

Slums are for People: The Barrio Magsaysay Pilot Project in Philippine Urban Community Development, by Aprodicio A. Laquian (Honolulu, East West Center Press, 1971), xvi, 255 pages, US \$9.00

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In Third World Countries, urban housing programs lag far behind expanding urban populations. The result has been the mushrooming of squatter communities in all centers of urban growth. The sheer weight of population has pressured governments to devise programs to meet the issues raised by squatter and slum dwellers. *Slums are for People* is a study of one such program undertaken by the Philippine government in a squatter barrio in the crowded Tondo foreshoreland of the Manila port area.

In March 1966, the Presidential Arm on Community Development launched an urban community development project in Barrio Magsaysay, Tondo. The use of the community development approach, which had been employed for 10 years in the rural barrios of the Philippines, was a departure from previous government action taken against urban squatters. For almost two decades, the government had resorted to squatter eviction and relocation as a means to clear urban land. In 1965, the Macapagal administration built three multi-storied tenements in an attempt to relocate low-income people in social housing. The Barrio Magsaysay project in 1966 tried a different approach. Community development techniques were used in an effort to change the urban squatter barrios from within. Following the community-development goal of helping people help themselves, the project directors stimulated a variety of community action projects to enlist the efforts of the people of Barrio Magsaysay in their own behalf.

Slums are for People tells the story of these efforts while offering insights into life in an urban squatter community. Aprodicio A. Laquian, who directed the research side of the Barrio Magsaysay Pilot Project, draws a sociological rationale for urban squatting from the

information gathered by the action-research teams. Squatting, Laquian suggests, provides a transitional community for rural migrants as they seek a place in the city. The ability of some squatters to save, by avoiding the payment of rent, enhances their mobility into the larger urban society.

One of the unique features of the Barrio Magsaysay project was the use of the action-research methodology. The advantage of an action-research approach is that researchers can use information provided by community action workers and the research group can in turn re-cycle its insights into the work of the community action teams. The interaction between the research teams and the community action teams makes it possible for Laquian to provide a critique of the different phases of urban community development work. The ultimate effectiveness of community-development goals in an urban situation is, however, not seriously questioned. The community-development projects were, in fact, secondary concerns of the Barrio Magsaysay residents, whose primary struggle was for land rights.

Apart from this limitation, the major contribution of *Slums are for People* is the information it provides on an urban squatter community. Such communities in the Philippines are much discussed and generalized about, but until the Barrio Magsaysay study, there had been few accurate surveys which provided a close look at particular communities. Mary Hollnsteiner's paper on "Inner Tondo As a Way of Life" (*St. Louis Quarterly*, Vol. 5[1-2] 1967) broke ground with a study of Vitas, Tondo, a low-income slum community. Richard L. Stone and Joy Marsella's study, "Mahirap: A Squatter Community in a Manila Suburb" (in *IPC Papers*, No. 6; Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila Uni-

versity Press, 1968) provided an engaging account of a Makati squatter community. *Slums are for People* is a noteworthy addition to this sparsely cultivated field of study.

In the East West Center edition, Laquian makes three helpful additions to the original 1968 version, which was published by the Local Government Center, College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines. He has included a glossary of terms and, in the Appendix, a comprehensive government report

made by a special committee in 1968 on "Squatting and Slum Dwelling in Metropolitan Manila." This report collates and summarizes the latest statistics and material on the subject. He also provides a longer introduction to this edition, bringing his thinking on urban squatting up to date and discussing government action taken in relation to squatters since the Barrio Magsaysay project in 1966. Available in Philippine bookstores (at ₱8.00) is a 1969 reprint of the 1968 version, which includes the same appendix found in the Honolulu edition.