

The Politics of Urban Poor Housing: State and Civil Society Dynamics

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This article examines the dynamics of power relations between the state and civil society on the urban poor's housing needs given the political and governance framework that emerged after the ouster of Marcos in 1986 and the passage of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. In this period, the urban poor increasingly shaped their sectoral identity around the defining issues of housing, lack of security of land tenure, and poverty. By organizing and mobilizing community based and sectoral organizations, mediated by allied NGOs, the urban poor gained political leverage in elections and policy formulation. The urban poor eventually gained access to resources for their security of land tenure for housing by engaging the state in policy formulation resulting in favorable legislation. One social housing scheme adopted by government, the Community Mortgage Program, illustrates this structural and process interface and co-sharing of responsibilities of three principal stakeholders: the national government, the mediator NGOs or local governments, and the beneficiary urban poor community association.

Introduction

In the Philippines, the rise of the urban poor sector since the 1970s has shaped national and local politics and governance practices. Urban poor-based peoples

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organizations and affiliated non-government organizations (NGOs) organized, mobilized and participated in the civil society movement that contested the Marcos regime in the 1970s. The urban poor gained identity and political leverage as a distinct sector that enabled them to participate in electoral politics and policy making processes after the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution – now referred to as EDSA I.

Among poverty-related causes, urban poor organizations placed their housing need as a critical priority, causing conflict between them and the state. Their policy advocacy reached the executive and legislative arena of policy making as the Philippine state accommodated civil society participation in a framework of democracy and governance stipulated in the 1987 Constitution, crafted and ratified immediately after EDSA I.

Policy advocacy by civil society pro-urban poor non-government organizations and people's organizations yielded positive results on housing policies and programs favorable to their cause. In electoral politics, the groups' political leverage was shown by the power of their votes and political support particularly as cultivated by then President Joseph Estrada. In a series of presidential proclamations, the successor president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, has also been solicitous in granting land for urban poor housing. In electoral politics and policy processes, the engagements of the state and the pro-poor NGOs and urban poor community-based associations effected innovative policies that shaped the governance system for urban poor housing after EDSA I.

In this context, this article presents the dynamics of politics and governance involving the state and the civil society's urban poor organizations and pro-urban poor NGOs on the issue of the urban poor's housing need. It examines the state's responses through policies that formalized the governance system on urban poor housing with participative and interactive roles of the state – national

and local government, the non-government organizations, and the urban poor associations.

In the framework of politics and governance, the non-state actors were able to develop access to power and resources and interacted with the state on their concerns. On the other hand, the state used its powers to accommodate and respond to non-state actors according to its constitution, laws, policies, and administrative system. Theoretical discourses have explored the definition and operationalization of the concept of governance – pertaining to the relationship between state and civil society and the participation of groups in society in political and state-government decision-making.

In the Philippine context, power relations have long been viewed in terms of patron-client politics, otherwise referred to as patronage politics or as political clientelism; and recently, from the perspective of machine politics, particularly in electoral politics (Lande 2002). Power relations are expected to have changed given the governance framework and system that emerged since EDSA I (1986). The access to power and participation of the urban poor sector in the governance system for housing is described and explained in this article.

First, the article locates urban poor identity in the context of urbanization and issues of poverty that deprive the urban poor of power and differentiate their concerns from that of the rural poor. The main issue of security of land tenure for housing, constitutes a major concern of the urban poor, among other needs such as livelihood, income, water, energy, and other basic services for better quality of life and well-being. The urban poor's political leverage is traced to the organizing and mobilizing of urban poor community based and people's organizations, with facilitative roles by non-government organizations addressing the urban poor housing agenda. This sector's political leverage vis-à-vis

political leaders, the state, and government, is indicated by their organized force in electoral politics and in policy making that have resulted in policies and programs favorable to the urban poor's housing need.

Second, it identifies the major state legislation of social policies to address the specific nuances of urban poor housing need and allow urban poor access to state resources. Civil society – composed of housing NGOs and urban poor people's organizations, community-based housing associations, was engaged in the politics of policymaking for landmark legislation. This article asserts that the policies and program for housing the urban poor significantly shaped the formal institutional arrangement for governance on urban poor issues.

Third, the discussion concentrates mainly on the ensuing dynamics of interactions among the state, civil society, and the urban poor organizations. The case of one housing program, the Community Mortgage Program, is examined to describe and analyze the dynamics of politics and governance at the ground level of policy and program implementation.

At the outset, it is argued that the urban poor acquired political leverage vis-à-vis the state and government through organizing and mobilizing with mediation by civil society housing non-government organizations and community housing associations. As this was applied on electoral politics and policy making processes, the urban poor gained access to state resources favorable to their housing need through formulation of social policies and a pioneering housing program.

It is significant that social housing policies made a breakthrough given the traditional dominance of economic housing in state policies. Such policies established the institutional arrangement for the engagement of co-

participants, namely the state, civil society, and the people on urban poor housing needs.

Data gathering methods included document research and literature review; participant observation in consultative processes and discussions; site visits to selected communities with operational urban poor housing programs in various parts of the Philippines; and interviews among sample non-government organizations, urban poor groups, and national agencies involved in housing. Data sources on the Community Mortgage Program included different surveys and evaluation studies covering varying sample sites nationwide. The literature review and secondary data proved useful in analyzing the case studies. One study covered twelve sample LGU originators: Naga City, Puerto Princesa, Bacolod, Davao, Mandaluyong, and Muntinlupa; and two or more samples, respectively, of community homeowners associations or a total of fourteen samples (Rebullida 1998). Another study (Rebullida 1999b) covered Luzon based sample originators by type (NGO, National Government Agency, Local Government Unit) with at least 18 sample communities.

Governance: Political Dimension, Indicators, Actors

The literature and discourses on governance define the concept in varying ways but essentially point to inter-linked political and administrative dimensions. With the governance framework, the analysis of power veers away from the traditional focus on the state and government and directs attention to other non-state actors, structures, and processes.

For instance, the emphasis on power relations can be seen in McCarney's definition of governance (1996: 4-5) as the *relationship between civil society and state, between rulers and ruled, government and governed; including civil associations, private sector organizations, community groups*

and social movements. On the other hand, the Institute on Governance (2002) formulated the working definition of governance as the "process by which stakeholders articulate their interests, their input is absorbed, decisions are taken, and decision-makers are held to account."

The link of politics and administration is evident in the view that governance is "administering in a political context" and "directing competence toward the broadest possible public interest," as articulated by Green and Hubbell (1996). In another sense, Ellison (1998:3) considers governance as a shift from old public administration to new public management and characterized by the following: decentralized, diverse, localized service delivery; inter-linked sectors; empowerment, "outward" accountability, performance orientation, advocacy-orientation of the civil service), and organizational competence. Brilliantes (1998: 48) links governance to democracy and decentralization with best practices criteria such as: effectiveness of service delivery, positive socio-economic and/or environment impact, promotion of people empowerment, and transferability.

There are many other attempts to define governance, to set indicators, and to apply these to specific concerns; hence, governance for the environment, poverty alleviation, women and gender, productivity, among others. Furthermore, the terms local governance, macro-national governance, international governance are used in referring to the level by which governance occurs.

Applied on processes of change, governance means transformations in the relationships of actors – government, civil society, people (sectors thereof, as the poor, the women, among others). For instance, Angeles (2000), focusing on the poor and the women in particular, refers to governance as "how relationship between government, civil society, and poor people is altered or maintained in the course of government's poverty reduction efforts (p.58)." Such

transformation of relationship between rulers and ruled allows the poor, the women, to make choices, exercise decision making powers, gain access to resources, and acquire political influence that can ensure their needs are met, their rights respected, and their priorities addressed (p.58).

From the United Nations perspective (UNDP 2002; UNEP 2001a, b), governance is a system – a governance system with social and economic structures, legal and political structures within which humanity organises itself. Furthermore, it is not just mere governance but good governance with indicators as participation of civil society, decision making processes with formal and informal actors' involvement, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability.

It is evident from the conceptual and research literature that governance constitutes a complex of political, economic, social, technical, and administrative processes. But how can governance be operationalized; how can this be observed empirically, even measured? Attempts at developing governance indicators have already produced many lists. The common features of these lists are the following categories: administrative, technical, institutional, development, political indicators (Mendoza 2000; Razon-Abad, Gregorio-Medel, and Brilliantes 2002).

In *governance politics*, the political dimension of governance is highlighted more than its administrative or management dimension. The *governance system* consists of the structures and actors, their respective roles, and the processes of interaction. Politics in governance finds expression in the powers exercised respectively by the actors; the processes by which such powers were acquired and exercised by actors; the policies and institutional arrangements that define the extent of powers; and, the

roles and responsibilities of actors, including the dynamics of such relationships.

Civil society and the state constitute the two main actors in governance politics; hence, vital concepts for discourses. In Philippine context, empirical and theoretical propositions can be drawn from civil society participation in governance that characterized the era of post-1986 EDSA people power Revolution.

Empirically, civil society in the Philippines employed varying and mixed strategies for entry into the policy processes (Wui and Lopez 1997:8). It used Congress as a primary battleground by participation and membership in consultative or technical bodies, by lobbying – submission of position papers, bill drafting; likewise, elections by endorsement of candidates during the years these were held. Also, rallies, strikes, demonstrations, mass action dramatized the cause of civil society. Essentially, partnership with state agencies on projects and activities, networking with the state and other civil society actors, proved to be major highlights of civil society behavior in governance. At the local government unit, civil society found its way into local government bodies and regional development councils as provided by the law (Wui and Lopez 1997: 9-10).

As a key participant in governance and its political dimension, civil society is perceived as the groups and individuals interacting on matters of collective concern, distinct from the state but interacting with the state (Ferrer 1997:7); civil society is independent from the state but civil society deals with society to negotiate, transact, secure its power (Co 1996: 192). Co cites Fr. John Carrol, S.J. who refers to civil society as an “organized citizenry” and the “concentrated expression of citizens that can bargain, negotiate, pressurize the state through the use of citizen power by virtue of plurality and organized strength (cited in Co 1996: 195). Hence, such organized collectivity results

in power to influence, to assert. Civil society participation and people participation denote collective action for various purposes such as "to seek information, demand accountability, assist public agencies in the production of goods and services, monitor the policies and programs of government (Gaffud and Termulo, 2000:218).

Comprising the collective entity of civil society are non-government organizations (NGOs) considered as intermediary organizations, people's organizations (POs), and community based people's organizations (CBOs) considered as the primary organizations (Shatkin 1999: 33 following Berner 1997). Such distinctions can help clarify civil society and establish the level of stakeholders' actions vis-à-vis the state. With Philippine realities, deriving the theoretical substance and definition of non-government organizations from historical and empirical analysis has not been easy but non-government organizations are considered as private, nonprofit, voluntary organizations established primarily to work for socioeconomic, sociopolitical, or sociocultural development. The definition includes cooperatives but excludes civic, religious, business groups. NGOs are further distinguished from people's organizations and community based organizations (Gonzales 1996; Alegre 1996).

Gavin Shatkin (1999:49) distinguishes the concept of people's organization from the concept of community based organization. He proposes that community based organizations (CBO) be understood as primary organizations made up of residents of a locality; as the arrangements and associations formed and located within the local space or immediate residential surroundings of actors, found to be prevalent in the Philippines (Shatkin 1999: 33). This is instructive because indeed there are organizations that are larger sectoral organizations that may aptly be called people's organizations as these stand between primary community based organizations and the non-government organizations.

For the purposes of this article, the conceptual distinctiveness of civil society groups is relevant to understand the types of urban poor groups in civil society, particularly in the Philippine setting. The principal actors are the urban poor non-government organizations, NGOs that are pro-urban poor housing, people's organizations, and community based organizations – neighborhood associations, community housing associations.

The effects of civil society on the state, whether adverse or not, and the responses of the state to civil society make up another domain of discourse – as revisiting the theory of the state and civil society (Contreras 1999) or reexamining its implications on democracy (Wui and Lopez 1997; Ferrer 1997), which cannot be taken up in this article.

Participation in governance calls attention to the identity of those involved or seeking to be involved. Groups in society such as women, indigenous peoples, and others traditionally considered as marginalized, have developed their respective group identity to challenge the actions, even the legitimacy, of the state (Contreras 1999) and to gain access to resources of the state for their concerns and needs.

Urban poor identity in civil society with housing as their "populist urban poor issue" is uniquely and empirically anchored on the historical setting of the 1970s and through the post-1986 EDSA people power revolution (Karaos 1993; Karaos, Gatpatan, Hertz 1995; Shatkin 1999). In this scenario, governance politics encompasses the processes and capacities by which the urban poor acquired their group or sector identity and political leverage, in terms of power to affect electoral politics by their votes and number and policy making in favor of their housing need that was not possible to them in the past.

To some extent, the landmark pro-urban poor housing policies demonstrate the kind of power exercised by the urban

poor, and also the responsiveness of both executive and legislature. The legislation of social policies for housing is a major turning point in Philippine policy making because of the long term predisposition toward economic policies. Social policy is a type of public policy that stipulates state investment or expenditure or subsidy for actions that favor the low income population based on need rather than on market forces, demand, and income (Llanto and Orbeta 2001).

The Urban Poor in Civil Society: Identity, Housing Need, Political Leverage

Identity and Housing Need

The urban poor's identity has been shaped by the nature of their housing conditions, as well as, by other characteristics of poverty. For a long time, the urban poor were referred to as "squatters" as they did not have any legal basis for using land for housing. They were called slum dwellers, to denote the blighted conditions of their settlements – deprived of basic facilities and services, usually lacking in sanitation. Also, they were referred to as makeshift dwellers, for their use of untenable housing materials (Endriga 1999: 19). Recently, however, it has been more appropriate to call them "urban poor informal settlers".

Data from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB 2003) showed the nationwide poverty incidence at 34.2% in 2000 from 31.8% in 1997. Varying measures such as food or subsistence threshold, poverty threshold, land tenure and housing characterize the urban poor (Rebullida, Endriga, Santos, 1999:20). That they are called urban poor derives mainly from the location of their housing in cities and urban areas – determined as such according to criteria set up by law (RA 7279; surveys of the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor). NSCB data showed that in urban areas, poverty incidence increased to 20.4% in 2000 from 17.9% in 1997; while in rural areas, 47.4% in

2000 from 44.4% in 1997. Annual per capita poverty threshold for entire Philippines was P11,319 in 1997 rising to P13,916 in 2000; urban areas at P12,577 in 1997 to P15,667 in 2000; while rural areas at P10,178 in 1997 to P12,232 in 2000. In terms of number of poor families the number has increased from 4,511,151 in 1997 to 5,215,420 in 2000 nationwide. Just for the urban areas, the number of poor families increased from 1,208,436 in 1997 to 1,531,481 in 2000 (NSCB 2003).

With evidence from baseline data of NGOs engaged in urban poor housing and empirical survey research (Rebullida 1998; Rebullida 1999b; Hasik 1997; Philssa 2001), the urban poor is described as working in the informal economy, usually in seasonal or temporary or part-time jobs, with incomes below the poverty line. For Metro Manila alone, NGO groups describe the urban poor, comprising half of the estimated 10 million metropolitan population, as informal settlers occupying marginal public and private lands, in riverbanks, esteros, garbage dumps, railroad tracks (Philssa 2001:12). In the mapping of the basic sectors for the national anti-poverty sectoral agenda (NAPC 2001), the urban poor is differentiated from other poverty sectors in the population, namely, the farmers, fisherfolk, indigeneous peoples, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and victims of calamities.

In the wide spectrum of poverty issues, housing stands as a major problem of the urban poor. In terms of the conventional framework of housing demand, they are aptly described as "poor, marginalized, and deprived" since with very low incomes, they cannot afford the costs of housing and cannot avail of government and private sector housing financial schemes. Clearly, government's anti-poverty agenda stipulated major issues of the urban poor sector as broader access to and security in basic needs particularly housing (socialized housing) and land, contrasted from the other poverty sectors in the population (National Anti-Poverty

Commission 2001; 1998 Republic Act 8425 The National Anti-Poverty Commission; 2001 Administrative Order No. 21).

Hence, it has been argued that the urban poor do not have access to conventional economic housing policies and programs offered by government and the private sector that are based on income, affordability, and demand. Urban poor incomes cannot accommodate the interest rates and monthly amortization. Due to their lack of legal basis in occupying land for housing, the urban poor are subject to eviction. They have not been receptive to the Philippine government's relocation and resettlement programs that were implemented since the 1950s due to the lack of basic services, amenities, employment opportunities in the sites.

Political Leverage

The urban poor's political leverage consists not only in their numbers translated into votes but most strategically in their organizational capacity for action. With housing as their strategic issue, the character and actions of three major urban poor organizations have been described as constituting a social movement. In the 1970s, these groups were the *Zone One Tondo Organization*, the *Pagkakaisa ng Maralitang Tagalungsod*, and the *(Samahang Maralita para sa Makatao at Makatarungang Paninirahan* or shortened as the *Sama-sama* (Karaos 1993:71-91). In the study of the *Sama-sama*, Murphy et. al. (2001) described it as a social movement of the urban poor and credited to be one of the longest and biggest organizing efforts among the urban poor, with women taking active roles as they infused the organization with their aspirations for land on which to build their homes. Triggered by government threats of demolition of their dwelling units and eviction from the land, these organizations and urban poor social movement gained momentum and pursued the cause of housing and better living conditions in their settlements (Rebullida,

1999:35-46; Karaos, 1993:76-78, 84-85). Eventually politicized into ideological alignments and drawn into the struggle against the Marcos regime, the urban poor organizations formed networks, coalitions, alliances (Shatkin, 1999:33; Karaos, 1993:79; Rocamora, 1993: 1-18).

Hence, by the time of EDSA I, the urban poor organizations' positioning in civil society was quite well-configured derived from experiences of community organizing and mobilizing during the Marcos regime around the issue of housing. Eventually, the mediation of non-government organizations with pro-urban poor housing agenda (referred to Housing NGOs) helped in empowering communities and organizing them into urban poor community-based housing associations, sectoral people's organizations. Eventually, they formed networks, coalitions, and other multisectoral groups.

In 1986, immediately after EDSA I, the urban poor organizations, networks, coalitions, clamored for the creation of the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP) to coordinate speedy implementation of urban poor policies and programs including those that are shelter related (Executive Order Bo. 82). In different parts of the country, accounts of community organizing and mobilization were reported. By 2002, the number of accredited urban poor organizations was significant: in Luzon 106; in Visayas, 134; and in Mindanao, 887 (PCUP 2003).

In Metro Manila, the *Sama-sama* urban poor organization continued to work vigorously and succeeded in resisting eviction and gained 150 hectares for their homes in the National Government Center set up during the Aquino administration; and, later availed themselves of the slum upgrading program during the Ramos administration (Murphy 2001:3-4).

In Naga City, the core of 9 local urban poor organizations that constituted the Naga City Urban Poor Federation in 1986 expanded to 59 (Angeles 1997:98) and then to 70 (Kawanaka 1998:22), facilitated by the COPE Foundation, a non-government organization. The strategies were varied for community empowerment and engagement in local electoral politics and policy intervention such as lobbying, dialogue, forums, petitions, coalition building, alliances, participation in protest rallies and mass actions, even those led by political blocs (Angeles 1997:97-110). In local electoral politics, the urban poor organizations succeeded in engaging mayoral candidate Jesse Robredo to sign a covenant that committed him to address their concerns when elected. Upon assumption to office, Robredo immediately created the Urban Poor Affairs Office (UPAO), consulted the urban poor organizations in determining its functions, and began pioneering programs for land acquisition and security of land tenure for housing of urban poor communities.

In many urban and urbanizing areas in the country, particularly the cities and municipalities in Metro Manila (Manila, Quezon City, Marikina, Mandaluyong, Muntinlupa), Davao and Bacolod, among others, local chief executives prioritized housing programs for the urban poor (Rebullida 1998). Relationships of mutual benefit existed between community beneficiaries who voted for political leaders and political leaders who ensured that public services particularly for housing favored the communities.

The data show that from 1986, non-government organizations emerged and that these facilitated the organizing and mobilizing of community based and people's organizations, as well as, the building of coalitions, networks and alliances. From opposing eviction and demolition, they moved to advocacy for land acquisition, security of land tenure, and access to government financing for their housing need. Their combined strength at policy advocacy

succeeded in the enactment of major landmark legislation and executive orders. Among the non-government organizations active in urban poor housing were the following: the Foundation for Development Alternatives (FDA), Urban Poor Associates (UPA), Foundation for the Development of the Urban Poor Alterplan (FDUP), Community Organizers-Multiversity (CO-TRAIN), Harnessing Self-Reliant Initiatives and Knowledge, Inc. (HASIK), Partnerships of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA), Community Organization of the Philippines (COPE), Urban Poor Colloquim (UPC), and the Congress of CMP Originators, the members of which consist of NGOs acting as originators for urban poor housing loans through the national government's Community Mortgage Program and social development organizations such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

Civil Society Advocacy and State Policy Responses

After EDSA I, the alliance, network, coalition of NGOs and urban poor organizations took the track of policy advocacy upon the executive which was a speedier route for immediate action. Then, in parallel efforts, they pressed upon the legislature for landmark legislation for social housing policies favorable to their housing need. Even after the policy pronouncements, they continued sustained vigilance upon national government housing agencies and local government to ensure implementation.

The Content of Urban Poor Policy Advocacy

NGOs and urban poor organization engaged in the cause of urban poor housing succeeded in gaining access to state resources and into the formal institutional arrangements for governance. Essential to this process was the instrumentality of urban poor organizing and mobilizing that gave them political leverage for policy advocacy. The urban poor groups dared to redefine their housing problem

as one of housing need arising from the inadequacy of their income, lack of affordability, and lack of access to the housing market and finance.

Urban poor advocacy pressed the legislature for social housing policy on security of land tenure and the executive for a comprehensive national shelter plan. For instance, the Alternative Planning Initiatives (Alterplan), a non-government organization asserted the alternative principle of urban poor housing need as basis for social policy versus housing demand that underlie the government's economic housing policy. It argued that the urban poor cannot have housing demand by reason of their low income, which makes government and private sector housing finance schemes unaffordable and inaccessible to them.

The network organization, Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA), processed the *Collection of NGO-PO Positions on Issues and Concerns Regarding Human Settlements* as reference paper prepared for the People's Forum for Habitat II in 1995. The organization and its NGO network asserted the need for moratorium on forced evictions and demolition of urban poor settlements and advocated for the state to formulate a comprehensive and an integrated policy framework, plans, policies, and programs addressed at national land use policy, urban development, social housing and security of land tenure. The NGOs declared its opposition to forced eviction as contrary to international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlement, the Istanbul Habitat II Declaration. Government has the duty to allocate resources for its people to enjoy the right to adequate housing (Philssa 2001:12-13). Basically, they have consistently opposed forced demolition and evictions, and government programs of relocation and resettlement without prior consultations, because of detrimental effects on low income families and their children.

For long term solution, civil society-urban poor advocacy turned to the enactment of social policies, resulting in the landmark law, the 1992 Urban Development and Housing Act (Republic Act 7279) and other social housing policies. Arduous internal consultations within civil society and painstaking transactions of civil society upon the state agencies characterized the processes of urban poor advocacy to shape policy content (Karaos, Gatpatan, Hertz: 1995; Pulso 1991).

Landmark Social Housing Legislation

The state's legislative response came in the form of Republic Act 7279 entitled the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 (UDHA), a historic milestone and a victory for the urban poor. Essentially, the law is a declaration of the state that it will undertake a continuing program of urban land reform and housing. The law establishes people's participation in urban development; enjoins all local government units to implement the socialized housing program in the context of decentralization; and, encourages private sector involvement as developers and sources of financing. It mandates national agencies to participate in social housing.

The impact of the urban poor movement can be clearly seen in the policy content of UDHA, that is, socialized housing for the homeless poor in urban and resettlement areas, equitable land tenure system, regulation for more balanced urban-rural interdependence. The law declares that the state should "make available, at affordable cost, decent housing and basic services to the underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban centers and resettlement areas."

Civil society continued to engage the state in policy formulation resulting in the passage of Republic Act 7835, the Comprehensive and Integrated Shelter Financing Act of

1994 followed by implementing rules and regulations stipulating the National Shelter Plan components such as resettlement program, medium rise public and private housing, cost recoverable program, and local housing program (PHILSSA 1998 vol 1 :vii). The urban poor sector considered this piece of legislation as crucial in providing for a comprehensive and integrated shelter and urban development financing by increasing and regularizing the amount of budget support allocated to government's housing programs.

Executive Policy Responses to Urban Poor Politics and Policy Advocacy

Presidential politics after EDSA I was affected by the emergent political power of the urban poor sector in civil society. Both presidents Aquino and Ramos pursued innovative and pioneering national shelter plans, following the United Nations Global Shelter Strategy that enunciated the "enabling" role" of the state. This new role meant that the state will no longer be the direct provider but instead be an enabler or facilitator of civil society and private sector participation in housing provision. This formalized the processes for participation and roles of non-government organizations, people's organizations, local government, and the private sector as implementors and service providers for housing the urban poor. Executive Order 90 (1986) created the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to orchestrate all housing agencies for the National Shelter Plan (NSP) implementation. The agencies' mandates varied but coordinated by HUDCC for production, regulation, guarantees, mortgage financing, and funding embodied in respective housing programs. Other administrative policies supported the legislation and the shelter plans.

Also a major strategic milestone, the network of housing NGOs and urban poor organizations played a crucial part in formulating and implementing the Community Mortgage

Program (CMP), that has been lauded as the pioneering and innovative socialized housing program of the government. The governance system, in its political and administrative dimensions, can be observed in the CMP as it stipulated the spheres of action and interdependence of the national government, local government, non-government organization, and community based housing association. Urban poor families can avail themselves of CMP when they are organized into a community housing association. The total amount of the loan can be computed according to the income capacity of the urban poor families comprising the applicant association. The loan is applicable for types of uses: land acquisition, house construction, site development.

Despite problems in implementation, the CMP demonstrated the capacity and success of the urban poor in gaining access to state resources and shifting the government's approach to a new thrust of land acquisition and security of land tenure for housing. It also laid down a governance system with mechanisms and processes that became the sources of conflict between the state and the civil society

Subsequently, the urban poor enjoyed more pronounced political leverage as Joseph Estrada credited the sector as his mass base and declared his "Erap Para sa Mahirap" slogan and vision for poverty eradication. The Estrada administration declared mass housing as its centerpiece program (Executive order No. 159). Hence, during his incumbency, President Joseph Estrada officially distributed certificates of land titles for urban poor housing with public media exposure.

In the aftermath of the January 2001 EDSA II that deposed Joseph Estrada, the new president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo appeared cognizant of the power of the masses, of the urban poor, and their importance in drawing

political support for the new regime. Arroyo's executive policies activated the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor as the sole clearing house for demolition and eviction orders (Executive Order 152). Hence, Arroyo embarked on distribution of land titles to the urban poor accompanied by prime media coverage, and promising to put housing (target of 1 million for land titling) on the top of her anti-poverty plan (*PDI*, August 6, 2001; *PDI*, July 20, 2001). A series of Presidential Proclamations and issuances directed the use of hectares of land for various urban poor informal settlers and low income communities in different sites of the National Capital Region, the Cordillera Autonomous Region, Regions IV, V, VI, VII, XI, also in Caraga and Mindanao (HUDCC 2002).

Local Politics and Governance

At the local government level, political candidates and elected officials recognized the electoral strength of non-government organizations and people's organizations. As mentioned earlier, Naga City stood as a model for civil society action and policy responsiveness of the elected Mayor and Sanggunian-municipal council (JAngeles 1997; Sayos, Quisao, Manasan 1998; Rebullida 1998, 1999b; Balenton and Rebullida 2001). Similar patterns also occurred in other sites (as in Mandaluyong, Muntinlupa, Puerto Princesa, Davao, Bacolod, Quezon City) where political awareness led to organizing and mobilizing in at least one urban poor community, then in other communities with the spread of information. Local governments in these sites established offices for urban poor affairs and programs with budget allocation for land acquisition and urban poor housing. The Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor also registered the increasing number of accredited urban poor associations throughout the country and local government units with units for urban poor services (PCUP

The Governance System: The Case of the Community Mortgage Program

The structure and dynamics of the governance system for urban poor housing is demonstrated by the Community Mortgage Program (CMP). This is the most pioneering and innovative government program for land acquisition and security of land tenure. Even with problems in its implementation, the CMP Congress persistently clamored for improvements and continuity of government support as this has been most acceptable and affordable to the urban poor.

In the CMP's formal structure and processes, the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation (NHMFC) serves as the national government's principal implementing agency for the CMP. The NHMFC serves as the main provider of funds to pay the landowner for the piece of land which the applicant urban poor community housing/homeowners association (CHA) seek to acquire. To resolve risk problems, the CMP requires a loan originator serving as guarantor and provider of technical assistance to the applicant community housing association. Originators could be anyone of the following: national agency, non-government organization, public or private sector bank, civic organization, local government. The program requires a partnership between the loan originator (CMP Originator) and the urban poor community housing association for the loan application and until the individualization of the land title:

The governance system can be described as the tripartite engagement of the national government through the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, the accredited originator, and the duly registered community housing association. Each of these actors assumes specific roles and responsibilities that are inter-connected in the total system.

Briefly, the formal process requires that the community organize a community housing association and registers with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Then it files the application for the CMP loan with the originator of their choice. The community must also engage in savings mobilization with collection of at least two months to demonstrate capacity to pay. The NHMFC then proceeds with the different stages of loan processing as all requirements are submitted by the applicant. The critical points are the NHMFC's payment of the landowner and the transfer of land title from landowner to the community housing association. Each household pays monthly amortization to the community housing association which remits the collection to the NHMFC. After two years of compliance with amortization payments, the individualization or unitization of the land title begins. That is, each individual household-beneficiary receives the land title for the occupied piece of land, and amortizes until full payment of individual loan, and the originator's role ends.

The dynamics within this formal structure and processes can be described in terms of varying forms of conflict and cooperation between the government and originator, the originator and community association, and between them and the landowner. Empirical survey and case studies (Rebullida 1998, 1999b; Balenton and Rebullida 2001; Sayos, Quisao and Manasan 1998) have covered at least twelve (12) local government units, two (2) national agencies, three (3) major NGOs; and thirty two (32) community homeowners associations in different parts of the country.

Data show that local government units opted to serve as CMP originators, where the mayors and the local councils (Sanggunian) assumed vital roles by setting up the local office for urban poor affairs, and allocating and releasing the budget for urban poor housing. The mayors

served as negotiators in conflicts over land between the community and the landowner, particularly influencing the landowner to sell the price of land at a price affordable to the urban poor. In some LGUs like Naga City, Muntinlupa, and Mandaluyong, the mayors' political will was important in the LGU's use of their funds for bridge financing to offset the delays by the national government. Furthermore, administrative efficiency of the local office was important in satisfying the beneficiaries.

In the study sites of these twelve LGUs, implementation turned out to be dynamic and vigorous when the mayor led and championed the cause of housing the urban poor, particularly the CMP and making it a flagship program (Rebullida 1998, 1999b; Sayos, Quisao, Manasan 1998; J Angeles 1997; Balenton and Rebullida 2001). Inevitably, the beneficiaries-communities turned loyal to the mayor who made land acquisition and housing possible to them and translated this into votes during elections.

Generally, the sample LGUs and sample national agencies did not engage in community organizing and mobilization but were credited for information dissemination and technical assistance in the community associations' loan application and implementation processes. In such cases, the community associations variably learned about the CMP through the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor, from relatives in other communities with CMP loans, from NGOs, and from the LGUs. However, the local governments, compared to NGO originators, had the inherent capacity to provide basic services to the communities such as roads, electricity, water, as well as technical assistance rendered by its offices. Besides the CMP, the local governments also developed their programs similar to the CMP scheme but with the LGU as the provider of funds and land instead of the national government, derived from the mandate of the Local Government Code and the Urban Development and Housing Act.

On the other hand, NGO originators generally encompassed more roles than their LGU and national agency counterparts (Rebullida 1999b). With their own funding sources – local and international, the NGO originators generally helped communities from the stage of community organizing, setting up the community homeowners association and its registration, the loan application, and monitoring the community's payment of all counterpart costs and the collective monthly amortizations from individual households. Hence, NGO originators can be credited for their extensive community empowerment, mobilization, and participatory processes. With their provisions of training, technical assistance, coaching, monitoring in their respective communities, the NGO originators expected the community to be empowered, with functional community housing associations, capable leadership, and participatory membership. Some NGOs, such as the Foundation for Development of the Urban Poor provided bridge financing to the community association and some small loans to individuals. Other NGOs supported the NGO originator by programs of livelihood, financing, training, road construction, water supply. In some cases, the communities exhibited their empowerment by mutual help in house construction and site development.

A unique venture can be observed in the multisectoral arrangement of Muntinlupa City LGU through the support of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (Balenton and Rebullida 2001). The convergence involved the mayor's leadership, the active management of the local government's Urban Poor Affairs, the support of a mediating NGO – the Philippine Business for Social Progress), and a local facilitating NGO – the Muntinlupa Development Foundation, and representation of people's organizations in the Muntinlupa local government's multisectoral group.

On the part of the community housing association or community homeowners association, its part in the

governance system of the Community Mortgage Program included organizing, mobilizing, and managing the association. Its compliance with the requirements of the program indicated the level of empowerment, cohesion, participation, functionality. In some instances conflicts occurred between the association and the originator, between the association officers and the members, and between the community and landowner. Early on, the formation of the community association was a process of conflict resolution among the people, including the politics of electing officers. The functional community association learned to negotiate with the landowner, to resolve conflicts, and to mobilize efficient collection of monthly amortization to effect the individualization of the land title, which is the final goal to be achieved. The problems tested the operations of the governance system and threatened to obstruct the very purpose of people empowerment for land acquisition and security of land tenure.

The political dimension of governance can be also seen in the NGO originators' recourse to rallies and demonstrations against the national government particularly in the early years of implementation to dramatize bureaucratic politics and inefficiencies of the national implementing agency. The National Congress of CMP Originators and Social Development Agencies for Low Income Housing represent the major non-government organizations engaged as originators for this government program, of which 8 are based in Luzon, 12 in Visayas, 18 in Mindanao. Outside of this network, the NHMFC identified twenty (20) other NGOs in Luzon alone. The CMP NGO network consistently took the government to the task of reformulating its operational policies, including requirements that communities found difficult to comply and therefore slowed down the processes. Essentially, the conflicts were intense at some point, as NGO originators pressed the government for the immediate release of funds to speed up the payment of landowners and land acquisition.

Analysis and Conclusions

The urban poor sector has succeeded in shaping an identity within civil society and gaining political leverage in electoral politics and policy making demonstrated by access to state resources in the form of social housing legislation and executive policies at national and local levels of government. Data show that the urban poor acquired political leverage not only by sheer number but by the strength of their networks, coalitions, and alliances. Consequently, the urban poor sector has gained value for itself in electoral politics and access to state resources to meet their housing need.

Non-government organizations with a pro-urban poor agenda played a major role in building the urban poor sector by facilitating the empowerment, organizing, and mobilizing of community based people's organizations. Essentially, housing conditions characterized and defined the urban poor and served as a focal point of conflict with the state before and after EDSA I. Beginning with the struggles against eviction and demolition, the urban poor movement moved into policy advocacy for security of land tenure and housing as a human right.

In the governance framework, a new power relationship has taken place between the people and the state, between civil society and the state. Through its organizing and mobilizing efforts, civil society has developed access to governmental decision making and the people have become empowered to participate in government. The 1987 Philippine Constitution and especially the 1991 Local Government Code established a more people-oriented governance system by mandating governing principles and the mechanisms for civil society participation in government. In this new democratic space, the urban poor sector's coalition and network of non-government organizations and

people's organizations succeeded in exacting state response to their housing need by breakthrough and landmark legislation and executive policies at national and local levels of government. In the politics of governance, the demonstration of organizational and voting capacities gave significance to the urban poor in local and presidential elections, and consequently support from the elected officials for their housing agenda. The NGO and PO urban poor sector's new capacities and powers have been showcased in the passage of landmark social housing policies – the UDHA, CISFA, and the Community Mortgage Program.

Hence, *governance politics* consists in the new power relationships between state and the people, between the political leaders and the people; and, specifically between government and the urban poor sector. This challenges the framework of patronage politics that explains the passive and recipient roles of the masses vis-a-vis political leaders. In the governance framework, power relations tilted favorably for the urban poor, as the urban poor groups used strategies to obtain policies responsive to their advocacy.

The pro-urban poor social housing legislation and executive policies established the governance system for housing, including the structural and institutional arrangements, roles, responsibilities, and interaction processes between state-government and civil society NGOs and POs. Specifically, in the case of the Community Mortgage Program, the dynamics of interaction within the formal operational scheme actualized the capacity of the state, the NGO, the people's association for governance. But the experiences tend to show that the system is threatened unless the NGOs persist in monitoring and sustaining community empowerment; the people's organizations sustain its functionality; and, the state housing agencies pursue effective implementation. ❖

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