

THE TONDO FORESHORE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT

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In July, 1973, an international organization started a series of survey missions to the Philippines to investigate the urban conditions of Metro-Manila and to identify urban development projects for possible financing assistance. A Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Team was created by the Executive Secretary to provide counterpart assistance to these missions and subsequently identified an urban project in the Tondo Foreshore.

On the basis of the first mission's report which indicated strong interest in the Tondo Project, an Inter-Agency group was created to prepare a pre-feasibility study of the Tondo Project. The study was completed in three months and a second mission came to discuss its findings and promptly recommended the preparation of a formal project proposal.

A Tondo Foreshore Renewal Project Team was formed in January 1974 composed of technical personnel from the Development Academy of the Philippines, the Department of Public Works and Bureau of Public Works, in consultation with other government and academic institutions, to prepare an integrated plan for the renewal of the Tondo Foreshore area.

A resettlement program has been found to accompany many urban renewal experiences. The reclamation of 450 hectares of land in Navotas was chosen as the first alternative resettlement site for the families to be affected by the renewal. Further considerations, however, led to the final choice of the Dagat-Dagatan lagoon, situated primarily in the municipalities of Navotas, Malabon, Caloocan, and Manila.

The Project Team has now completed plans

which propose to (1) upgrade and re-develop the Tondo Foreshore Area and (2) develop a resettlement site in the Dagat-Dagatan area for the families affected by the Tondo Foreshore development program.

General Objectives

Increased urbanization under a variety of circumstances has developed a dual system of lifestyle in many countries — the Philippines being one where the majority find themselves correspondingly less capable of securing basic facilities and services. It has thus become a recognized role of the State to bridge the gap between social and economic developments in order to universalize the accessibility and delivery of basic social services. This is achieved through comprehensive development plans which include economic, social, physical and other aspects. Physical planning then is oriented towards the attainment of social or humane objectives in order to foster greater integration within the increasingly diversifying societies. This is based on the observation that physical conditions often directly reflect social inequities which are mostly unintended or at the least, undesired. Facilitating mechanisms are, therefore, needed in order to attain more readily the general economic, political, and social goals of a country. At the same time, there is the problem of identifying the most essential developments in order to avoid wastage of limited resources on unnecessary premature or over-ambitious plans. This problem entails careful consideration of the relevant factors in the empirical situation to formulate a comprehensive development plan.

The Squatter Problem

The Philippines shares with many developing countries the experience of uncontrolled urban settlement growth. This phenomenon has been attributed to several factors such as economic development, industrialization, perceived greater opportunities in urban centers, and rapid urban population increase as well as to various developments in rural areas such as agricultural under-employment, rural poverty and isolation, and even to natural disasters and other calamities. In unplanned economies, urbanization has normally resulted in the mushrooming of provisional settlements or shanty towns all over the city by migrants and newcomers. This is often accompanied by strong competition for space, and a greater demand for employment, accommodation, public services and community integration which cannot be readily met. In some cases, it entails illegal occupation of private property, or of government land reserved for other purposes. This accentuates a variety of conditions obtaining in the larger society such as limited public utilities services, and employment for the inhabitants. The non-legal nature of occupation further restrains the provision of such basic facilities as water, sewage connections, and electrical lighting by the government.

Many among the settlers are unskilled workers, new to urban ways and generally poor. Hence, there is an attempt at self-help by building shelters out of substandard materials, and overcrowding in the limited available space.

Uncontrolled urban settlement in the Philippines is particularly apparent in the Metropolitan Manila area. In 1968 there were about 184,000 families or approximately one-third of its population living in slums or squatter conditions.

Relocation Within the City

The problem of squatters and slums has been approached in a variety of ways ranging from on-site renewal, transfer by relocation to other districts, or resettlement to frontier areas, and rural development in order to retain rural

inhabitants. Such measures, if adopted in piecemeal fashion, can only temporarily mitigate the situation. Big cities offer more opportunities by way of employment amenities and human development. These inevitably attract the more enterprising segment of the hinterland's population to such cumulative advantages. The negative aspects associated with population increase can be remedied or prevented through integrated economic and social development planning as seen from the experience of a number of countries. In fact, squatters and slum dwellers are integral members of the community and constitute an available labor supply for further national development, as well as potential contributors to community revenue.

The problem of squatters and slum dwellers therefore is relative to the community's perspective and plans. For a community with development goals, the problem is one of facilitating and accelerating the process of adjustment and absorption of the newcomers into the viable social structure in order to make each one a useful and effective participant. This can be accomplished through programs that improve the capacity of the community to absorb newcomers in every way, such as investment and training programs, with the objective of shortening the period of dependence of the individual or group.

The Tondo Problem

To decipher the real problems of Tondo from the entangled observations made about it requires more than just a perceptive eye. A large part of the difficulty in identifying and eventually solving the Tondo problem, as in any uncontrolled settlement situation, stems from what might be called frame-of-reference distortion. Traditionally, the point of departure has been to view slums as outside the urban landscape, implying thereby that it has no positive role to perform. Consequently, slums have been treated as a problem by themselves to be excised and thrown somewhere else. Tondo today, is seen in a different light.

Two other aspects need to be mentioned. First, is the recognition that the problems are

so inter-related as to defy one-shot, uni-dimensional approaches. The arraying of problems, therefore, is merely a convenient expository device and in no way implies their separability. Second, we are with a complex social system in which no uni-directional cause and effect can be defined.

Without concomitant controversy, the possibility of worsening the conditions in Tondo is recognized. Programs of amelioration and improvement proposed at this stage may just "buy" time and may exacerbate the growth of squatting and slums in the long run.

Tondo Foreshore – the Present Situation

With the understanding of the complications arising from the considerations just mentioned, the following multifaceted problems characterize Tondo as revealed in the results of the socioeconomic survey of the Tondo Foreshore area conducted by the Project Team in May, 1974.

Tondo Foreshore has a land area of 137 hectares containing 27,000 families at a density of 1,694 persons per hectare. The average family size is 6.6 persons.

The median-household income in 1971 was only ₱3,528 annually, 32 percent lower than the Metro-Manila median of ₱5,202.

Twenty-three percent of its labor force is unemployed, the unemployment rate being 2.9 times greater than that for urban Philippines in 1973. While the employed rate is two per household, each worker on the average supports three dependents.

The dearth of skills among the residents perhaps accounts for the low-income and low-employment rate. Of those employed, more than half are unskilled workers, 8 percent are skilled, 5 percent are fishermen or agricultural workers and only 3 percent professionals.

Although only 4 percent of the population, 25 years and over, are reported as not having completed any schooling at all, the fact remains that educational attainment level is low.

Only 19 percent of the households have private facilities for drinking water. The rest depend on public wells, neighbors, or buy from

water-peddlers.

Although the district is highly urbanized, about one-third of the households have no electric lighting.

Almost one-half of the households lack private sanitary toilet facilities. These households utilize either public toilets or river banks and the seashore, or use the wrap and throw method.

Only 13 percent own the house and lot they occupy and about 75 percent occupy the lots rent-free.

Our structural census of the area revealed that although most of the houses are of the single-detached units, the total floor spaces are inadequate in size and odd in shape so much so that there are not enough rooms for essential family activities other than the ordinary household chores. Oftentimes spaces have multiple uses.

Worsening these alarming problems is the structural quality of the houses. The construction materials of these dwelling units vary extremely from strong to salvaged materials. Houses of mixed materials dominate the scene.

This picture of the Tondo Foreshore area with its socioeconomic problems are not its own but shared by the whole Metro Manila area, and likewise being experienced by the other fast urbanizing centers of the country and even in some parts of the world. Hence, whatever policies, measures and efforts the government will undertake to uplift its deplorable condition, hopefully may serve as a model for other development and urban renewal strategies.

The Tondo Project: Development Framework

The objectives of the project were formulated by a process of inversion of the problems. Great care was exercised not to aim for something which will work against the real dynamics of Tondo Foreshore in the urban hierarchy. The plan is therefore, directed to the following set of objectives, not as separate or distinct ends, but rather as interdependent stages the individual realization of which lead

to the total renewal of Tondo. The circumstances facing Tondo Foreshore are much too complicated to allow reliance on very few key objectives to catalyze the process of community renewal. Hence, the objectives of the project are:

1. upgrading of the physical living conditions of the community through the provision of adequate housing, water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial needs; system for drainage and sewage disposal, and a circulation network of vehicular and pedestrian pathways;
2. creation of economic opportunities to enable residents to increase their incomes;
3. development of skills among the labor force;
4. provision of better opportunities/facilities for schooling and learning;
5. establishment of the minimum standard amenities for a decent and livable community such as parks and playgrounds;
6. fostering of community participation in the development of Tondo Foreshore and Dagat-Dagatan, it being recognized that the interests of the residents themselves are important parameters in the plan;
7. establishment and organization of an effective mechanism to focus government efforts in the area.

The plan envisions a seven-year program the completion of which will show the following components:

1. about 100 families per hectare;
2. a variety of housing-units ranging from single-detached, duplex and row-houses to low-level tenements — all units basically built of semi-permanent materials with some units already embellished by the residents;
3. a circulation system well-structured for functionality and pedestrian-oriented;
4. a land use zoning scheme where industries, commercial establishments and community facilities are built in a

- service hierarchy;
5. an adequate supply of water;
6. a sewerage system that can handle domestic and industrial effluents;
7. a system of main and secondary drainage pipes laid out and integrated with Manila's overall drainage system;
8. a hierarchy of schools and health care delivery services;
9. an industrial/commercial complex complemented by small-scale and cottage industries;
10. a fully operational Tondo Foreshore Development Authority (created by the President in October 1974).

It is to be noted that these targets are to be achieved, not simultaneously, but incrementally through a phased development program. As a whole, the plan embodies the concept of a "total community" wherein jobs, housing, transport, services and utilities would provide the vital elements reinforcing each other to bring about an efficient and livable settlement.

Dagat-Dagatan Resettlement Program

The development of Dagat-Dagatan as a ready relocation site for displaced residents is an integral part of the Tondo Foreshore Renewal Project. It is, therefore, phased in close coordination with the Tondo Plan so that, as much as possible, continuity is maintained in the physical, economic and sociopsychological make-up of the relocated community.

Dagat-Dagatan, which is about 430 hectares, stretches about 3,800 meters long along the eastern side of the Manila-Navotas Coastal Road (R-10). As a catchment area for the Tondo Renewal Project, it is appropriately located about three kilometers from the Tondo Foreshore land. The area is characterized by tributaries which empty into Manila Bay. It is presently owned by a number of private individuals and is under the political jurisdiction of the cities of Manila and Caloocan and the municipalities of Navotas and Malabon. A major portion of the area is unreclaimed fishponds,

now of suboptimal use while peripheral areas are of mixed commercial, residential and industrial uses.

The strategy adopted for the development of the Dagat-Dagatan area involves not only the physical development of "sites and services" and the construction of housing units but also the provision of a variety of employment opportunities through the establishment of an industrial estate in the area in addition to areas for commercial activities which are basic requirements in the daily life sphere of the residents.

The physical development of the relocation site which includes reclamation, a circulation system, site development and provision for basic community facilities is scheduled for completion in as short a time as possible, given constraints imposed by actual operational procedures, manpower and technology. Incremental housing is however, spread over a longer period to correspond with the Tondo Foreshore development.

The development plan for Dagat-Dagatan is based on the socioeconomic needs as well as the life-styles and aspirations of a population resettled in a new community.

This is a far cry from similar undertakings which tend to overplay the negative significance of resettlement — that is riddance of squatter and slum problems with their attendant ills and menacing elements, particularly the associative or community implications of resettlement efforts have almost always been met with resentment and skepticism which pose a major challenge to the planning scheme.

This attempt to translate the needs and aspirations of people will present an alternative that is socially oriented and more humane and hopefully, more acceptable. The plan encompasses the entire range of human activity and the interlocking social, economic and physical aspects of the environment and focuses on the Tondo dweller's vision of his community as its dominant guideline.

Conclusion

The perennial problem of slum settlements in Tondo has given rise to much enthusiasm among government authorities and planners to search for workable realistic plans and policies geared to stimulate actual and potential economic development of the area. The type of policy adopted for Tondo does not only provide for physical amenities and social reconstruction but more importantly, it also seeks to promote promising improvements in economic well being of the residents.

No less than President Marcos has pledged his support on this project by creating the Tondo Foreshore Development Authority, the agency entrusted with the principal responsibility of carrying out the plans for the renewal of Tondo.

Note

At the time she read this paper, Ida Estioko was resource management development officer, Development Management Staff, Office of the President.

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