

A working home

Integrating income generating space in housing relocation projects



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Introduction

The island country of the Philippines has a population of over 100 million, a population growth of 1.81 percent and a rapid urbanisation process (CIA, 2013). The capitol region is Metro Manila and, as one of the most densely populated urban areas in the world, it is considered an international mega city. Being the fastest growing region in the country Metro Manila is struggling with challenges of heavy traffic, pollution, crime and an increase of informal settlements. According to a UNHABITAT report from 2010 Metro Manila had a population of over 11 million and 37 percent of the inhabitants, around 4 million people, in the city were informal settlers (UNHABITAT, 2010). These numbers have been steadily increasing since.



Informal settlements along waterways

The informal settlements of Metro Manila are located on left over land, not seldom in polluted industrial areas and danger zones such as flood prone waterways. Due to practical reasons the settlements are often placed close to livelihood possibilities such as industries and harbour areas. Many of these informal settlements have unsatisfactory sanitary conditions, with insufficient public services and infrastructure. As the settlements grow incrementally without consideration to planning and building regulations, and due to the lack of space to settle on, the population density is often high. This has many negative effects one of them being that the accessibility for emergency vehicles is limited.

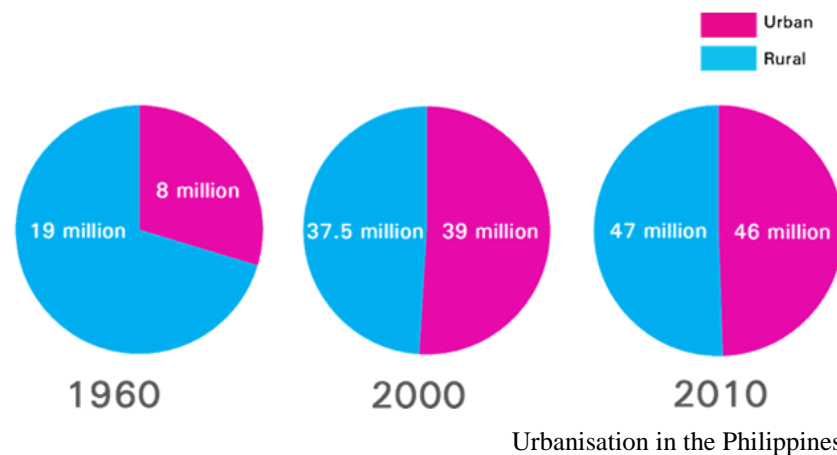


A fire in a informal settlement in Tondo

When disaster strikes the dangerous conditions in the informal settlements come to public awareness and demand action from politicians and city government. The last years one of the strategies has been state funded relocation projects, resettling the informal settlers in safer areas. With rising land prices in the city centre the social housing relocation projects are likely to be placed in the city outskirts far away from the informal settlers previous networks and from their livelihood. The relocation projects are often large scale monofunctional developments. In this paper I look at arguments to include income generating facilities in relocation projects.

Rapid urbanisation and informal settlers of Metro Manila

The Philippines are experiencing a rapid urbanisation process. In an attempt to improve their livelihood, and to access services provided in the urban areas, filipino families leave their homes in the provinces and move in to Metro Manila. Metro Manila is considered a rapidly urbanizing “megacity”, ranking 14th in size among 20 megacities around the world, with a population of 11 million inhabitants (UNHABITAT, 2010). In the same report from 2010 we find that 37 percent of the inhabitants, around 4 million people, in the city were informal settlers and that the numbers are steadily rising.



As a student in the course Urban Shelter given at Housing Development & Management Department at Lund University I participated in a field study to Metro Manila in February 2015. During the field study we visited informal settlements, relocation projects and informal settlement upgrading projects. We also had the possibility to interview residents of the different projects, politicians, practicing architects, engineers and volunteers working with the housing situation in Metro Manila.

In the field study I observed that the character and size of the informal settlements in Metro Manila vary greatly; ranging from a few houses under a bridge on a small piece of leftover land to a neighbourhood with thousands of people laying out roads and setting up a community in the harbour. The standard of the housing units range from corrugated sheet sheds, poorly prepared to withstand or protect its' inhabitants against dangers or climate, to four storey concrete block houses

fully equipped with with electricity, water and cable tv. Informal settlements lack, or has insufficient, public services and infrastructure such as fresh water supply, electricity, waste management, drainage and sewage system and road network. The physical environment is often crowded and the streets congested due to lack of planning.



Informal settlements along train tracks

Informal settlements are set up on land that the occupants have no legal claim to, sometimes paying a fee to speculators controlling the land illegally. The settlements are not seldom situated on high risk land where formal settlements are not being built due to risk of hazards. Some of the larger settlements are located by the seashore, on polluted garbage dumps, by riversides, under bridges and on fault lines vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. As the informal settlement families have left the livelihood of their province behind most settlements are located close to new livelihood possibilities such as industries or harbour.

Livelihood in relocation projects

Chambers and Conway, from Institute of Development Studies at University of Sussex writes: “A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources,

claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term” (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Provision of secure livelihood, just as secure tenure, is according to many one of the long-term solutions to poverty for slum dwellers and also a way to get the individual to feel like a contributor to society being part of the country’s development.

Because of a city governance decision to clear danger zones and waterways in Metro Manila, and land being cleared to be developed, thousands of informal settlers are being relocated in resettlement projects in the outskirts of the city where the land prices are lower (Paquito N. Ochoa, 2010). The resettlement projects enables them to get a formal contract of their housing unit and a better standard of their living. However it also presents the informal settlers with new challenges as they have to leave the social network they have built up in their former neighbourhood and maybe also lose their access to livelihood possibilities.



A panorama from a future relocation site in the outskirts of the city

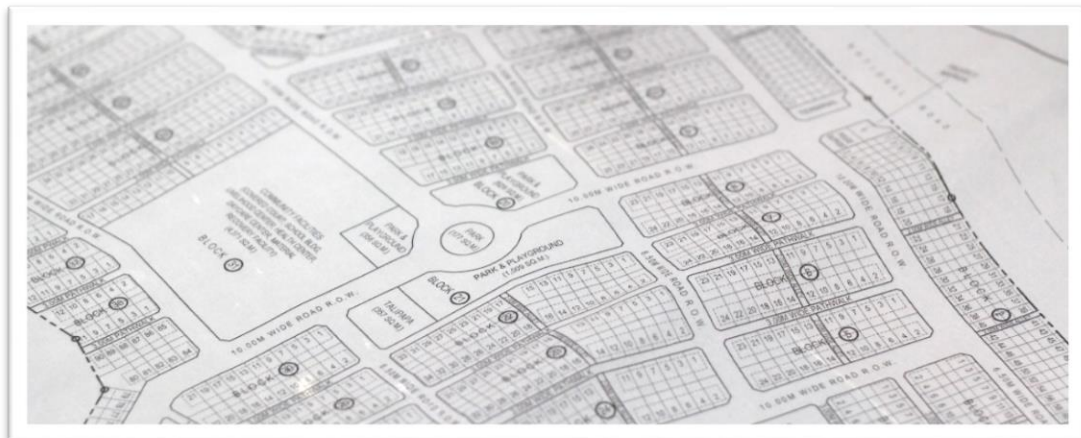
Ćosić, a social development specialist at the European Investment Bank states in a presentation that: ”Relocation may directly affect the transportation cost of getting to and from workplaces and schools.” (Ćosić, 2014). The Metro Manila Urban Services for the Poor also stresses the increased travelling costs: “They (informal settlers) cannot afford the cost of traveling from distant less expensive peri-urban regions for work and income-earning opportunities into urban centers (Urban Services for the Poor Projects, 2008). Through interviews with previous informal settlers during our field trip we learned that it occurred that families sold their allocated resettlement units to speculators to move back to the area they were

relocated from to be closer to available livelihood possibilities. If a family has once has been a governmental beneficiary they can not apply for another housing unit.

As a result of losing their livelihood the resettled families have to find other means of supporting the family often entering the informal work sector. Ćosić describe the difficulties:” Informal livelihoods occur primarily due to challenges in accessing the formal job market and the informal and segmented markets are often associated with low-paying jobs, unreliable stream of income and risky working conditions. (It is a) vicious circle of discrimination associated with the location where persons depending on informal livelihoods live.”

Mixed use and developing planning

During our field trip to Metro Manila we noted that many of the housing projects that we visited were planned without much consideration to the surrounding urban context: like islands in the urban fabric. This has lead to a defragmented city planning without interconnections, sprawling suburbs and segregated housing areas. An overwhelming side effect of the non contextual, island developments is how traffic planning has been neglected in between the new developments. Most new housing areas are monofunctional and to access services and facilities, even though not located at a great distance, the inhabitants have to travel by car. In a city with 14 million the situation quickly turns unbearable. Many social housing



relocation projects are large scale monofunctional areas contributing to this situation.

In her book *'The Death and Life of Great American Cities'*, the urban theorist Jane Jacobs writes about slum neighbourhoods in the United States in the 1960's. Her examples come from existing slum areas in the city and how to make interventions in these to turn them into safe and lively neighbourhoods. She argues that if not planned as an integrated part of the city slum relocation projects, or upgrading projects, risk relapsing and readapting slum features. To avoid relapse Jacobs writes about how the slum settlements can improve and formalise themselves with the right tools: "We need to identify, respect and build on the restorative powers that are in the slums themselves, and proven to work in big cities." (Jacobs, 1961) She continues: "The crucial question (to succeed in creating a vibrant developing neighbourhood) is if enough of the merchants and residents find it both desirable and feasible to implement their own plans where they are, or if they have to move elsewhere". (Jacobs, 1961)

The ground floor apartments, in all relocation projects that we visited during our Manila field trip, were more expensive for the residents than the units on higher levels. We were told that there was two main reasons for this: the inhabitants did not need to walk in any stairs and the fact that the ground floor apartments had a better location for income generating activities. And indeed almost all residents on in the ground floor apartments had devoted part of their housing unit to an income generating activity. The apartments on the ground floor did not differ in layout from the units on the higher levels. Residents who choose to have for example a little shop, also called a sari sari, thus has less space for living in the already small apartments. In a project called Smokey Mountain by the National Housing Authority, NHA, also residents on higher floors had small businesses which they had added on to their units by incorporation part of the hallway. In another project the residents in the area had created a small attractive commercial street by building small shed structures of a temporary character leaning their backs against the housing buildings blocking the daylight access for the ground floor units. These shops and workshops were built on the sidewalks pushing pedestrians out

into the street. The many examples of self initiated income generating spaces in the social housing areas indicates that there is good support for smaller income generating spaces in the developments. The residents of today have little possibility to incorporate workshops or shops in the permanent building structure without compromising living space or public space.

Researcher Ben Arimah has written an article for World Institute for Development Economics Research in which he argues that slum formation and growth is not only caused by rapid urbanization or income poverty but by factors such as regulatory framework on planning and delivery of land for settlements and government spending on infrastructure (Arimah, 2010). “The approach to slum poverty thus involves effective town and shelter planning and expansion of urban infrastructure to underserved and informal settlements” he continues. This indicates that not providing services and livelihood possibilities could perpetuate informal settlement conditions in the new in relocation projects.



A home sari sari shop

In the chapter about recovering slum areas Jacobs touches on the same subject as she emphasizes the importance of creating neighbourhoods that the inhabitants wants to stay and invest in: "A successful deslumification is dependent on that a sufficient number of people feel so at home in the area that they want to stay, and it also depends on their practical ability to continue living there. Many slums that has been on the verge to recovery has failed for practical reasons. Most often it has been about lack of funds for renovations, new houses and business premises at

a time when the needs were urgent and refusals has been critical. It has been about the difficulty of having to do many detailed changes in the recovering slums over time" (Jacobs, 1961).

Concluding discussion

I will conclude my paper with arguments on why it is important to provide for income generating space and livelihood possibilities in upcoming relocation projects. In general I have found that the motives on why to provide for income generating space in relocation projects ranges from the small scale, like the the living unit and the individual resident, to the much bigger perspective where more possibilities in the relocation projects help strengthening democracy and the residents feeling that they are contributing to the society.

On the field study I observed that many of the residents today are incorporating income generating space in their unit at the expense of the livable space for the family. The activities ranged from sari sari shops and internet cafés to massage studios and laundries. It was indeed an impressive inventiveness in space effectiveness and activities taking place on only a few square meters. However, already sharing a small space, the family would benefit greatly if the development from the beginning had a design more adapted to the need for livelihood space either within the unit, the building or the neighbourhood. Seeing the variety of professions thriving in the projects I think there is a great potential to work with.

“We need to identify, respect and build on the restorative powers that are in the slums themselves, and proven to work in big cities.” (Jacobs, 1961)

When informal settlers are relocated in the outskirts of the city many of them face the problem that they can not afford travelling to their previous workplaces and and therefore lose their livelihood. This has a big negative impact on the individual and its' life situation. From interviews conducted during our field study we learnt that in areas where livelihood possibilities was lacking, newly relocated residents sold their allocated apartments to speculators to move back closer to

their previous work and housing location. This creates an informal housing market where speculators are taking advantage of the pressing housing situation for low income families, overcharging rents and creating an insecure tenure situation. If the residents would have more job possibilities in, or close to, their housing area this kind of speculation could be interrupted and the relocated residents would have a future to invest in within their area and therefore stay at the relocation site.

Let us zoom out a bit and look at some of the benefits income generating space in relocation projects could provide at a city governance level: Metro Manila is as earlier stated a city heavily affected by traffic. Providing services and facilities within walkable distance from housing areas will reduce how much residents would have to travel by car to supply their needs. This mixed use development would therefore have a positive effect on the amount of cars in the city. Providing space in the developments dedicated for income generation could also redirect street vendors, who are now putting up temporary shed structures on sidewalks and in public spaces, to more appropriate locations more easily regulated by the city governance. This would help creating a more safe traffic situation for the pedestrians who are now being forced to walk in the street as the sidewalk is occupied. Redirecting street vendors to dedicated sites would also make it easier maintain the area and to keep the area tidy. This would also improve the areas from a safety point of view as studies have shown that well maintained areas feel more safe (Liuke, 2015).



Monofunctional rowhouse relocation project

On a societal scale, by providing planned and approved income generating space the National Housing Authority for example could help their residents going from the informal to the formal work sector. Formalizing the informal work sector would secure the income for the residents and provide them with a more sustainable life situation. Legalizing their businesses gives the relocated belief in investing for the future. A cheap investment for the government in a long term solution of poverty. An expense that will be refunded as residents with a formal income can pay taxes and contribute back to society. I believe that this will strengthen democracy: as taxpayers the residents will feel responsible to make demands on policy makers to use the taxes in a responsible way.

The Role of Architects

As a architects and an urban designers I believe it is our responsibility previous to designing to evaluate preceding projects, drawing conclusions and in this way constantly moving forward in our design. In the field of social housing there is much to be learnt from previous experience and by combining this experience with analysing the needs of the future residents and later planning accordingly I think we would have a more sustainable resettlement design than we see today. Listening to and communicating with the end users I believe is especially essential in social housing and low income housing where the recieveing community is not used to or capable of presenting their needs and expectations in comparison with other income groups

Architecs and urban designerns can also put design and investments into a greater system perspective when discussing with the developer. What is the expected result and how is that goal reached. What is the time frame on the vision? How will the area work in five, twenty or sixty years? Moving from the small unit perspective to the big refunding investments to the government when planning and discussing with the developer is valuable in creating cities that can grow and develop over time.

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