

MANILA'S SQUATTER MOVEMENT: A STRUGGLE FOR PLACE AND IDENTITY

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The recent intellectual and political interest in what have come to be generically called *social movements* has acquired special relevance to grassroots movements in periods of democratic transition. Their democratizing potential has inspired the imagination of social scientists concerned with processes contributing to the stability of democracy and the commitment of social activists involved in the daily struggles of popular movements.

Democratic transitions provide a useful context for evaluating the impact of social movements as vehicles and agents of popular participation. In the Philippines, the flowering of popular movements around such issues as the country's foreign debt, environmental problems, the US military bases and land reform, was aided by the widening political space following the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

Although social movements have yet to make a decisive impact on national

policy and decision-making, these have influenced political processes in subtle but important ways. These have contributed in no small measure to the popularization of the concept of people's participation and its use in national and local official bodies. The language of people's empowerment and the developmental role of non-government organizations or NGOs have also found their way into the public discourse of politicians and bureaucrats in recent years.

Democratic transitions, however, also create new dilemmas for popular movements. While there is generally a qualitative break in the nature of the political system after the collapse of a dictatorship, the reform of political processes towards a more participative and democratic system faces many obstacles. In the Philippines, these obstacles were not merely structural legacies of authoritarianism but were also the product of social forces unleashed by the democratization process itself. The revival of electoral competition, for example, revitalized patron-client types of

alliances in which state bureaucrats, politicians and communities became involved.

After the change of government in 1986, the problems faced by the new administration of President Corazon Aquino were numerous and daunting. It inherited a \$27 billion foreign debt, and faced an insurgency perpetrated by the communist left, and later by military rightists. The economy was in shambles and political institutions were in disarray, while factionalism threatened the stability of the "rainbow coalition" in President Aquino's government.

Amongst these problems the earlier broad protest movement against the Marcos dictatorship quickly transformed into several issue-based movements advocating social reform policies. A diversification of the popular movement ensued, with grassroots groups consolidating their forces around specific sectoral issues and demands. The urban poor movement was among these groups.

This paper will look at the way the urban poor or squatters movement has been influenced by state policies and political conditions under different administrations from 1970 to the early 1990s. The squatters movement was largely a reactionary movement, the development of which was in many ways conditioned by state initiatives and policies. Its history reveals the dynamic interplay between political mobilization and state action creating new spaces for future political interaction.

Most accounts of the Manila squatters movement have focused on its composition and internal characteristics and which are perceived to be responsible for its

dynamism and weaknesses. These have dealt mainly with the ideological heterogeneity and coalition building among urban poor groups and the changes in the movement's political orientation. This present work recognizes the importance of these factors in understanding the squatters movement but regards them as variables requiring causal explanation. Thus, I attempt in this paper to look into the social forces which affected the movement and helped shape its characteristics. These forces had to do with the type of regime and state policies which the movement had to confront, as well as with social and political processes which were not strictly the product of state action.

Finally, an attempt is made to consider the possible impact of democratization on the squatters movement, with attention given to the contradictions which simultaneously limit its radicalism and offer opportunities for political action and reform.

Genesis of a Squatters Movement

Since the first federation of squatters organizations appeared in Tondo in 1970, the urban poor movement has traveled a long way in terms of territorial scope, organizational sophistication and political involvement. The *Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO)*, widely acknowledged to have pioneered the organizations of squatters specifically on the land issue, was formed in October 1970. The early years from 1970 to 1975 saw the phenomenal growth of ZOTO from 20 member organizations when it was founded in 1970 to 113 local associations in 1975 (this number was reduced to 68 by 1982 for reasons to be explored later). More significant than its numbers, however,

ZOTO's rise to prominence in the 1970s was a historic turning point for it represented the first real organization of squatters into an urban social movement.

Long before ZOTO came into being, various local associations in the Tondo Foreshore area had petitioned the government, then under President Ramon Magsaysay, for land rights. A group known as the *Federation of Tondo Foreshoreland Tenants' Association* had successfully lobbied for Republic Act (RA) 1597 in 1956 which allowed the squatters to purchase the land they were occupying at a price of five pesos per square meter. But President Magsaysay died in 1957 without implementing the law and soon thereafter the organization broke up in 1959. Meanwhile, the first massive demolition of squatters settlements began in nearby Intramuros in 1963 and in Tondo and the North Harbor in 1964. These demolitions encountered no organized opposition from the squatters who were sent to distant relocation sites in Sapang Palay (Bulacan), Carmona (Cavite), and San Pedro (Laguna).

A new organization was formed in 1969 by the groups previously affiliated with the old tenants' association and was named the *Council of Tondo Foreshoreland Community Organizations* (CTFCO). The group resisted various demolition attempts by the local government then under Mayor Antonio Villegas and pressed Malacañang for the implementation of RA 1597. But the council's leaders were allegedly bought off when mobilizations for the law's implementation intensified, causing the group to disintegrate. This second failure in creating a solid organization to tackle the land problem led to the formation of ZOTO.

While the primary objective of ZOTO centered on the land problem, the organization gained wide community acceptance because it was able to secure tangible benefits for the community. In a span of five years, it boasted a list of achievements never before attained by any organization of squatters. It obtained funding and extended material assistance to residents victimized by typhoon Yoling in 1970. It succeeded in pressuring an industrial firm located in the area to move back its fence which illegally encroached on one of its community's "territory." It invaded an area earmarked by the Bureau of Public Works to be developed into a warehousing facility and succeeded in obtaining it as a relocation site for people displaced by infrastructure projects. ZOTO persuaded the German government to require the Philippine government to provide relocation for the people to be affected by the construction of a German-funded international port in the area. It also succeeded in pressuring a business association to withdraw its plan to lease from the government a seven-hectare piece of land located in one of its base communities.

But perhaps ZOTO's crowning achievement was obtaining the first in-city relocation site in the Dagat-Dagatan reclamation area for families displaced by the Tondo Foreshore slum upgrading project. ZOTO in fact claimed that the Dagat-Dagatan housing project was the Tondo people's idea. Also significant was that ZOTO's expanded organization, the *Ugnayan ng mga Mamamayan sa Tondo Foreshoreland* (Ugnayan), obtained the recognition of the Tondo Foreshoreland Development Authority (TFDA) as well as

the World Bank as the community's legitimate representative in negotiations pertaining to the Tondo Foreshore slum upgrading and housing project.

These community successes enhanced the strength and popularity of ZOTO. Its influence and drawing power was visibly demonstrated by its ability to mobilize for mass actions. It drew an urban poor crowd of 8,000 for the papal visit to Manila in 1970. It easily mobilized 2,000 people to rally in front of Congress to demand the implementation of RA 1597. It gathered a substantial urban poor delegation to join the historic Agrifina peasant protest in pre-martial law days. These mass actions gained for ZOTO increased public recognition, further reinforcing its strength and credibility as an urban mass movement.

Although ZOTO was the best-known squatters organization in those early days up to the mid-1970s, there were other groups similarly organized and inspired by the successes of ZOTO. The growing number of squatter communities throughout the metropolis, coupled with government programs which threatened their existence, gave added impetus to the organization of squatter communities. The *Sangguniang Kristiyanong Komunidad* (SKK), a community-based organization built on the Church model of the *Basic Christian Communities* (BCCs) was formed in 1974 in Magsaysay Village also in Tondo. The *Samahang Pang Nayon* (SPN) was organized in 1973 in Navotas to protest the construction of the Navotas Fish Port and Fish Market which threatened to displace the residents of North Bay Boulevard.

These early organizing attempts showed that the initial push for organizing on a community-wide scale derived from

the need to resolve the land issue. ZOTO and the other community organizations were basically federations of existing local associations which attended to diverse sectoral needs and found a common interest in securing land tenure for its members. The expansion of these groups, however, and their subsequent mobilizations were oriented toward resisting or modifying specific state-sponsored programs that were being implemented locally, such as the Tondo Foreshore Slum Improvement and Resettlement Project and the Navotas Fish Port and Fish Market.

Because these state programs which affected the squatters were territorially-bounded, the nature of the squatters organizations which evolved at the time defined their goals in territorial terms (Ton van Naerssen, 1987). They sought community-specific demands without necessarily challenging existing norms for defining land tenure and the social distribution of land ownership. Thus, although these early mobilizations were in many ways militant and irreverent of state authority, the demand for land took on a defensive nature. They targeted state agencies and resisted state-imposed programs but they remotely threatened the prevailing structure of economic distribution and political authority. However, the squatters' quest for land security was fast turning into a political cause.

The territorial definition of the squatter's agenda and mode of mobilization in this period was both the movement's strength and weakness. It gave the community organizations like ZOTO a sense of power and achievement because the demands they made were within the state's capacity to grant. They were demands involving specific programs and not

universal rights or redistributive reforms. Concessions could be negotiated, albeit with difficult, even violent, encounters between squatters and the government. But the structural boundaries for state action were not challenged by these demands, a situation which allowed the state some maneuverability to respond in ways that somehow reduced the conflict between the squatters and the government.

To take the example of ZOTO, its success in obtaining demands like on-site development and in-city relocation, was due partly to the fact that the World Bank which funded the Tondo Foreshore Slum Improvement Program was supportive of community participation. Prevailing ideas on low-cost housing to which the World Bank subscribed also permitted the successful negotiation of ZOTO for the replacement of urban renewal with urban upgrading which minimized project-related dislocation of families.

On the other hand, ZOTO's limited success on the issue of payment of the cost of development could be attributed to the World Bank's insistence on cost recovery in the housing programs it funded. The beneficiaries were required to shoulder the cost of development despite their strong objections. Thus, the government's ability to concede to the squatters' demands on this particular issue was restricted by World Bank policies. The state's dependence on external funding donors for its housing programs determined the concessions the squatters could obtain.

The Authoritarian State and the Squatters

By the mid-1970s, the state tightened its policy toward squatter incursions

signaling a marked change of attitude in its treatment of popular mobilizations. Following the economic difficulties wrought by the first oil shock in 1973, the government under President Marcos became more aggressive in implementing various development projects and attracting foreign loans and investments. The imposition of martial law in 1972 led to arrests and raids of urban poor communities throughout the capital region. In August 1975, the President issued a decree which criminalized squatting in an effort to stem the growing squatter invasions of government and privately-owned lands.

Meanwhile in Tondo, the accommodation that attended the earlier negotiations between ZOTO and the TFDA correspondingly changed to growing confrontation. The issue of land tenure continued to fester in the Tondo Foreshoreland. In 1975 President Marcos rejected the people's offer to purchase the land at the price set by Magsaysay's RA 1597. Instead, he prescribed a lease-purchase arrangement in Presidential Decree (PD) 814 which the people found unacceptable. ZOTO's vehement rejection of PD 814 provoked stronger government reaction. As it became clear that the military state was intent on pursuing its own development plans for the area despite people's objections, the people's organizations came to define their own posture toward the government in increasingly more adversarial terms.

In the mid-seventies too, the authoritarian government started to establish a clearer definition of its urban land and housing policy. A series of presidential issuances defined specific state programs for particular areas throughout the

metropolis. *Slum Improvement and Resettlement (SIR)* was declared a national policy by Letter of Instruction (LOI) 555 in 1977. In Metro Manila this program was called *Zonal Improvement Programme (ZIP)* which prescribed on-site development as an alternative to evictions. Relocation areas were designated as "sites-and-services" project areas by LOI 556 and 557. PD 1517 identified some 244 "areas for priority development" (APDs) where on-site development was to be implemented. Later these settlements were proclaimed urban land reform areas by Proclamation 1893. Finally, the creation of the National Housing Authority (NHA) in 1975 and the Ministry of Human Settlements (MHS) in 1978, and a host of house financing institutions thereafter, marked the launching of an aggressive low-cost housing program ostensibly intended for the city's poor.

These proclamations had important political, rather than practical, consequences. First, the proclamations conveyed the impressions that the government was attempting a serious and well-designed urban land and housing policy. This image was important for a government interested in soliciting foreign funding support for its programs as well as foreign investments for the country's economic development. Moreover, the shift toward on-site development and sites-and-services projects reflected the policy bias of the World Bank, the chief funder of the government's housing programs and supplier of the country's development loans.

Secondly, the government gave more importance to the institutional-building aspects of the housing policies it adopted than to their delivery mechanisms. In fact, the most significant outcome of the housing

policies of the Marcos government was not the provision of more housing but the creation of a new bureaucracy which could wield power in the urban land and housing sector. Yet the implementing mechanisms which could have made the proclaimed policies into effective housing programs for the urban poor were never seriously instituted. The programs were poorly designed and managed, in some cases never even implemented. The financing institutions empowered to mobilize and channel funds to housing became bankrupt. The political will to carry out the reforms promised by policies was not present. Instead the policies were used to legitimize the creation of a multitude of institutions which were actually intended to add to the regime's economic and political base.

Lastly, these policies had an even more consequential impact on the organization of the urban poor. The proclamation of different programs for different areas was a good strategy for segmenting the urban poor sector. It obfuscated the basic issue of land rights as a universal entitlement and poverty as a common situation rooted in inequitable social structures. The differentiation of housing programs also led to confusing strategies on how to deal with government. The variety and vagueness of its housing programs enabled the government to enlist the cooperation of community leaders who were not always sure of what the government was up to. The confused postures added to the ideologically-motivated tensions that were taking hold of the movement at this time, and fueled mistrust and disunity.

That the government had other intentions at heart rather than the welfare of the poor was belied by the systematic

repression which occurred during the latter half of the seventies. Urban poor leaders were arrested, detained and harassed by law enforcers, their communities raided, at times deliberately put on fire to quell or punish resistance. Evictions and relocations likewise accelerated as the government embarked on massive and vigorous Metropolitan-wide slum clearance operations in preparation for special international events under the direction of then Minister of Human Settlements and Metro Manila Governor Imelda Marcos.

The tightening of state policy had its effects on the organizing strategy of the squatter communities. Broad alliances among organizations from different squatter areas began to take shape. The *Ugnayan ng Maralitang Tagalunsod* (UMT) was formed in 1976 and included as many as fifty people's organizations from ten cities and municipalities in the capital region. Among the issues the UMT pushed for were people's participation, on-site development and a stop to demolitions.

Underneath the growing politicization of the movement, however, was an insidious instability. The growing influence of radical leftist groups among the marginalized classes found its way into the urban poor movement and sowed the seeds of ideological divisiveness, traces of which can still be found in the squatters movement today. While the specter of a "common enemy" did foster some degree of unity, the strong ideological orientation of the more militant squatter groups not only invited more state repression but also gave rise to conflicts within the movement and restricted the movement's scope and influence to those communities prepared to

make committed positions on political issues.

Expansion and Increasing Politicization

The second half of the 1970s was an important threshold in the development of the urban poor movement. From one point of view this period was the expansion and politicization of the squatters movement as it addressed national (more than sector-specific) issues linked with other political movements that embraced a wider constituency and audience. The increasing repression prompted the community organizations to build a united front to tackle a common and broader set of issues. This facilitated the elevation of community-specific demands to more universal demands for squatter rights (Ton van Naerssen, 1987). The political demands of the UMT, the major coalition at the time, reflected this tendency.

From another point of view, however, as some commentators have argued, the growing politicization of the movement which resulted from increased political demand-making for nationwide reforms also weakened the movement. Many of ZOTO leaders regarded its golden years to have ended in 1975. The increasing politicization made the organizations more vulnerable not only to repressive actions by the state but also to ideological divisions and conflicts which have taken a toll on the quality and unity of the organizations. Moreover, where the focus of mobilizations tended toward national issues, community concerns were increasingly subordinated to political demands (Murphy, 1990).

The dynamics of state-urban poor relations in the late 1970s is interesting for many reasons. First is the observation that the state exercised the initiative in defining what this relationship was to become by putting together a host of state programs and legal promulgations to keep urban poor issues from developing into a political demand for universal rights. As we have seen, this initiative was not so much a response to popular pressure as it was a strategy designed to consolidate the regime's economic and political power. The effect of the state's action was to structure its relationship with the squatters in a manner in which the state could figure as the dominant actor and the squatters forced to assume a defensive role.

Secondly, the duality of state policy characterized by selective repression and a differentiated sites-and-services approach did not break the back of the urban poor movement. While the repression certainly exacerbated the internal problems the movement was experiencing at the time, the contradictions in the state's policies provided a new rationale and focus for political demand-making. The direct repression employed by the state and the poor implementation of its housing programs left the urban poor more discontented than they were before. The squatters found in the government programs new reasons to criticize the state, while the newly created NHA and MHS provided new targets for the poor's collective anger.

Finally, the repression accentuated the ideological tensions within the movement. Underneath the movement's growing politicization was an emerging conflict between those who advocated its linkage

with the radical leftist party and those who insisted on maintaining the squatters' autonomy and the primacy of the urban poor's struggle for land. The state's policy of repression strengthened the position of the radical elements who favored linkage with the Left. On the other hand, some leaders, wanting to protect the organizational gains of the past, opted to be more cooperative with the government (Honculada, 1984). Thus, organizations like ZOTO were unable to define a political posture that was both popular and progressive. The polarized situation, heavily tainted by ideological differences, prevented the movement from mounting the same kind of independent and creative behavior that it exhibited in the early years of ZOTO.

Thus we find that contradictions in the state's policies produced contradictory tendencies in the squatter movement as well. All throughout this process, the state was the dominant actor maneuvering within a political field in which the imperatives of economic accumulation and political consolidation dictated its options. On the other hand, the urban poor acted as reactionary forces caught between the state's initiatives and the disunity within its ranks, unable to wage a progressive and coherent strategy.

The Last Campaign and Protest Movement

In 1982, the government stepped up its campaign against squatters and renewed its slum clearance policy. New relocation sites were opened in Bagong Silang, Caloocan and Payatas, Quezon City where thousands of squatter families were brought. A host of squatter organizations came into being

to resist the demolition drive. Among them were the *Pagkakaisa ng mga Maralita sa Lungsod* (PAMALU), and the *Alyansa ng mga Maralita Laban sa Demolisyon* (ALMA). Many of these alliances consisted of existing squatter organizations which found in the demolition campaign a new reason to unite and mobilize. The widespread demolition once again revived the imperative for coalition-building and political demand-making.

Yet the squatters were unable to mobilize on a large scale and to effectively oppose the demolition being carried out in many parts of Metro Manila. This failure was indicative of the fragmentation that continued to characterize the squatters movement. The leadership of the radical left group which heretofore constituted the mainstream of the squatters movements was increasingly being challenged by the rise of many independent and socialist-influenced groups among the urban poor such as the social democrats and the socialist. However, while the numbers grew, the groups tended to congregate around different ideological centers and responded in knee-jerk fashion to particular demolitions without a coordinated and systematic strategy. This coordination was only to come later with other developments in the larger protest movement.

By the early 1980s a broad anti-Marcos movement, loosely organized into the "parliament of the streets," started to gain momentum and to make its presence felt in the national political scene. This development was fueled by the festering legitimacy crisis which followed the assassination of Marcos' chief political rival Benigno Aquino in 1983. Popular discontent was further fanned by the

worsening economic crisis which began to erode business confidence in the government.

The development of an anti-dictatorship protest movement created opportunities for the practice of coalition politics among different ideological formations in the last years of authoritarian rule. The organized forces consisted of the national democrats and the social democrats, who made up the bulk of the mass movement, and their middle-class allies most of whom were businessmen and professionals. The urban poor were inevitably drawn into the multi-ideological alliances that were formed after 1983. They became a considerable constituency of such groups as *Bayan*, *Bandila* and the *Lakas ng Sambayanan*, which organized popular mobilizations during this period of intense political upheaval before the change of government in 1986. In these alliances, other urban poor groups besides the UMT gained prominence. Among these were the social democratic TAMASA and KASAPI and non-aligned SAMA-SAMA of Commonwealth.

With the inauguration of democratic rule under President Aquino, there were populist tendencies in the beginning which encouraged the formation of popular movements among the marginalized sectors such as the urban poor. There were openings provided by the new government for popular interventions and grassroots participation. The urban poor demanded the creation of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) which was subsequently formed in December 1986. A new Constitution was drafted and ratified in 1987 providing for sectoral representation for marginalized classes,

including the urban poor, in the legislature. The newly-appointed local government executives, wanting to be popular among their constituents, subscribed to a memorandum of agreement which instituted a moratorium on squatter evictions in their respective localities.

Under these more democratic conditions, new contradictions arose which undermined the cohesion and effectiveness of the urban poor movement. The many attempts to consolidate the squatters into a political force fell into a recurring pattern of disintegration marked by factionalism and dissension.

Coalition Politics

Upon the inauguration of the new democratic government, coalition-building among the various urban poor organizations gained new momentum. It was attempted at various levels with the initiatives coming from different sources. The first of these coalitions emerged right after the change of government in February 1986. Urban poor groups belonging to the multi-sectoral alliance, the *Lakas ng Sambayanan*, and the *Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng mga Maralitang Tagalungsod* (KPML) which included ZOTO and UMT, came together to form the *National Congress for Urban Poor Organizations* (NACUPO), until then the broadest coalition of progressive urban poor organizations. The NACUPO presented a set of demands to the new government which included a moratorium on demolitions and on the payment of development costs by beneficiaries of NHA housing projects. It also spearheaded the demand for the creation of the PCUP and undertook initial dialogues with mayors and

government housing officials on the institution of a moratorium on demolitions. Conflicts on these issues, however, soon surfaced between the extremist and moderate groups which led to the coalition's break-up in a matter of months.

Meanwhile, a host of urban poor coalitions espousing different political orientations consolidated their forces to participate in the broad sectoral movement. By 1990, there were at least eight major urban poor alliances based in Metro Manila, namely *KPML*, *Katipunan ng mga Samahan ng Mamamayan sa Komunidad* (KASAMA-KO), *Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Maralita para sa Lipunan at Panlungsod na Reporma sa Lupa* (PAKSA-LUPA), *Tambuli ng Maralitang Sambayanan* (TAMBULI), *Samahan ng Ugnayan ng Maralita sa Pilipinas, Inc.* (SUMAPI), *Katipunan ng mga Samahang Nagkakaisa* (KASANA), *BISIG-MARALITA*, and the alliance of communities affiliated with *Aksyon Para sa Kapayapaan at Kata-rungan* (AKKAPKA).

The federations constituted the major formations within the urban poor movement at this time. But there were also independent organizations which gained prominence for their community struggles. Among them was the *Samahang Maralita para sa Makatao at Makatarungang Paninirahan* (SAMA-SAMA) which took part in the formation of NACUPO in the early days of the Aquino administration.

The squatters in the government-owned land earmarked for the National Government Center (NGC) in Commonwealth, Quezon City organized the SAMA-SAMA in 1982 with the help of a non-government organization, the *Community*

Organization of the Philippines Enterprise (COPE). This organization evolved from the Basic Christian Communities-inspired neighborhood groups which were organized in the area in the 1970s by the local Catholic Church. During the campaign for the presidency, this group was able to exact a promise from Corazon Aquino for the government to set aside a portion of the NGC to be the community's permanent settlement should Aquino be elected President. In August 1987, President Aquino made good her electoral promise by issuing Proclamation 137 which appropriated 150 hectares from the NGC for distribution to qualified beneficiary families. The exceptionality of the Commonwealth case, however, was underscored by the fact that President Aquino never enacted a similar program to apply to other squatter communities. Her government left this task to congressional legislation.

Partly because of the sheer number of urban poor organizations and alliances and the heightening of urban issues, coalition-building increasingly became the thrust of urban poor organizing. An innovative strategy was adopted by a group of activist-organizers known as the People's Foundation of Organizers for Community Empowerment (PEOPLE'S FORCE) in 1987. This group tried to bring together individuals of different political tendencies to design and implement a community organizer's training program emphasizing "popular democratic" elements shared by the broad spectrum of left-leaning ideological groups. The idea was to build community organizations imbued with a popular democratic orientation resulting from the cooperative efforts of the differ-

ent political formations. This experiment, however, did not go very far as one political bloc eventually came to be perceived as exercising a more dominant role than was considered conducive to genuine pluralism. The situation led to the withdrawal of the other partners in the alliance.

A third attempt at coalition-building was made under the auspices of the government's PCUP. In 1989 the PCUP organized a tri-sectoral network which involved the participation of government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and people's organizations (POs) in the formulation of strategies to address urban poor problems. The Urban Poor Coordinating Network (UPCN) was formed as a way of consolidating the urban poor sector within the tri-sectoral framework.

The UPCN proved its clout when it succeeded in having two of its urban poor nominees appointed as sectoral representatives in Congress in early 1990. From that time on, the UPCN was to gain the recognition of the government as having the widest representation of urban poor groups in the country. However, its close association with a government agency impeded its capacity for independent action and decision-making. Dependent on the PCUP for logistical and secretariat support and occasionally caught up in bureaucratic politics, the UPCN seriously lacked the dynamism and initiative to launch a sustained campaign for urban reforms.

The clamor for urban land reform which first emerged in the early years of the Aquino administration was revived in 1991. An important event dramatized this revival when some 5,000 urban poor, clerics and lay supporters gathered in front of the

Manila Cathedral to publicly demand the enactment of an urban land reform law as mandated by the 1987 Constitution. This clamor received the explicit backing of the Catholic Church with no less than Manila Archbishop, Cardinal Sin endorsing the urban poor's demands.

Soon thereafter, the House of Representatives, after sitting on various proposed drafts for over three years, came up with an Urban Development and Housing Bill. This provided the occasion for the urban poor to come together once again and make their own assessment of the proposed legislation. It did not take them long to realize that the bill required many major revisions. The intense lobbying work that ensued paved the way for the formation of a tactical alliance among various POs, NGOs, and Church supporters which came to be named the Urban Land Reform Task Force (ULR-TF).

Sponsorship day for House Bill 34310 saw some 2,000 urban poor filling up the gallery of the Lower House. Thus began the urban poor's initiation into the intricacies of legislative lobbying. Organized as a loose alliance, the ULR-TF did not have a formal set of officers and structures. Tasks were formulated and distributed on an ad-hoc basis allowing for great flexibility. For months the Task Force worked on the various proposed bills, integrating the proposals of different NGOs and POs as well as the different congressional bills. The group established alliances with key persons in the legislature and, with the help of the urban poor sectoral representatives, actively lobbied to have its proposed revisions incorporated into the final House version.

While some of their interventions did get into the bill's final form, some compromises had to be made. Among them was the provision, introduced in the Bicameral Conference Committee, which allowed financial compensation as an alternative to the requirement for relocation in cases of court-ordered demolition on privately-owned lands. At the end of Congress' regular session in March 1992, the two chambers passed the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992.

In the course of lobbying and assessing the progress being made in the legislative agenda for urban land reform, consensus was not always achieved even among the groups comprising the ULR-TF. For instance, after the congressional approval of the bill, some groups belonging to the KPML came out with very strong criticisms of the bill's provisions. This reaction stood in sharp contrast with the stance of the larger body within the ULR-TF which continued to support the passage of the law while acknowledging its shortcomings. The KPML thereafter became less active in the coalition's activities.

Also a significant factor in the relative success of the advocacy efforts of the ULR-TF was the amount of support it received from the Catholic hierarchy and its various allied organizations as the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, CARITAS, and from other NGOs and professional and legal assistance support groups. This broad support afforded the coalition invaluable resources for mobilizations and technical and secretariat support.

Some general observations can be made about the urban poor movement during this

period of democratization. First, the direction and strategies of political participation employed by the urban poor continued to be determined by state initiatives. The different coalitions formed by the urban poor were still mainly responses to state action and oriented toward political participation within the established political framework. While this kind of participation was supportive of the democratic process, it also reinforced the urban poor's limited access to decision-making to the extent that the democratic process was still largely defined along the lines of elite politics.

Secondly, although the movement remained plagued with divisions within its ranks, the kind of ideological rifts which weakened politicized organizations like ZOTO in earlier periods did not appear to undermine the present squatters' movement. This is due in part to the greater plurality of ideological orientations within the present movement, whereas ZOTO came to be dominated by one party during its politicized years. While some of today's urban poor groups may be under the sway of one ideological group or another, the movement has achieved greater scope and diversity and a stronger disposition to democratic pluralism within its ranks. Decision-making is more decentralized as there exists not one but many decision-making centers within the movement.

Additionally, the problem of "linkage" with an ideological party which became the cause of ZOTO's crisis in the late seventies has ceased to be a major dilemma today owing to the plurality of organizational influences operating in the broad reform movement. There is a substantive difference

between the situation in the past where an underground political party espousing a monolithic party line took control of a people's organization, and the latter situation where the squatters coalition is loosely linked with a pluralist and open reform movement operating in a parliamentary framework. With a host of NGOs available to lend assistance to grassroots groups, the latter are less dependent on a single ideological party for political and logistical support.

It can be argued, however, that this greater internal pluralism has its own disadvantages. It has allowed more opportunities for divisions and cooperation and inhibited the movement from taking more radical and united positions. For example, some people think that the inability of the extremist KPML to get the ULR-TF to insist on its original proposals with respect to some key provisions of the UDHA weakened the urban poor's bargaining position when the law was being deliberated in Congress. These same people believe that a more favorable version of the law could have been achieved had the ULR-TF stood more firmly on its original positions. On the other hand, there are those who think that the bill would have been killed in Congress had the urban poor not been willing to compromise the way they did to protect some positive, though limited, concessions.

These opposing views notwithstanding, the fact remains that decisions on what positions to take were not made on the basis of some predetermined party line imposed by some anonymous entity on the people's organizations. Decisions were instead the product of open debate wherein

groups in the movement were free to argue their positions, and pursue different courses of action if consensus was not achieved. This quality of the decision-making process makes the "linkage" factor a less critical issue in the present movement.

The State and Squatters

The relationship between the state and the squatters from the 1950s to the present democratic period was constantly shaped by historical conditions influencing the way the state defined its urban and housing policies. In the pre-martial law years, the land question was a survival issue for certain communities which saw the need to demand land rights. But the state had virtually avoided confronting the squatters problem as a land issue. As we had seen, the only attempt to effect a program of land transfer in Tondo under President Magsaysay never materialized due to the increasing economic importance of urban land to the development efforts of the state. Succeeding administrations became less interested in the political support which the urban squatters could give them. Instead they were more concerned with taking advantage of the increased economic payoffs to be derived from the use of urban lands for infrastructure and commercial development. Thus, until the declaration of martial law by President Marcos in 1972, the state conveniently disregarded the squatters' clamor for land security and consistently pursued a policy of slum clearance and relocation.

Under the Marcos regime, substantial foreign funding was poured into urban renewal projects. A housing policy began to take shape which gradually created the conditions for the emergence of a landless

urban class whose social identity became increasingly tied to the land issue. Following the organization of ZOTO in 1970, a squatters movement began to make its presence felt in the urban political scene. The formal declaration of urban land reform in the late 1970s was an implicit recognition on the part of the regime of the growing political importance of urban poor. Furthermore, the growing squatter population of the capital region, coupled with the urban upgrading strategies espoused by the World Bank, made the adoption of a slum improvement and resettlement (SIR) policy a logical move for government. This policy gave more explicit recognition to the issue of land security. On-site development became a more politically acceptable alternative to relocation.

Despite the adoption of on-site development for some squatter settlements, SIR did little to resolve the land issue of the majority of poor communities. The Marcos government's development strategy necessitated the construction of many large-scale infrastructure projects in the metropolis such as roads and ports. These projects required the relocation of many squatters to sites located outside Metro Manila. The pursuit of economic development dispossessed many communities of their land while the government continued with its SIR program.

When President Marcos declared an urban land reform program in 1978, the squatter problem had swelled uncontrollably. It became evident that the relocation program failed to prevent the return of squatters to the metropolis, and that a more radical policy was needed to confront the issue of land tenure in existing illegal urban settlements. The inability to

implement land reform, however, after it was declared an official policy in 1978 was as much a sign of the government's lack of commitment to land redistribution as it was a symptom of the political weakness of the squatters movement at the time.

The demolition issue provided a common ground for squatter communities and organizations to unite in a campaign to make demands on the state. However, the movement fell short of advocating policy alternatives to demolition because it became engulfed in national protests orchestrated by the radical left. Despite its politicization and the left's decisive influence in its organization, the squatters movement was unable to push for the implementation of urban land reform. In fact the movement may have been too politicized that squatter issues were relegated to the background of the movement's struggle in favor of more overtly political and national issues. This alienated the movement from its own social identity as squatters with a "class" interest to advance. The over politicization of the movement in this period, coupled with the state policies which maintained the segmentation of the squatters as separate communities, inhibited the consolidation of the movement into a political force with a distinct social identity.

Policy Space

Notwithstanding the dependence of the squatters movement on state initiatives, there are conditions in the present democratic transition which have helped it achieve some advances in reform. The first is the widened democratic space which allows the organization of many communities free from the harassment of a repressive state. This is not to say that

harassments no longer take place under the liberal democratic regime. Some local executives and law enforcers at the behest of landowners are known to terrorize leaders and communities in illegally occupied lands. Repression, however, has ceased to be a systematic state-sanctioned policy.

A second factor has been the relative weakness of the new democratic state that emerged from the ashes of the dictatorship. This weakness owes to a multitude of reasons too long for us to get into. The fragmentation of the elite control of the state apparatus, the divestment of executive powers in the new 1987 Constitution, and the absence of a visionary political leadership were some of the factors that contributed to this weakness. This political inadequacy manifested itself in a failure to articulate and implement a coherent urban policy, and a policy which would structure the state's relationship with the squatter communities. Even the newly established PCUP does not have an effective presence in the communities nor is its influence on the movement perceptible in any way. Urban policy remains an object of contention among interest groups: private developers, local executives, politicians and particular communities.

This lack of policy definition after the democratic restoration in 1986 afforded squatter communities and the movement a policy space within which they could press for demands. It also provided the squatters movement opportunities for forging alliances with local government officials, politicians and state bureaucrats. These opportunities introduced a new dynamism into the movement. However, it also multiplied the opportunities for division as

it opened the stage for the pursuit of divergent strategies by different urban groups.

The largely unexpected passage of the UDHA at the end of President Aquino's term is best seen in the context of the policy space afforded by the lack of cohesion in the state. In the absence of an urban policy, the UDHA came about to provide a definition of one, though admittedly a product of compromise between the urban poor and private property interests protected by politicians in Congress. The non-articulation of well-defined class interests at stake in the proposed law also gave legislators some room to grant concessions for the chance to win urban poor votes in the 1992 elections scheduled two months after the passage of UDHA by Congress. Despite the law's shortcomings, it represented a clear indication of the relatively wide policy space the squatters movement enjoyed at that historical conjuncture.

The boundaries of this policy space moreover, is in the process of being redefined by the changing nature of the propertied classes' interest in urban land. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the big real estate developers began to expand into areas outside the inner cities of Metro Manila. Suburban development has expanded to the outlying towns with the opening of vast tracts of land to residential subdivisions in places like Alabang, Novaliches and Pasig, and lately to as far as Laguna and Cavite for the urban upper classes. Meanwhile, commercial development has intensified in the inner cities with the construction of many large shopping malls catering to the middle and upper classes while providing livelihood opportunities for the urban poor.

Upper class housing in the inner cities has increasingly taken the form of clusters of townhouses and high-rise condominiums. Land in the inner cities has become more scarce, and investments in real estate in these places have turned toward the more intensive use of land.

Population concentrations in the inner cities favor real estate development for commercial and high-rise residential buildings which use relatively less space per capita, while upper class subdivisions have expanded to suburban locations. Because of the diversification of the land interests of private developers and proprietors and the trend toward more intensive land use, there is greater opportunity to restructure land use and ownership in the inner cities. This fact has afforded the urban poor and the state greater policy space for the enactment of a law like the UDHA. But the UDHA's redistributive impact, as far as land is concerned, is also greatly limited by the diminishing supply of land in the inner cities where the majority of the urban poor are found.

Defining a Social Identity

The constant ambiguity in the relationship between the state and the squatters caused by the difficulty in transcending territorially-based interests and forming a common social identity has a more fundamental source of contradiction. It has been argued that the illegality of their status puts squatters in an inherently ambiguous relationship with the state, which is inherently dependent and politically reactionary (Castells, 1983). Because they are illegal city dwellers, their physical existence is dependent on the tolerance of government authorities. Their

illegal status forces them into a defensive and reactive position vis-a-vis the state.

Manila's squatters movement displayed these reactionary tendencies in the political posture it took on many issues. Throughout its development, even during its militant struggles under repression as well as during the democratic euphoria of the post-Marcos years, the movement's direction and agenda were largely shaped by reactions to government policies.

The illegality of the status of squatters could have formed the social basis of a common identity. But the segmentation engendered by the government's housing program reinforced the heterogeneity of community situations and the territorial definition of the squatter's social identity. Furthermore, the fact that legality itself was granted by successive government programs to communities, and not to squatters as such, made communities the logical basis of social identification.

Perhaps the closest the squatters got to demanding some universal rights was the campaign for a complete moratorium on demolition which escalated after the change of government in 1986. But even this campaign could not be sustained because of its contradiction to the basic principles and practical requirements of private property which the state continued to uphold. The limited concessions the squatters gained on the matter of the moratorium after many years of advocating for this has made moratoriums an ineffective means for advancing urban land reform.

The Metro Manila mayors forged a memorandum of agreement in 1990 which imposed a selective moratorium on squatter

evictions and demolition. But the general provisions were not fully enforced and some mayors did not comply with the stated agreements altogether. Later, the state passed the UDHA which granted a three-year moratorium on demolition excepting certain instances, namely, danger zones, sites of government infrastructure projects, and private-owned lands subjected to court orders. As it turned out, however, the exceptions covered most of the actual situations of squatter settlements. Hence while the moratorium provision contained in the UDHA legally outlawed indiscriminate demolition, it hardly constituted full legal protection against squatter evictions.

The campaign for the passage of the UDHA was another instance of a struggle for universal rights with the potential for generating a momentum for urban land reform. The law recognized the government's obligation to provide legal housing to the urban poor but it did not give the latter automatic legality nor tenurial rights in their present locations. The law did not legalize existing squatter settlements. Legality was to be contingent on the local government's political will and financial capability to undertake socialized housing programs.

In other words, although the squatters movement was able to wage campaigns for universal rights which helped the squatters define a social identity, its efforts were invariably caught in contradictions which limited the concessions it was able to achieve within the prevailing state-sanctioned market and property system. The state was constrained to define squatter rights territorially, rather than universally, because of its commitment to private

property. Instituting a genuine urban land reform needed a radical redefinition of property rights which both the state and certain interests were unprepared to make.

Contradictions in the Democratic Transition

Much has been written of the limited transformative potential of squatter movements in democratic societies (Mainwaring, 1987; Castells, 1983; Gilbert and Ward, 1984). A variety of reasons have been advanced to explain this apparent inadequacy such as the vulnerability of squatters to the manipulation of the state and political parties, the inherent difficulty in defining a political identity, and the heterogeneity in the immediate interests of different squatter communities. We have seen how these factors have been exacerbated by government policies in the case of the Philippines. But there are also conditions in the present democratic transition which are limiting the potential of squatter movements to act as agents of social transformation.

The reform of social structures and political processes is believed to be particularly problematic for societies going through a double transition to democracy and a free-market economy (Nelson in Boeninger 1991). In the Philippines, despite a clear trend toward political liberalization and the privatization of economic sectors previously under state control or protection, the politico-economic rules of democracy and the free market have not been firmly established and legitimized. Conflicting interests among segments of the national bourgeoisie dependent on different forms of state patronage continue to

struggle within the post-Marcos state. These interests exert their influence on state policies in ways that produce contradictions in the avowed goals of economic and political liberalization.

The liberalization of the economy has facilitated the rise to political hegemony of a section of the bourgeoisie linked to banking and commercial interests. Industrial capital has not been a major beneficiary of the Aquino and Ramos government's liberalization policies. The return to a democratic political system was accompanied by deliberate state policies to restore the competitiveness of the economic systems regarded to have been distorted by the monopolies and state enterprises established by the dictatorship. But the opening of the country to a liberal economic regime has done little to improve the pace and quality of industrialization. As a result, the structure of the economy continues to favor finance and commercial capital and affords little possibility for trickle-down effects in terms of increased job opportunities for the poorer classes.

Moreover, the economic stabilization program pursued by both the Aquino and Ramos governments restrict the state's ability to respond to grassroots demands for social reform. With the economy still handicapped by the burden of debt-servicing and slack industrial growth, the economic condition of the lower classes is not likely to improve quickly. Yet political liberalization may heighten popular demand-making for welfare and redistributive measures. The resulting social tensions are likely to intensify the political intervention of grassroots movements.

The Squatters Movement and the Limits to Reform

The liberalization of the political system which began in 1986 opened opportunities for political participation for the popular movement. These same opportunities, however, also limited the influence which grassroots groups exercised on the kind of reforms which could be instituted. The experience of the campaign for the UDHA illustrates this point.

When the squatters movement, through the ULR-TF, decided to lobby for an urban land reform legislation in Congress, it was initiated into a reform process defined by the parliamentary system. By submitting to this process, the movement was inevitably drawn into making necessary compromises with other interest groups like real estate developers and landowners, interests represented in the legislature. Consequently, what the squatters achieved in terms of reforms was limited by the parliamentary system and the system of private property which the legislature was committed to protect.

In other words, the democratic space was itself a limiting condition to the extent that this legitimized the parliamentary process of reform and, by extension, the prevailing power structure in society. Congress and the Executive Department were still dominated by the propertied classes. This meant that popular mobilizations, in order to achieve some result, had to be exercised within institutionalized channels of political participation which had to accommodate the interests of the dominant classes. Yet these same channels were systematically constrained by the development strategy adopted by the state

and the prevailing political economy which operated in favor of commercial and real estate interests.

Another limiting condition is imposed by the revitalization of social forces brought about by the democratization process. The electoral exercises revived the political party system traditionally based on personalities and paternalistic loyalties. The urban poor communities, when they participated in these exercises, proved to be most vulnerable to the factionalism engendered by this type of politics. In some cases, coalitions broke up as a result of partisan tensions generated by election. The heightened competition produced by the growing number of political parties has likewise increased the pressure of politicians and government incumbents to find new ways of coopting poor communities and squatter organizations.

The increased opportunities for political involvement also encouraged the launching of many popular initiatives which pulled the movement in so many directions. Priority concerns differed across the different groups from livelihood to demolition; from reform advocacy to participation in government programs like the Community Mortgage Program (CMP) and involvement in the affairs of local government. As a result, it became extremely difficult for the squatter organizations to act as a united force even in crisis situations.

When various local governments in Metro Manila stepped up their squatter demolition campaigns after the 1992 elections, the movement failed to launch a unified defense despite the momentum generated earlier by the campaign for the UDHA and the legal protection offered by

the recently promulgated law. Various coalitions convened their respective groups to map out strategies to monitor and intervene in the demolition but no united effort could be sustained because the groups were caught up in their different on-going concerns. The lack of strategic focus is one of the consequences of the plurality of influences and decision-making centers in the movement.

Despite the lack of unity, however, the independent efforts of the different groups proved effective in deterring some local governments from going ahead with their demolition campaign. In the City of Manila, after the first wave of demolition was ordered by the mayor in apparent ignorance of the UDHA, squatter groups sought an audience with the local executive. In this meeting they succeeded in obtaining the assurance of the mayor that the provisions of the UDHA pertaining to demolition would subsequently be observed, in particular, the need for relocation.

More recently, squatter groups have turned their attention to their local governments as a result of the devolution of powers provided under the new Local Government Code as well as the UDHA. Some successes have been noted in a few areas but the potential for influencing decision-making on the local level is only beginning to be seen. Local groups in Quezon City were able to press the mayor to designate the urban poor as one of three sectors to be represented in the city council and have elected representatives to the council. They have also been able to influence the implementation of government infrastructure projects in the city to ensure the provision of adequate relocation to affected squatters. With successes like

these, squatters are likely to shift their strategies toward local-level demand-making.

Squatters and Urban Social Movements

Many observers have noted the characteristic inability of squatter movements to reform societal values and structures. They appear to have little in common with the new social movements that have excited Western scholars. Urban poor demands have often centered on survival issues of land, services and housing which echo more the aspirations of the classical social movements than those of their "new" variants. Concern for identity and meaning, and the defense of civil society, which animate the radicalism of the new social movements (Cohen, 1985) have yet to find a place in the political identity of squatter movements.

This article dealt with the incipient squatters movement in Metro Manila. I emphasize the word *incipient*, for the organization which the squatters have achieved thus far lacks the organizational scope, clarity and unity of purpose, and political influence normally associated with social movements. At the same time, despite the inherent difficulties in galvanizing and sustaining urban poor political action, the increasing mobilization of squatter communities in Metro Manila manifests the potential for influencing state action and producing important social and political effects on the urban form (Castells, 1983). The experience of the squatter groups of Quezon City with their city government after the 1992 elections has demonstrated the movement's potential to do this. Redefining the political matrix in

terms of City Hall instead of national power structures like Congress has infused a new dynamism to the political praxis of the squatters movement.

The struggle for land in urban society will become an even more important source of social tension in the years to come. In pursuing this struggle, the squatter movement, constituted by several independent coalitions, faces the challenge of carving out a political identity which will make it a more significant and effective social force in the democratization of our cities.

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