

Urbanization and the Slum Dwellers' "Right to the City": The Case of Pag-Asa, Olongapo City, Philippines

Cecilia C. Garson¹, Roy N. Villalobos² & Marie Fe D. de Guzman^{3*}

^{1, 2, 3*} Graduate School, President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), Iba, Zambales, Philippines

e-mail: deguzmanmariefe2018@gmail.com

Available online at: <http://www.ijcert.org>

Received: 28/August/2021,

Revised: 06/September/2021,

Accepted: 15/September/2021,

Published: 22/September/2021

Abstract: Background/Objectives: Olongapo city is a unique case because it is the most urbanized city in Central Luzon. Additionally, the former United States Naval Base is located in Olongapo City. This study will argue that more than just areas of 'unsafe housing, cramped space, disease, vice and poverty', these communities, like Pag-asa are areas of resistance of the underprivileged, the disadvantaged and the marginalized groups against the government's denial of their right to the city.

Methods/Statistical analysis: This study is a qualitative research which utilized a descriptive case study design to have an in depth understanding on the everyday struggle of the slum dwellers in Pag-Asa Olongapo City.

Findings: This study sought to answer how the struggle for the right to the city is manifested in slums by using Pag-asa, Olongapo City as the case study. The resistance may not always be in a form of an overt social movement that is why aside from their organization, relocatees who returned to Pag-Asa as well as renters that continue to settle in Pag-Asa despite knowing that the area is in threat of demolition, are also crucial actors of resistance. The proximity to work is the main reason why most of the dwellers refuse to leave the place, more so, it shows that slum dwellers are willing to face everyday risks just to remain in the area. While hopelessness, poverty and blight are uncontentionous images involved when talking about slums, it is interesting to note that the slum dwellers in Pag-asa are living harmoniously. The people treat each other as family, hence, it is one of the reasons why despite the relocation site offered by the government, the dwellers prefer to stay in the community.

Improvements/Applications: Based on the fieldworks conducted for this study, other studies aiming to challenge the dominant and marginalizing discourses on the urban poor can also focus on the role of women in resistance movements through using the feminist approach of 'the personal is the political'. The result of this study may help the government design more inclusive urban policies and programs that can reflect the interests of both the LGU and the dwellers. Lastly, it is also interesting to look at the implications of the slow violence that the urban poor is experiencing in relation to how this affects their mentality towards themselves.

Keywords: Urbanization, Slum Dwellers, Right to the City', Residents of Pag-Asa, Olongapo, Philippines.

1. Introduction

Urbanization is considered as major drivers for progress of cities while providing great opportunities for individuals and families to prosper as well. Most analysts agree that urbanization contribute to economic and social

development by allowing for economies of scale in provision of basic services and utilities and by benefitting industries from concentration of suppliers and consumers [1]. People from rural areas migrate to city because of the promise of economic opportunities like better jobs, and higher wages. Garrido [2], argued that one of the driving factors of the growth of slums is the rural to urban migration. In

developing countries like Asia, people move to cities because of the promise of a "better life". They conceived that cities offer better jobs and higher wages. Because of the influx of rural dwellers, the cities become over populated, thus, the proliferation of informal settlements [2].

In Asia, many migrants end up in squalid slums. UN- HABITAT defines slum household as the "most deplorable living and environmental conditions and are characterized by inadequate water supply, poor sanitation, overcrowded and dilapidated housing, hazardous locations, insecurity of tenure and vulnerability to serious health risks – all of which has major implications for quality of life [3]. A similar definition of slum was also provided by the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC). The growth of "mega cities" is the common image of Asian urbanization. Asian Century Institute finds that, out of 21 mega cities in the world, 12 are located in Asia. These include Tokyo, Mumbai, and Shanghai in china. As Urbanization thrives in Asia, urban poverty is now a growing phenomenon. Urban poverty means lack of mutual social and community networks. It also signifies social problems such as violence, crime, and exposure to infectious diseases. Additionally, informal settlements in developing Asia are characterized by poverty, limited access to basic needs potable water, health, and sanitation.

Inadequate planning tends to be the reason behind the slum problems. Hence, the Central Government and the Local Government Units (LGU's) must implement an effective urban planning to address the problems. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh and India some buildings collapsed because the contractors failed to comply with the standards set by the government. Hence, urbanization has to be managed efficiently and sustainably and sustainable urban planning addresses this. It looks at the current state of a place, studies where it needs to go, and creates ways to solve problems that may be encountered along the way [4].

In Manila Philippines, informal settlements are located in high risk areas. Because of their location, almost 12 million dwellers are experiencing natural disasters [5]. The Philippines is also confronted with challenges of adjusting and finding solutions to rising demands on housing, transportation, and basic services at the quickest possible time. Thus, Failure to address such will result in the proliferation of the marginalized urban Filipino- the urban poor, the slum dwellers, and informal settlers. However, since the 1970's a discrepancy regarding the number of informal settlers in the Philippines, ranging from as low as 470,000 families to as high as 2.5 million families, remain evident. Despite these differences, figures still showcase an exponential growth in the population of the urban poor in the country [6].

The usually stigmatized informal settlements have for many years, been a prevalent feature of the Philippine urban setting. Unfortunately, despite being considered as a

large component of the urban population, informal settlements and informal settlers are increasingly sidelined and made invisible. In rare cases that they become part of an official local policy, they are "treated more as problems or as nuisance in the midst of cities attempting to become modern" [7]. An example of such is Pag-Asa Olongapo, City which has been in constant eviction since 2015.

Refusal of slum dwellers for relocation has been recurrent challenges in Pag-asa Olongapo City, Philippines. The growth of Olongapo City's economy has been characterized by boom and bust cycles and current episodes of moderate economic expansion and impacted slum dwellers for the said purpose. Most of the original dwellers are workers of the Subic Naval Base, and local commercial businesses. Olongapo, city is a first class highly urbanized city in Region III. The Subic Port is one of the largest and busiest ports in the country. Additionally, five star hotels, large shopping malls and factories offer employment opportunities to many people. Hence, people from nearby provinces like Zambales, Bataan, and Pampanga migrate to Olongapo to work in SBMA and in Olongapo Central District. As of 2015, there are 101,651 workers in Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority most of them came from Olongapo , Zambales, Pampanga, and Bataan (SBMA.com) and the total population is 233,00. The influx of migrants contributed to the formation of informal settlements in the city.

The dwellers are occupying the three-meter easement along the artificial drainage canal built by the Americans. For more than six decades, the government tolerated the slum dwellers granting them "land rights" to stay in the area. It means that the owner of the "rights" have the right to occupy the place. However, last 2015, the dwellers have been constantly facing evictions and clearing operations. In 2017, a fire broke out and the dwellers were prompted to leave the place. Nonetheless, after several months, the dwellers returned to Pag-Asa and started to construct houses again, thus this study. The slum dwellers of Pag-Asa are occupied mostly by the residents of Olongapo, City, Zambales and by different groups of individuals from different parts of the country. The dwellers, despite their eviction experiences still persist to live in slum. They resist leaving despite the possible demolition to give way to the construction of park and other commercial establishments. The dwellers assert that the "rights" gave them the authority to stay in the place. Dwellers are willing to face every day risks such as eviction, natural, and man-made disasters. The city government is having a hard time implementing its land policies because the dwellers refuse to obey. Most of the dwellers refuse to be relocated in a relocation site provided by the city government of Olongapo, City.

In line with this, there is a need to problematize why despite government interventions to transfer the slum dwellers in a relocation site, a significant portion of the community still prefer to remain in the area. It is thus

noteworthy to study what features make slums special for the urban poor in such a way that they are willing to face everyday risks just to remain in the area. While, poverty, hopelessness and blight stereotyped images involved when talking about slums, this paper will attempt to go beyond these stigmas.

2. Objectives of the Study

There is an increasing body of literature about informal settlements as spatial outcomes of everyday forms of resistance of the informal dwellers. These researches apparently reflected the "Right to the City" framework which envisages spatially just resource distribution which includes the right of the informal dwellers to participation in urban governance as well as their right to appropriation, which is the consumption and production of urban opportunities.

While there are existing studies that reflect the struggles and stories of the informal urban dwellers about their rights to city, these assertions vary across different contexts. Thus, this research aims to locate the framework "rights to city" in the situation of informal urban dwellers in Olongapo City to reveal the stories and struggles of the dwellers in asserting their rights to city.

They have been in the said city for a very long time however, recent urban development priorities of the local government require them to leave the place. Despite this notice of eviction, the dwellers refuse to leave. Hence, it is interesting to know the everyday forms of resistance of the informal urban dwellers in claiming their rights to city.

Central Question:

1. How do informal urban dwellers assert their rights to city?

Specific Questions:

1. What are the factors affecting the movement of the informal dwellers in the city?
2. What are the encountered challenges of the informal urban dwellers in terms of the following:
 - a. Right to participation in urban governance; and
 - b. Right to appropriation (*consumption and production of urban opportunities*)?
3. What strategies do informal urban dwellers utilize in asserting their rights to city?
 - (a) To what extent have these strategies of survival asserted their rights to city?
4. What is the pattern of resiliency of the informal urban dwellers in claiming their right to city spaces?

3. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the researcher uses the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey in investigating the struggles and assertions of the informal urban dwellers of their rights to city. The discussion of the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey about the right to city is focused on the following: (a) Conception of Space; (b) Urban Common Spaces traversed by contradictions, disputes and material and symbolic conflicts among different agents; and (c) The Right to City.

According to Henri Lefebvre [8], space is founded on triplicity: spatial practice (space of perception arising out of daily reality), representation of space, and representational spaces. To Lefebvre 'spatial space, representations of space and representational space influence or contribute in various ways to the production of space according to its qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question and according to historical period.'

In this regard, a space can be perceived as in different ways and is affected by different factors. Pag-Asa, Olongapo City as an urban space, following the narrative of Henri Lefebvre [8], is founded on these aspects: spatial practice (space of perception arising out of daily reality), representation of space (conceived space and represented space), and representational spaces (spaces experienced through symbols and images).

David Harvey [9] emphasizes the need to recognize the diversity of the agents and the interests that intervene in the production of the city and its various forms of relating to urban land, urban equipment, and housing on use values and exchange values understood as relational concepts. Therefore, Pag-Asa, Olongapo City as an urban common space is marked by conflicts and contradictions; this allows reflection on the dynamic of production, preservation, reproduction, destruction, and creation of new urban common spaces, identifying factors that focus on their homogeneities and heterogeneities, their continuity, and ruptures.

The idea of the right to the city acquires meaning as formulated by Lefebvre [8] as follows: 'The right to the city is like a cry and a demand.' For him, the idea of the right to the city acts in two aspects: on the one hand, a requirement, a demand for the provision of social reproduction in the city; on the other hand, a project, a collective demand for the new city that expresses the right to claim something that does not yet exist, the right to another city [10].

4. Methodology

This study is a qualitative research which utilized a descriptive case study design to have an in depth understanding on the everyday struggle of the slum dwellers

in Pag-Asa Olongapo City. Olongapo city is a unique case because it is the most urbanized city in Central Luzon. Additionally, the former United States Naval Base is located in Olongapo City. During the American occupation, people moved to Olongapo to work in the central district where commerce is concentrated. However, in 1992 the RP-US agreement was terminated. The former Subic Naval Base was converted into an industrial zone, hence it offered more employment opportunities. In mid-2019, SBMA alone employs 135,00 workers, because of economic opportunities, people from nearby provinces moved to Olongapo. Because of the increasing population, Olongapo city government is having a hard time to cater the housing needs of the people, thus migrants ended up squatting in abandoned private lands and government owned properties. Thus, the case study.

The qualitative research will be consisted of three parts. First, a key informant interview with the members of the KAPAGASA, an organization formed by the slum dwellers, was conducted in order to study the experiences and reactions of the slum dwellers in Pag-Asa towards relocation programs of the city government, mainly investigate the forms of resistances they deploy and understand the ways they assert their right to the city. Secondly, a focus group discussion with at least 13 slum dwellers was conducted to obtain information about the personal or group feelings, opinions, and perceptions of the participants. Lastly an interview with the city planning officers was also necessary to identify the various relocation programs undertaken and the responses to the resistance shown by the slum dwellers. Documentary analysis from the city's Urban Planning Report and articles from credible scholars, books, journals and published government documents was also endeavored.

The study also used open-ended questions to allow the respondents to provide more information, additionally, this helped the researcher to understand unfamiliar topics. Additionally, focus group discussion with the dwellers that have been living in the area for quite a long time was also be utilized to ask the perceptions, ideas or opinions of people with similar backgrounds. Also, key informant interview with the Barangay chairman was conducted to know the history of Pag-asa, the barangay policies, and the urban participation of the slum dwellers in Pag-asa.

Table 1. Tabular Presentation of the Required Steps for the Methodology Section of the Research

Data Needed	Method of Analysis	Plan of Analysis
Nature of slums	Secondary materials (articles, journals, books,)	Literature review, coding for themes, coding for sub-themes
History of Pagasa	Key informant Interview with Barangay Chairman	Thematic analysis

	and the oldest in the community	
Strategies and practices of resistance of the slum dwellers	Focus Group Discussion with 13 participants	Thematic analysis
How the dwellers assert their right to the city	Interview with at least 3 key informant	Thematic Analysis

5. Results and Discussion

This study is a qualitative research which utilized a descriptive case study design to have an in-depth understanding of the everyday struggle of the slum dwellers in Pag-Asa. This chapter will first delve into the history of Pag-Asa, how it developed through time and the challenges that it faced as a community. Instead of using secondary data from books or the internet, the researchers opted to conduct a key-informant interview with Eliza Ramos, the purok leader of Pag-Asa more popularly known as Manang Elisa, who has been living in Pag-Asa since 1958. Another interview with the barangay chairman of Kalalake was also conducted to support Manang Elisa's statement.

An in-Depth Interview with the Renters in Pag-Asa and their Resistance

Reasons why Renters Prefer to Live in Pag-asa

Slum-dwellers who rent in Pag-asa despite the possible demolition and evictions that will take place in the community also play a vital role in the existence and persistence of Pag-asa as a community of resistance. Migrants from rural areas opted to rent in informal settlements because of the low rent, also, the rent agreement in informal settlement is more flexible than the formal housing [11]. In Pag-asa, the renters decided to rent in the area because of its accessibility to livelihood. Furthermore, because of the low rent, they can meet both ends meet.

The in-depth interview conducted with the renters of Pag-asa demonstrated that although they believe that they cannot do anything if the government will demolish the place, they still hope that their stay in Pag-asa will get extended because of the benefits they reap from the community. Both respondents agreed that they will not leave the place and if ever, the right to housing should also be extended to the renters since the right to housing is everyone's right. True enough, following Mike Davis [12], renters are usually sidelined of the slum dwellers because governments normally do not provide compensation or resettlement for them since they do not own the house. One

of the renters said that their organization ASA will help them assert their right to remain in the area.

One of my respondents also stated that, even though Pag-asa is not a perfect community, this place provides them ample reasons to stay. The primary reason why Respondent 1 wishes to stay long in this community is its proximity to her husband's work and the camaraderie which is present in the community. This is evident since there is an existing association (ASA) established by the residents themselves. Also, the participant mentioned that there are problems about flooding and other water and electric-related issues that for them, took its toll since they decided to stay in Pag Asa.

These results are parallel to what Landa Joano experienced in [13], where it revealed that in a slum neighborhood, people can be happy in slums and the dwellers are resilient. He also observed that slum dwellers are in a better position than most of the professional because they can limit their wants from the capacity of their resources; slum dwellers have also learned to take an optimistic approach to a particular type of cultural adaptation. Cojano also pointed out that slum life has its realities and it has positive and adaptive value to the residents, more so, the dwellers took their economic deficiency with less effort and comfort.

Reasons why Relocatees returned to Pag-Asa and their resistance

One of the many reasons that place slum dwellers in the negative light is that they tend to not accept the relocation sites that are being offered to them by the government. It is crucial to look at the reasons why slum dwellers continue to return to Pag-Asa despite everyday threats of natural disasters and health risks. The in-depth discussion that the reserachers conducted with the slum dwellers who returned to Pag-Asa revealed the poor condition of the relocation site. One of my respondents stated:

According to one of the respondents Violeta, Iram, the relocation site provided by the government is very far and many were arrested because of pushing and using illegal drugs. The people in Iram are not the same as the people in Pag-Asa because, here in Pag-Asa, we are happy, and this place is near the work and market quipped one of my respondents. Additionally, in Pag-Asa, they are like a family, and the place is peaceful, and if we need help, we have the ASA to turn to)

What crucially needs to be highlighted however is that respondents agreed that they experienced economic problems while staying in Iram. Both respondents agreed with proximity to work is very important to meet both ends meet. Building up from their statements it can be inferred that transferring them to a relocation site where no livelihood is available, and lack of access to basic services prompted them to return to Pag-Asa.

Slum-dwellers who returned to Pag-Asa despite being initially transferred to relocation sites are also actors of

resistance against the poor condition of the relocation site because the relocation site is located near the mountain. Also, the life in Iram is difficult and the people do not live harmoniously because of the diverse culture of the residents. The people residing in Iram came from different parts of the country, and most of them are Muslims, unlike in Pag-asa where the residents are from the same region and they already built a certain form of belongingness. By returning to the city, they are asserting that they will not accept relocation sites that lack the basic resources to have a decent and safe environment. Moreover, returning to the city is the only practical way for them to have access to livelihood, and other government services.

Challenges Encountered by the Slum Dwellers

Informal settlements make up a decent percentage of most urbanized areas. Niva, Taka & Varis [14] note that settlements face several challenges such as urbanization and sustainability. The migrants and those who have already established themselves are often exposed to various hazards and vulnerabilities given the extremely dense population and the sheer lack of secured tenure, safe, and sanitary living environment as well as access to the most basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare. Although access to basic facilities including schools and hospitals is not a problem, slum dwellers are still beset with risks and dangers since they are situated in the least healthy part of the city [15]. Despite these, they continue to settle in slums because of the expensive cost of traveling from peri-urban regions to work in the city.

The common challenge encountered by the slum dwellers in Pag-asa is flooding. This is expected because they are occupying the three-meter easement near the artificial canal built by the Americans. Despite the notice of the LGU to vacate the place because of the risk of flooding, the dwellers refuse to leave the place. According to the respondents, the flooding is just a normal occurrence not only in Pag-asa but the whole Olongapo is a flood prone area.

Another challenge is the access to basic services such as water and electricity. The dwellers, responded that they do not have their own water meter and electric meter because one of the requirements of the Olongapo Public Utilities Department (PUD) is the certificate of ownership of the house. Since majority of the dwellers do not have the certificate because they are illegally occupying the place, they can not avail of the services.

The latest challenge that the dwellers are facing is the COVID-19 Pandemic, though at the time of the interview, there is no COVID-19 case in the community. However, all of the respondents answered that COVID is the biggest challenge they are confronting. All of them are afraid that one day they will also contract the virus, considering that the houses are almost attached to another house.

Additionally, discipline among the residents is one of the problems of the barangay. The people do not observe proper health protocol such as wearing of mask. Also, the children are exposed to the virus because the parents let their children to play outside their houses despite the prohibition from the local government.

Table 2 The Challenges Encountered by the Slum Dwellers in Pag-asa

Respondent	Challenges Encountered				
	Flood	Volcanic Eruption	Water	Electricity	COVID 19
1	√		√	√	√
2	√				√
3					√
4			√		√
5					√
6				√	√
7	√	√			√
8	√		√	√	√
9		√			√
10	√				

Focus Group Discussion with the Slum Dwellers in Pag-Asa Reasons why Slum Dwellers Resist to Leave the Area

The Focus Group Discussion that the researchers conducted with the dwellers of Pag-Asa revealed that Pag-Asa's proximity to sources of livelihood is the primary reason why they remain in Pag-Asa. Proximity to work is important for the dwellers because they can save money. Additionally, when the work is near the place, they can save time and energy because they don't need to be in a hurry to reach their work places. As one of the respondents claimed, they can avoid traffic by living in Pag-asa because their place of work is just walking distance.

The table below demonstrates that all of the respondents claimed that they settled in Pag-asa because of its proximity to sources of livelihood and the harmonious relationship in the place. Seven respondents stated that it's because of its proximity to hospital, and school; four respondents stated that it is because of nearness to church; two respondents said that it is because of the low housing rent in Pag-Asa and five respondents stated that their primary reason for staying is their family. Take note that the responses of the interviewees concerning their reasons for staying in Pag-Asa despite health risks, disasters, and possible demolition are overlapping and are not limited to a lone reason alone.

Citing the anarchist architect John Turner who claimed that 'housing is a verb', Mike Davis [12] in his book 'The Planet of Slums' provides that housing is a choice similar to a mathematical equation involving calculations where you attempt to maximize quality housing, personal and financial security, and distance to work. What he also

pointed out is that in some cases, people even trade a comfortable shelter for a house located near a job.

Strengthening this claim is a statement from one of my respondents from the focus group discussion with an individual who left Pag-asa during the wake of Pinatubo and resided in Laguna yet returned to Pag-asa. "We went back to Laguna but after the eruption, and the situation became normal, we went back to Pag-Asa because our livelihood is here, our house is here and my husband is working in the base"

Since it is evident that the existence of livelihood near Pag-Asa seems to be the main reason why the community persists despite constant government intervention to pursue the demolition of the area and transfer them to the off-city relocation site, the in-depth interviews conducted revealed equally interesting findings as shown in the table below.

Table 3 shows the responses of the dwellers in the proposed relocation

Respondent	Whether they will accept the relocation site
1	No
2	No
3	No
4	It depends if they will pay and there is work/ livelihood
5	No
6	It depends if the relocation site is near the workplace and the house is decent
7	It depends if they will pay us
8	If there is no choice, they will relocate
9	It depends if there is a livelihood
10	It depends if the place is safe and decent
11	it depends if the place is near the city

As observed in the table above, half of the respondents claimed that it depends on the situation. From these responses, I would like to emphasize those who responded with "it depends". Seemingly, those who responded with "it depends" would agree to transfer to relocation sites if there is livelihood available and the place is near the city. Additionally, respondents also stated that they will agree to be relocated provided that the house is decent.

In 2012, Almeida claimed that people looking for employment and better opportunities move to the cities. This, in turn, produces an increasing number of people in the cities that cannot sustain the new population influx (Ploeg, 2008). Consequently, the core principles of neoliberalism make formal employment and housing unattainable for these people, hence, the rise of the cities also led to the formation of slums. In the Philippines, World Economic Forum [16] reports that cities fail to cope with urbanization thus resulting in the proliferation of informal settlements.

Local Government's Responses The Dwellers Right to Appropriation

The dwellers like all the bonafide residents of Olongapo enjoy equal opportunities such as free access to health, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or the 4P's which is a conditional cash transfer program of the government are also enjoyed by the dwellers.

With regards to the consumption and production of urban opportunities, Balde stressed that "similar to other common residents in the City, the informal dwellers have access to all basic government services." To support Balde's response, Mr Eric Sanchez, said that though the dwellers and renters can enjoy housing opportunities, the houses are not for free. Further, he added that the City Government does not charge any amount from informal settlers because Informal Settlers need housing assistance from the government. However, Balde stated that The City's future/planned housing projects will be paid by beneficiaries, based on the available amortization schedules.

The City Government of Olongapo provided a list of inventory of available lands suitable for residential purposes, and one of them is Iram, the relocation site where some of the relocatees who returned to Pag-Asa resided for a while. According to United Nation's Human Settlements program, housing is affordable when the occupants are not deprived of the enjoyment of Human Rights, further it should be adequate in quality and location and does not cost too much [6]. In the Philippines, there are two laws that provide the real definition of affordable housing, the Local Government Code, and the Urban Development and Housing Act. The UDHA also provides that the government should provide employment opportunities to the urban poor. In the case of the Philippines, informal dwellers, do not only suffer social inclusions but they are also hardly involved in the decision-making policies [17]. The right to the city also entails conceiving cities as commons wherein all inhabitants, present and future, permanent or temporary, should have the capacity to equally access the urban resources, services, goods, and opportunities of city life, and participate in the management and development of the city itself.

The Formation of ASA and the Right to Participation in Urban Governance

Inclusive urbanization allows every individual to participate, contribute, and enjoy the benefits of urbanization. It involves the provision of economic opportunities such as employment, livelihood, and access to finance. Spatial inclusion includes improved access to basic services such as housing and infrastructure while social inclusion consists of essential principles of equal rights and involvement in the development process [17]. In the case of Pag-asa, similar to other residents, the informal dwellers have access to all basic government services. A representative from their community

is also receiving invitation to attend city council session, public hearing, and public consultation.

In a key-informant interview with the city planning officer and the barangay chairman of Kalalake, they both stated that slum dwellers in Pag-Asa have the right to participate in urban governance. Barangay Secretary Armie Araman claimed that the dwellers in Pag-Asa are represented by its Purok Leader. Aling Eliza, the purok leader is always invited when there is a public consultation, also, one of the Kagawad of Kalalake is also a resident of Pag-Asa. Additionally, the dwellers in Pag-asa formed an association to protect them from any form of violence and to serve as the voice of the slum dwellers.

To reiterate Bayat [18] the quiet encroachment of the poor may be incorporated in the province of contentious politics once their gains become endangered. Case in point, the development of ASA as an organization was propelled by their experiences that without an organization, a slum dweller's voice would not be heard by the government. What is interesting about the ASA is that the organization was formed and led by women residing in Pag-Asa.

According to ate Celerina, before the creation of ASA, there was a previous organization called SUGPO but it did not prosper, hence, four female residents of Pag-Asa formed an association called 'ASA' or Samahan ng mga taga Pag-Asa. The association serves as their voice to air their grievances to the government. According to one of the respondents who happened to be one of the founders of ASA, the leader of the association is the one representing them whenever there is a dialogue between the City government and the Slum dwellers. However, when the leader left the place, the women who have been living in the Pag-Asa for a long time are representing the community in the LGU.

Strategies of Survival and the assertion of the 'Right to City'

When survival inevitably contravenes with legality, survival itself is already a manifestation of resistance. He also claimed that in the case of squatting for example, it is not unusual to hear of a squatter settlement that has been constructed overnight. Tayyab Mahmud [19]. This was strengthened by the statement of one of my respondents who said that the "extension" of the place was a former river. Building up from this statement, it can be concluded that the formation of slum in Pag-Asa was illegal since river is part of public domain and hence, outside the commerce of men. Additionally, the dwellers were aware that they do not have the legal right to stay in Pag-Asa since they only reclaimed the river.

Despite this, majority of the participants asserted their rights to the city by stating their reasons why they chose to stay such as livelihood, community assistance that will provide financial support and other medical concerns, and accessibility to areas like a public market, church, parks, and

malls (as presented previously) which considered as factors affecting their movement to the city. Further, six respondents mentioned that they have been in Pag Asa all their lives and it will be very hard for them to transfer to a site where they have to adjust again.

James Scott [20] argued that the formation of informal settlements which are "spatial outcomes" of the urban poor's utilization of space that is normally obtained through "quiet encroachment" serves as the springboard of their resistance for appropriating to themselves scarce living space. Although there is no direct refusal from the slum dwellers, it can be inferred that they asserted their rights by stating and putting emphasis on the number of years they have been living in Pag-Asa. The formation of an organization is also one of the strategies of the dwellers to assert their right to the city. The organization

Also, location is an aspect of informal settlement for people in Pag Asa, which is very closely related to other aspects like basic infrastructure and services. Whereas the quality of life depends on adequate shelter, basic services, and infrastructure, the slum dwellers live in a substandard living condition in this area. It was revealed in the results that informal settlers in Barangay Pag Asa benefited in several ways from the city in terms of social needs excluding housing security. People in the community are well-aware of the fact that the government reserves the right to expropriate.

Pattern of Resiliency

Filipinos are born resilient and no calamity, vices, or crimes can bring us to our knees. The study found out that slum dwellers in Pag-Asa accepted that trouble is a normal occurrence in a place. For the slum dwellers, what appears to be a threatening behavior is just a coping mechanism. Hence, the response of the slum dwellers regarding trouble, flooding, and other natural disasters is a coping device in handling difficult conditions.

In Pag-Asa, one factor that makes the dwellers resilient is the presence of emotional social support. The neighborhood expresses love and empathy to each other, additionally. The respondents unanimously answered that they have each other to turn to in times of problems and crises. Mental resilience, is also present in slum dwellers, for decades they have experienced different adversities like a volcanic eruption, floods, and the pandemic. As normal individuals, they experienced disappointment and grief, but they were able to recover. They manage to keep functioning mentally and physically. In summary, the slum dwellers developed resilience like a positive attitude to survive, connection with sources of support, being helpful to others, and the ability to cope with every situation.

The city, as noted by an urban sociologist Robert Park is "man's most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire" [21]. UN Habitat III [21] argued that the

Right to the City envisages spatially just resource distribution. This includes basic infrastructures and services like water, electricity, decent jobs, decent housing and settlements, health care, and education. The "right to the city" is also a political agency. It means that all inhabitants as social and political actors can fully exercise the true meaning of 'citizenship'. Government policies must ensure that every individual especially the marginalized groups have access to political agency. It requires transparency and accountability. Additionally, the right to the city embraces the recognition of culture, it also requires that the city must create active connections and social encounter because it results in a renewed form of urban life. Right to city requires the respect of religion which is the highest among the hierarchy of rights, customs, and ethnicities, to establish solidarity and community.

6. Conclusion

The paper concluded that the Local Government Unit of Olongapo City has concrete plan for the informal dwellers, the study finds that the government is addressing the increasing number of informal dwellers in the city. It finds that the city government will provide relocation sites for the informal dwellers. Although the relocation site is not for free, the monthly amortization is affordable. Additionally, the paper concluded that overt social movement usually do not occur among the poor but rather, everyday forms of resistance is displayed through evasion, false compliance, feigned ignorance and pilfering. It must be noted that in Pag-asa, the dwellers are aware that they are illegally occupying the place, further, the dwellers are not paying real property tax because they have no documents to show that they own the place.

In the Pag-Asa case study, it was revealed that due to its proximity to livelihood, hospitals, church, markets, and schools, the slum dwellers whose primary sources of living include working in SBMA, selling retail products, Job orders in LGU, working in Malls, and driving tricycle are ready to face possible threats just to remain in the area. In brief, the urban poor are willing to trade a shelter for a location near a job.

The association formed by the informal dwellers, provided the dwellers the opportunity to assert their rights to the city. Through the association, the dwellers can have access to government services, further, the representatives from the association were given the chance to attend the public hearing and consultation. However, the participation of the dwellers is limited or just a mere token because they are merely audience or spectator.

According to the barangay chairman of Kalalake, the barangay where Pag-asa is located, people resist to leave because there are dwellers who are holder of land rights. The

rights afforded the dwellers the reason to resist relocation. Relationship with the people around us is very important. Thus, one of the reasons why the dwellers refuse to leave Pag-asa is because of the connection of the people in the area. In Pag-asa, they treat each other as family and the dwellers are close to each other. For the dwellers, Pag-asa is special because, it is where they started to realize their dreams, additionally, most of the dwellers have been there for more than five decades hence, aside from proximity to livelihood, and family is the primary reason why they continue to resist leaving the area.

The study concluded that the people in Pag-asa are resilient. They were able to withstand life's adversities. Despite the challenges they encountered, the dwellers were able to bounce back from challenging life trials. It is noteworthy to find that the dwellers in Pag-asa are mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially resilient. The study finds that they were able to adapt to life's adversities like family problems, and economic problem. For them, financial problem and economic problems are part of life. The dwellers who work in the construction, the tricycle driver, street sweepers and factory workers inside the SBMA managed to remain physically fit especially during this pandemic. The respondents answered that staying healthy is very important for them to continue to work so they can provide for their families. In addition, the dwellers were able to demonstrate emotional resilience by accepting their real life situation. All of them are aware that there is a possibility that they could be evicted in the place, however, they are optimistic that they can assert their right to city. Engagement with other dwellers is another reason why it is difficult for the dwellers to leave Pag-asa. Despite the occasional trouble in the area, the people have learned to co-exist with it, also eves dropping and "chismis" became part of their everyday life. Flooding is not an extra ordinary phenomenon for the dwellers as one of the dwellers responded, flood is what makes Pag-asa special also. Because the place is near the river, it is expected that during rainy season, they experience flood.

It has been claimed that resistance of the subaltern is often manifested in a wide array and even conflicting forms. Case in point, mass organizations may be formed to demonstrate resistance but at the same time, it must be noted that in some cases, resistance is not always in the form of an overt social movement. Asserting their right to the city, original occupants, the former relocatees, and the renters through remaining in Pag-asa, keeps the community alive. The data gathered from the respondents of this qualitative research have proven that the urban poor are not merely willing recipients of the government's relocation projects. They are compelled to resist relocation because it is only through being in the city that they can survive. Simply put, their constant struggle to be in the city for survival manifests their resistance.

Through rejecting relocation, slum dwellers are asserting that housing is more than just a shelter. Though land is normally classified into residential land or into spaces for making a living, truth be told, the society's socioeconomically deprived citizens need to veer away from these classifications of particular spaces. In most cases, what is rendered as residential land also needs to be converted by the slum dwellers into spaces for making a living due to the nature of work that they are capable. Therefore, their housing choice is not completely geared towards the comfortability of a house; rather, it is a choice made by weighing accessibility to livelihood, prospects for development, and opportunities for a dignified life.

Accordingly, this study is a call for reshaping the city based on the needs of the most marginalized and not on the interests of the government and the capitalists. It must be fully realized that an individual's right to survive is far more important than any legal or economic consideration.

7. Recommendations and Future Scope

Over the years, we have witnessed how cities are being shaped based on middle-class a preference that has treated the marginalized urban Filipinos as 'second class citizens'. Further worsening the predicament that the urban poor, informal settlers and slum dwellers are in to are the dominant and hegemonic discourses from the powerful, the government, and even from the academe that has forced the society to be disgusted and afraid of the marginalized by stereotyping them as criminals, lazy, and short-sighted. In this regard, there needs to be a resurrection of subjugated knowledge. Individuals must take the challenging step of unlearning the norms and beliefs imposed by these privileged groups in order to take notice what is really going on.

This study revealed that the struggle for the right to the city is manifested by the existence and persistence of slum communities. This study has also proven that relocation sites such as Iram which is an off city relocation offered to the urban poor, particularly to the slum dwellers of Pag-Asa have never been pro-poor and thus, only put the marginalized in a much worse off position. Hence, there should be a stricter implementation of the provisions of the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992. At the same time, the concept of a "home" should also be viewed to be not only limited to the physical structures of the house alone. This research is however one aspect only of the many other things that urban studies should shed light to.

Based on the fieldworks conducted for this thesis, other studies aiming to challenge the dominant and marginalizing discourses on the urban poor can also focus on the role of women in resistance movements through using the feminist approach of "the personal is the political". It must

be noted that in Pag-Asa, the officers of ASA and the purok leader that represent the community are women. A future research on women empowerment in slum areas should be conducted. Further, this study could be beneficial to the Local Government of Olongapo because it could serve as their reference in understanding the resistance of the slum dwellers to leave the place. The result of this study may help the government design more inclusive urban policies and programs that can reflect the interests of both the LGU and the dwellers. Lastly, it is also interesting to look at the implications of the slow violence that the urban poor is experiencing in relation to how this affects their mentality towards themselves.

Again, narratives and stories of the urban poor must be resurrected. It is only through listening to them that we will be able to solve the urban problem.

8. Acknowledgment

The researchers wholeheartedly thank the PRMSU Graduate School and University Research and Development leadership for their valuable help and support in the finalization of the this research article and for its publication.

References

1. Carmody, P. & Owuso F. "Neoliberalism, Urbanization and Change in Africa: The Political Economy of Heterotopias", *Journal of African Development*, Vol.18,No.18,pp.61-73, 2016.
2. Garrido, M. Z. "The Patchwork City, Class, Space, Politics in Metro Manila", Chicago, Illinois.University of Chicago Press. Doi:cdn.fbsx.com, 2019
3. UN-HABITAT, "State of the World's Cities 2012/2013 Prosperity of Cities UN HABITAT", 2013
4. Ron Mahabir, R., Crooks, I.A., Croitoru, I.A. & Agouris, P., "The study of slums as social and physical constructs: challenges and emerging research opportunities", *Regional Studies*, Regional Science, Volume 3, 2016 - Issue 1, 2016
5. West J., "Urbanization and Slums in Asia". Asian Century Institute, 2014
6. UN HABITAT, "Global report on human settlements 2011, Cities and Climate Change", United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2011
7. Lagman, M., "Informal settlements as spatial outcomes of everyday forms of resistance: the case of three depressed communities in Quezon City", *Political Social Science Review*, 2012
8. Lefebvre, H., "The production of space", Malden, MA: Blackwell. Original work published in 1974. 1991
9. Harvey, D. "The right to the city", *New Left Review*, Vol. 53, pp. 23-40, 2008
10. Marcuse, P. "Reading the Right to the City: Analysis of Urban trends, culture, Theory, policy, action", Retrieved July 10,2019, from <http://www.tandfonline.com>, 2014
11. Kumar, K. "Sociology and the Englishness of English Social Theory", First Published March 1, 2001 Research Article, 2001
12. Davis, M. "Planet of Slums. New York, USA: The Guardian, 2006
13. Landa J. F., "Experience and Perspectives in a Slum Neighborhood: An Anthropological View", *PSR* 21, pp. 223-28, 197,
14. Niva, V, Taka, M & Varis, O. "Rural-Urban Migration and the Growth of Informal Settlements: A Socio-Ecological System Conceptualization with Insights through a Water Lens". www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability.DOI:10.3390/su11123487, 2019
15. Ballesteros, M. M., "Linking Poverty and the Environment: Evidence from Slums in the Philippine Cities" Phil. Institute for Development Studies, 2010
16. World Economic Forum, "From Slum to Success Story: This is Ciudad Neza", www.weforum. January 18, 2021
17. World Bank, "The World Bank Annual Report 2017", Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/27986> License: CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO. 2017
18. Bayat, A., "From 'dangerous classes' to 'quiet rebels': Politics of the urban subaltern in the global south", In *Sage Journals: International Sociology*, Vol. 15(3), pp. 533-557, 2000
19. Mahmud, T., "Slums, Slumdogs, and Resistance", In *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* (Vol. 18(3), pp. 685-710, 2010
20. Scott, J., "Beyond the war of Words: Cautious Resistance and Calculated Conformity" in Amooore, L. *The Global Resistance*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005
21. Harvey D. "A Brief History of Neoliberalism", Oxford University Press Inc., New York. 2012
22. UN Habitat III, "Urbanization and Development Emerging Futures", UN HabiTat III for a better Urban Future, 2016

Authors Profile

1. Cecilia C. Garson, LIB - Working as Instructor at President Ramon Magsaysay State University and as the Director of Student Affairs. Specializes in Social Science Research, Development Studies, Gender Studies, and Law.

2. Roy N. Villalobos, DPA – a Faculty of the PRMSU Graduate School and the current University President of

PRMSU. Specializes in Public Administration and Social Science Research and Development Studies.

3. Marie Fe D. de Guzman, EdD – Working as a Professor V at President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), Iba, Zambales, Philippines. Specializes in Social Science/Studies Educational Management and Professional Education subjects. Currently the Director of PRMSU Graduate School and a Faculty of College of Teacher Education.