

ABSTRACT

A Study of Changes in Urbanization and Occupational
Mobility of the Thai Labour Force

by

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This study examines changes in the degree of urbanization in various types of a community and an individual's mobility in the three major occupational groups, agriculture, industry and service. Information was obtained from two levels, 1) a community level: a total of 503 communities was sampled from the 1970 and 1980 data tapes of Population and Housing Censuses, and 2) a personal level: a total of 720 households was sampled including 1,294 individuals of 35 years and over, selected for the survey and interviewed concerning their individual working experiences over the period 1970, 1980 and 1985.

The methodological analysis is divided into 3 types: 1) the degree of urbanization of a community and social status of a labourer are measured and grouped by the factor analysis method, 2) the significant variables affecting change in the degree of urbanization and in an individual's social status mobility were analyzed by the multiple regression method, and 3) the contextual analyses of effects from the structural characteristics of a community and from the personal characteristics which are interactive with the social status mobility of an individual were tested by the hierarchical regression method.

Results and Recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. The degree of urbanization of a community is widely classified into 3 parts, the high, middle and low levels. The measurement adopted in the study yields results that are the local government division of communities by Department of Local Government, the Ministry of Interior. Most of the highly urbanized communities are municipal areas, while most of the middle urbanized communities are the sanitary areas, and most the low urban communities are the rural villages. The measurement can be used to identify which communities should be reclassified, since their status is not consistent with the official urban classification, so that these communities can be developed according to their appropriate status.

The measurement of an individual's social status shows consistent results. Those who have high status scores live in municipal areas; these with moderate scores in sanitary areas, and those with low scores in rural areas. This indicates the appropriateness of the set of variables used for status measurement at the both levels.

2. Among the set of causal variables, two factors, economic and sociological, show significant, positive effects on urban status. They are: 1) the interactive variables of economically active manpower and the higher educated persons proportion, and 2) the interactive variables of the male labour force and migration rate. On the other hand, a demographic factor, the interactive variables of dependency ratio and fertility rate show a negative effect.

Similarly, at the individual level, education and migration experiences show significant, positive effects on a person's social status, while fertility shows a negative effect.

3. As for the urban area, trends of the urban growth rate and the social status mobility over 10 years (1970-1980) change in the same direction. For example, a community or a person which has an initial low status shows the tendency to have greater decrease in status at the destination point, while an initial middle status or an initial high one shows a greater increase in status. However, as for the rural area, much of the growth tends to show a converse direction; i.e., a decrease in urban change of a low level community where a person has an upward mobility, and an increase of urban change of a higher level community where a person has a downward mobility.

The main causes of an initial high status of people in rural area becoming poorer are explained in that while a primary, or agricultural, community is developing to a secondary, or industrial, community, most of the beneficiaries are returned among those of non-local people who had invested on industrial expansion from the land uses. Thus, the role and status of the local landlords changes since there is a lack of regular income from the land rent. Their work status changes from "land owners" to "wage earners" in the agriculture or industry sector, etc.

On the other hand, a progressive status change appears for those who have an initial low status but who live in an urban growth community. With the decrease in agricultural land utilization, people have greater opportunity to change their work status from a wage-earning farmer to a wage-earning industrial worker. A further point is that these people gain more income from their children who migrated to work in other cities and who send money back to their parents.

4. Analysis of interactive factors between the personal characteristics (education, migration and fertility) and the community structure

resources (including gross domestic products, taxation and urban score) show that the personal variables by themselves and the community variables by themselves have a negative association to a person's status mobility. When all of the six variables of both levels are mixed or analyzed together, they have positive effects on personal mobility. This implies that, in general, the development of a community's structure will affect people living in that community. If we analyze each occupational group, the results are different. For example, in the agriculture group, the community structure factors have a positive effect on an individual's status mobility but when the personal factors (e.g. fertility) are mixed with the community structure factors, there is a negative effect on personal mobility. Thus, the person who is a farm labourer and who lives in an urban community will exhibit downward mobility if he or she has a large number of children (i.e., high fertility).

Moreover, it is also found that interrelationships of various social, demographic and economic factors changes in urban status or an individual's social status show a diversity of effects among the regions or other locality types. These findings can be used to assess which factors affect community and personal status change. The findings suggest that some sanitary districts or villages had urban status scores showing that they should be promoted or reclassified to an appropriate level. It is further recommended that national development planners should take into consideration the integration of those factors of a community structure which associate with personal characteristics and branches of occupation.