to work. Fringing the Cavite hills and the Montalban mountains is open land that can still be planned as breathing spaces for pollution- and crowd-weary Manilans. Nature has done its share; men must do theirs.

And man is one of Manila's greatest assets. In this city are congregated some of the most talented Filipinos in the nation — skilled architects and engineers, research-oriented social scientists, well-trained government functionaries, public administration teams, financial wizards,

and feeling artists. Let these specialists pool their knowledge and efforts to unlock the potential of this city. In this they need to work together with the urban masses whose contribution looms no less important. The thousands of closely-knit neighborhoods and communities that characterize the poorer areas of the city testify to the city's innate warmth and friendliness. Where neighborhoods are more impersonal, peopled as they are with middle- and upper-income groups, compensation appears in their kind of civic consciousness, one that leaps beyond immediate boundaries to the city as a whole. Traditional Filipino hospitality is woven into the very fabric of Manila life and can be reshaped to respond to the entire city as communities. For a city whose systems mesh and whose aesthetic features burst forth in full panoply communicates a warm and vibrant personality to friend and stranger alike. Nature, history, and contemporary man as artist and technologist can as easily conspire to beauty and comfort as they can to ugliness and despair. Why then settle for the latter?

Strategies for redeveloping Metropolitan Manila

Solutions are possible only if one defines an area of life as problematical. We need to recognize the problem, assess its gravity, and look for those solutions productive of the least number of subsequent serious problems. Two essentially opposing perspectives must be simultaneously adopted by the student of the city: (1) the narrow, almost myopic view of the scientist, who solves a problem by isolating and simplifying one tiny aspect of a complex phenomenon, and (2) the broad perspective of the ecologist, who confronts a system as it is in all its complexity and carefully tries to trace out the strands of its interrelationships (Bowen 1970:15).

Within these frameworks we need enlightened ways of thinking about a metropolis.

A sense of place. "It is essential to note," comments an urban historian, "that cities are collections of places as well as places in themselves. Each city has a collection of distinct places, each with its own ecology and history,

sometimes with its own subculture." He continues, "The contemporary 'problem' is to retain the sense of variety within the city — the invitation to explore — while eliminating social 'blackspots' " (Briggs 1968:82–83). How does one bring this about?

One way is to stop planning *for* people and to start planning *with* them. The apparent cost advantages of mass housing, for example, while important, should not so preoccupy planners that they obscure the residents' feelings about the kinds of homes *they* want. Perhaps they do not favor being zoned off into strictly residential areas, but prefer to be near an industrial-commercial site. A pleasant mixture of workplace and residence is viable, provided each component is attractively situated and meaningfully integrated into the whole.

Further, before city authorities break up socially healthy squatter communities to provide them with supposedly more acceptable living conditions in scattered relocation sites, let them consider this. The shared experience of living together in a certain neighborhood, physically deteriorated and disorderly though it may appear, can nonetheless give residents a sense of order and well-being they may never recapture in the antiseptic, rigidly spartan row-housing of resettlement blocks. Close neighborhood ties forged through common interests and kinship links lay the foundation for community concern. One can hope that as residents grow in their awareness of a larger whole, they will see the value of identifying with the entire city as their own. Because it responds as no other place has to their material and spiritual wants, then will they begin to nurture it as their place.

This identification will be enhanced by the presence of meaningful symbols of the city. Not only buildings, monuments, museums, or public sculptures but spacious, tree-lined, greenery-filled parks and plazas can take on this function. What the Lincoln Monument and cherry blossoms are to Washington, D.C., the Arch of Triumph and the River Seine to Paris, or the Star Ferry and the nighttime panorama of the

Bay to Hong Kong — so too must our symbols be treasured reflections of sentiment and pride in Manila.

And we have made a start. For some, Manila means Rizal Park. The well-heeled beautiful people might choose spacious Ayala Avenue and the modern Makati Shopping Center. Impassioned student activists and older freedom-loving citizens would swear by Plaza Miranda. Each of these publics treats their cherished spaces with the appropriate gestures — loving care for the first two, and tumultuous participation for the third. Yet millions remain unrepresented in this listing. Meaningful physical entities have not yet emerged to give play to their urban consciousness. When they do, they must appeal to the gamut of metropolitan residents.

Monumentality helps. This concept refers to great buildings or settings which give people a feel for grandeur. It means buildings or places “constructed primarily — not solely, necessarily but primarily — for purposes other than mere usefulness.” The attractive environment created draws people who then come to appreciate its pragmatic aspects as well (Johnson 1968:151, 157) Unfortunately for the average low-income Manilan, the opportunity or reason to visit many of the metropolis’ most beautiful buildings and savor the greatness they embody is rarely offered him. Hence they cannot serve as his mirrors of Manila.

Symbols scattered throughout the city give the resident a feeling of history, or pride in himself and his people, of beauty and belonging — in short, a sense of place. Some symbols might represent a limited, local involvement; others might encompass more widespread emotions. The entire City of Manila itself ought to evoke a universal appeal as the core of the metropolis. It is the keystone in the great arch. If it gives way through sheer deterioration and desertion, as business, government, and people flee to the suburbs, then the entire structure faces collapse. Pure self-interest dictates that the suburbs share the responsibility for the continuing development of the central city.

Systems analysis. The modern metropolis represents a network of interacting systems whose relationships with one another are constantly changing with new inputs and outputs in the feedback process. Each of these internal systems — transportation, health, safety, education, and the like — must fit in with all the others if the whole network is to operate smoothly. One studies, then, both the totality and the contact points between the parts, or the interfaces, and develops alternative strategies for reaching defined goals. Prediction of differential results now allows decision-makers to decide on appropriate choices. By adopting the rational, precise systems approach, the intricate character of the metropolis can, in analytical terms at least, take on a manageable quality (Wood 1968).

The belief in manageability occupies an important place in the urban planner’s, administrator’s, and citizen’s conceptual framework. As with any individual facing an overwhelmingly complicated situation, he may be tempted to lapse into despair at the prospect of having to cope with it. The next stage finds him rationalizing his ensuing lethargy as the only feasible response under such unmanageable circumstances. If urban services are to be effectively delivered to the city population, manageability, then, both as conviction and as technical skill, must be enhanced.

But the delivery aspect forms only one part of the urban process. The others involve research and planning, and effective sectoral communication.

Sound planning can occur only if one reckons simultaneously with the possibility of utopia and the actual behavior and values of the city populace. Thus, research of all kinds is called for to reach an understanding — not only of the systems network and the nature of its interfaces, but also of each internal system composing it. The latter’s structure and the way in which it functions, formally and informally, warrants investigation. At another level the focus on the metropolitan network as a single unit broadens into one encompassing the entire region or the

national society; in this context the city becomes only one of several internal systems under scrutiny.

Different alternative strategies now develop relevant to this reorganization. Because they must recognize the need to integrate the city with adjacent non-urban systems, solutions evolve that may sacrifice metropolitan improvement for investment in some other area. Thus, it is conceivable that top decision-makers may favor a deliberate policy of strengthening the smaller Philippine cities over investing further in Manila. On the other hand, a national strategy seeking to give the total export economy a boost might advance Manila's fortunes by leading to the extensive development of her port facilities. It is clear that a metropolis of this size can be viewed at varying levels, a reflection of its dominant role in national, regional, and local affairs. The point is, given this complexity, research and planning using the systems-analysis approach can yield the kinds of understandings that foster sound development.

Basically, systems analysis operates on a communication model. Yet ironically, mutually productive contact between metropolitan planners and administrators has remained weak. The public hears much of comprehensive city plans, but little of their execution. This gap between theory and practice appears in even more pronounced fashion between urban planners and administrators, on the one hand, and the urban citizenry, on the other.

Part of the reason is that except for those contacts which low-income neighborhood residents may make with politicians through their ward leaders, or middle- and upper-income residents with officials through personal and institutional links, the city's bureaucracies do not generally invite the opinions of their clientele in the decision-making process. The increasing frustration of the citizenry at not having a direct voice in policy-making finds expression in the demonstrations and rallies that have become almost daily fare for Manilans. Seeking power through collective mass action is gaining ground as a strategy, especially in urban settings.

The same principle translated into a neighborhood community setting dominates the activities of groups like the Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO). Using militant confrontation tactics when called for, its members have successfully negotiated a number of signed agreements with private and government agencies regarding the pursuit of agency programs involving their neighborhood. Early in October 1971, a milestone in "people power" vis-a-vis government agencies was reached with the joint signing by ZOTO and the People's Homesite and Housing Corporation (PHHC) of a significant document. This was an agreement, giving ZOTO members, among other things, a say in the design and administration of the proposed PHHC Tondo condominium plan. Such breakthroughs mark the beginning of efforts at forging new structures and processes for increasing communication between the mass base and urban planners and administrators. These innovations may ultimately arrest urban apathy, decay, and disorder in favor of a renewal based on concern, growth, and sound citizen organization in the metropolis.

An ecological outlook. Until recently the modern Filipino, like most educated people the world over, has assumed that progress depends on harnessing natural forms of energy and re-fashioning his environment to suit man's needs. Suddenly he has begun to realize that the earth's resources are not limitless, that his insatiable demands take their toll on nature's ability to replenish her supply. Thus, given the increasing population of indiscriminate loggers and *kaingeros*, the forest cover cannot restore itself fast enough to continue absorbing water and holding back the mountain soil. The results — flooded cities, a problem heightened by the sea-level location of most large Philippine cities, and power failures bringing brownouts and dry water taps in their wake.

With the same rampant disregard for the recycling involved in the earth's resource production, the Filipino industrialist takes its riches and dumps end-process wastes into an increasingly septic stream or bay nearby. Few of his kind have invested in waste disposal or treatment

plants in their own recycling of profits. Toiletless urban sea-coast dwellers follow suit with their personal wastes. The government, meanwhile, offers them no feasible alternatives to this sorry state. Industrialists, for example, might be given anti-pollution tax incentives. Squatters might be provided with "planned slums," a concept which would have the government provide low-income or squatter settlements with the basic amenities of water, sanitation, electric power, and road layouts; residents would take care of home building. The result could be an ecologically viable site.

Man's exploitative adaptation to his environment reflects a short-sighted view, both spatially and temporally. The Manilan patronizes the jeepney because it will allow him to ride rather than walk two blocks. But he pays the price in the long run by having to inhale the fumes of thousands of jeepneys catering to this desire for immediate comfort. Moreover, the resulting haze that now forms a permanent part of Manila's sky cover adds a grey pall to his already drab setting, and may affect neighboring field crops in ways we have not yet fathomed. Further, if he thinks his life is adversely affected, let him consider the fate of future generations of Filipinos. Allowing rivers like the Pasig to reach a near-irreversible level of pollution means that his children and their children will have to apply massive inputs to rehabilitate it should they decide their health and aesthetic dreams require this. What we do with Laguna de Bay today will affect our children's lives many years from now, hopefully in an ecologically positive way. Every tree cut down and open space turned into a concrete base for roads, parking lots, or buildings diminishes further the fresh air supply and increases temperatures in this tropical city. Rehabilitation is far costlier than prevention.

What is needed is a change in outlook, a departure from the view that the earth exists mainly to serve man. Instead we need to cultivate the awareness that man and his earth are linked in a precarious symbiotic relationship. A change in the relationship can bring great harm to both man and environment if it is not carefully

studied and evaluated. Nature is, McHarg reminds us (1968:210), "a creative, interacting process in which man is involved with all other life forms." Because man above all creatures is endowed with the ability to understand this relationship, he must take on the role of steward. In so doing, he should also recognize his responsibility to nurture not only his own city or nation, but the entire planet as well. As the earth's resources are not limitless, neither does his biosphere generate infinite quantities of oxygen. Spaceship Earth can maintain life only if a dynamic, mutually supportive equilibrium integrates occupants and craft.

Like many other men, the Filipino has too long adopted a literal translation of the Biblical injunction which has God decreeing to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

While the rural Filipino still tries to live in harmony with nature and placate the spirits he believes surround him, his lack of scientific knowledge about cause and effect in nature has led to the despoiling of the land. His urban brother's equivalent behavior finds less excuse; education should have taught him better. As thinking men and women interested in saving our cities, we need to listen before it is too late to the ecologists' plea for stewardship of our resources. God's command, they tell us, implies this concept rather than the earlier cited, commonly accepted one of domination. And for proof they again quote Genesis (2:1): "The Lord God planted Man in a garden of delight to dress and to tend it."

Let us fervently respond "Amen" to that.

Notes

¹Unless specifically limited to refer to the City of Manila, the use of Manila or Manilans pertains to the metropolitan area which includes the City of Manila, the three adjacent suburban cities, Caloocan, Pasay and

Quezon, and the four surrounding Rizal municipalities of Makati, Mandaluyong, Navotas, and San Juan.

²The four provinces and 20 municipalities involved are the following: Bulacan – Meycauyan, Valenzuela; Cavite – Bacoor, Kawit, Noveleta, Rosario, Cavite City; Laguna – Biñan, San Pedro, Santa Rosa; Rizal – Cainta; Las Piñas, Malabon, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Pasig, Pateros, Taguig, Taytay.

³Intensive surveys of two depressed areas of Manila done by the Institute of Philippine Culture; Ateneo de Manila indicate much higher levels of unemployment. In the Pag-asa section of Malate it was 28 per cent in October 1970 (Makil and Juanico 1971:17); in Vitas, Tondo, the figure was 21 per cent in the April to September 1971 period.

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