

## CHAPTER 4

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# Slum Clearance as a Transnational Process in Globalizing Manila

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Perhaps one of the most striking features of late twentieth-century urban management is the exercise of slum clearance. A faithful companion to most visions for urban improvement, slum clearance is inextricably bound up with the pursuit of modernization, development, and growth. While the term “slum clearance” has become politically unpalatable of late, policies of identification, labeling, and settlement eradication remain intact from the mid- to late twentieth century, and the recent preference for terms like “relocation” (removal of settlers from a designated space) and “resettlement” (rehousing of individuals and families in a new space) says more about image making than the process of removal itself. In the same way that it stretches across time, slum clearance also remains coherent across national and regional boundaries: whether in countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, or North America, governments typically identify an urban space they deem to be ineffectively used, calculate the political cost of seizing property rights in this area, delineate and map the space to be “redeveloped,” remove existing residents (often forcibly), and direct the cleared property—now formal real estate—toward more profitable uses. A history of slum clearance, then, straddles local, national, transnational, international, and global histories, on the one hand demonstrating the power of states and, on the other hand, exemplifying the relationships between settlements, states, and broader patterns of industrialization, trade networks, property investment regimes, and labor management.

Slum clearance also brings in the role of intergovernmental organizations in supporting states—in fostering state power where there was little or none. By employing violent removal and by physically breaking apart coalitions—neighborhoods, communities, political networks—of poor urban dwellers, states could delegitimize claims to use rights and assert the primacy of only those property rights sanctioned by the state.

There are many potential starting points for this sort of history. Colonial and postcolonial history highlights some of these struggles over property rights. The end of World War II is equally rich in this regard: in the late 1940s and 1950s, so-called developing-world cities experienced explosive growth with refugees, dislocated populations, and job-hungry itinerants flooding into the nearest metropole in hopes of finding work and food. Newly independent regimes and postwar governments, conversely, aspired to reshape urban landscapes in ways that were friendly to investment and that enticed more affluent populations while eliminating unsightly, inadequate housing. At least two important results followed: urban real estate values rose rapidly and governments found it increasingly vital to secure prime locations without paying those rising prices. Above all, states understood that they needed to connect their nations to a world economy via urban hubs, and that the organization and infrastructure of those cities played a key role in setting regional and international hierarchies. Governments may have welcomed poorly paid laborers as part of the process of development and modernization in postwar cities, but in the eyes of politicians and government officials, their poor accommodations were another matter.<sup>1</sup>

Given that economic incentives and tactics developed at the global level, postwar slum clearance makes more sense when considered in global, transnational, and international as well as local or national terms. A more expansive approach allows for important questions about the relationship between transnational urban planning practices and state power, about the art of ungoverned urbanism (to adapt James Scott's phrase) and informality, about the sources of political legitimacy for an intergovernmental organization like the World Bank. While still looking closely at one urban site—in this case, Manila—and one specific time period—in this case, from the 1970s to today—it quickly becomes apparent that transnationalism did not have a historical "moment" in the case of Manila or even Philippine planning history. There was no decisive rise or fall of transnationalism; rather, transnational ideas about good planning traveled along intellectual, educational, and professional networks and contended with the needs and wants of national and city

administrations while also competing with deeply local, pragmatic approaches to spatial order in specific communities. The transnational dimension to this sort of urban history, then, plays an important function in denaturalizing the power and coherence of state planning, instead refocusing attention on contestations of power.

In this chapter, close attention is paid particularly to the relationships between national government policy, informal dwellers and informal dwellers' organizations, nonprofit organizations often working on global scales, and intergovernmental organizations like the World Bank. Interactions on the global and transnational scale revealed, on the one hand, clear institutional and rhetorical reproduction of what Filipino government officials perceived to be American, at other times more vaguely "modern," standards. On the other hand, local and national political needs often overshadowed even the hefty financial power and global influence of organizations like the World Bank, instead steering slum clearance projects decisively toward domestic conceptualizations of successful urban development. Projects often reflected the needs and desires of elite Manila residents, but informal settlers played a critical, if often undocumented, role in this story as well: while states enacted costly, expansive slum clearance programs, the impoverished stratum of Manila society continued to move and resettle in ways that confounded urban planners, disappearing from government records and reinhabiting urban spaces without the permission or even knowledge of the state. The invisibility of many of the cleared residents speaks to the myriad ways in which state policy failed in its most fundamental goal of controlling who lived where, and how. From the point of view of individuals and families, this invisibility was not a victory, but rather a symptom of dispossession and extreme marginalization.

### Creating Slums and Squatters

In order to comprehend slum clearance in Greater Manila, it is necessary to take a step back and examine the context of illegal land occupation. When American advisers first arrived in the archipelago less than a year after the Japanese surrender and a few months before independence on July 4, 1946, mission leader Earl Gauger, legal adviser John Tierney, and economic adviser Roy J. Burroughs found Manila utterly decimated by war and occupation. Homeless and displaced families had erected self-made structures amid the rubble in neighborhoods around Barrio Fugoso, Casbah within Binondo,

Ermita, Intramuros, Harrison Plaza, Magat Salamat Elementary School, Malate, and North Harbor.<sup>2</sup> Preexisting land rights were poorly delineated, and land titles were either lost or disputed after years of occupation and war. As with much of the rest of the world, decent housing was in short supply.

Despite such obvious troubles, the federal government focused on institutional changes that had little connection with the realities of poor residents. Informal settlements spread rapidly across the city, with up to 75 percent of informal dwellers in Manila having no visible source of income in the early and mid-1950s, according to the government.<sup>3</sup> Unable or unwilling to directly provide housing for lower-income urban dwellers, administrations from Manuel Roxas' (1946–48) to Elpidio Quirino's (1948–53), Ramon Magsaysay's (1953–57), Carlos Garcia's (1957–61), Diosdado Macapagal's (1961–65), and, finally, Ferdinand Marcos' in 1965 generally focused on bolstering upper-class housing via institutional changes. Outside advisers fueled this trend: one team (N. J. Demerath and Richard N. Kuhlman) paid for by the U.S. National Housing Agency and U.S. Navy, for instance, suggested the nation firm up its home financing system for those interested in buying property on credit.<sup>4</sup> The Philippine government followed much of Demerath and Kuhlman's advice, merging the People's Homesite Commission (an agency primarily geared to stimulating homeownership) and the National Housing Commission (an organization devoted more to housing for the poorer classes) into a newly created People's Homesite and Housing Corporation (PHHC, 1947–75).<sup>5</sup> A 1947 Joint Philippine-American Commission helped smooth the way for banks and financial institutions to issue more long-term, low-interest loans, and it also set up the Rehabilitation Finance Corporation to shore up the secondary mortgage market and create a more vibrant set of housing choices for "salaried people in the moderate income groups."<sup>6</sup> The newly created Home Financing Commission, meanwhile, deliberately patterned itself after the American Federal Housing Administration in its system of mortgage insurance.<sup>7</sup> In this first attempt to replicate First World housing conditions, then, international input complemented domestic interest in housing for the wealthier classes. Slum clearance and relocation stood on the policy sidelines: a mere 6,900 families were relocated during the entire decade of the 1950s, and by the end of the 1960s, many of those had returned to informal settlements because of the lack of jobs and community services, as well as a general inability to pay for PHHC housing.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, it was domestic politics that drove the government to finally consider informal dwellings during the 1970s. Informal communities had been

a politically potent force since liberation in 1945; by the early 1970s, President Ferdinand Marcos came to see them as dangerous sources of political unrest and antigovernment mobilization—a fear that drove Marcos to more explicitly marginalize and, eventually, criminalize self-housed individuals and families. In Tondo, an enormous, mostly self-housed community of roughly 180,000 people located along North Harbor in Manila, the government Bureau of Public Works began building its port and industrial complex in the early 1970s, using the Tondo Foreshore Land Act of 1956 to articulate government land rights and to take over properties occupied by informal dwellers. Tondo residents worked together to fight government eviction, mobilizing political action through groups like Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO), an organization that represented some sixty thousand residents in the area. While ZOTO fought for informal dwellers' rights to inform city planning in Tondo, the organization freely admitted that "only about sixty percent have a right to the land where their houses stand," according to an internal census of Zone One in April 1973.<sup>9</sup> Still, the ZOTO report concluded, "the reason why Tondo is overcrowded with houses is because the people prefer to live in a very small *barung-barong* [makeshift house] that is their own rather than rent a place."<sup>10</sup> The seeming contradiction of disenfranchisement and shanty ownership encapsulated a critical transition in the way land rights were being reframed in the postwar period: many families used land for which they had no state-issued paper titles, but they nonetheless felt a sense of community ownership and shared rights through their use of the land and through their personal investment in self-built housing, as well as their long-standing occupation of it. That system of land rights was being systematically threatened by the slum clearance process—and deliberately so.

President Marcos had little interest in sweat equity or the use-based land rights put forward by ZOTO. Instead, he forcibly adjusted expectations for house-owner recognition in his administration's response in the mid-1970s. This was not simply a case of one form of land right (legal paper titles) competing against another (ownership through occupation and investment), but rather of the state asserting its power through the language of land rights. Land titling was not a neutral process designed to empower citizens; it was a weapon wielded to delegitimize their rights to the land they lived on. Marcos' Presidential Decree 772 in 1975 defined "squatters" as criminals, as individuals who, "with the use of force, intimidation or threat, or taking advantage of the absence or tolerance of the landowner, succeeds in occupying or possessing

the property of the latter against his will for residential commercial or any other purposes.” Such actions were “illegal and nefarious” and were punishable by prison time or fines. A second presidential decree, PD 814, in the same year addressed the fact that “the Tondo Foreshore [was] the largest squatter and slum colony in the Greater Manila Area where people live[d] in substandard conditions incompatible with the goals of the New Society.” PD 814 specified a squatter upgrading and resettlement program for Tondo Foreshore and Dagat-Dagatan that would remove residents from the property and permit new tourist- and investor-friendly developments like hotels and industrial production sites. As the clearest evidence of the powerlessness of residents-turned-squatters, Manila police seized ZOTO leader Trinidad Herrera in April 1977, questioning her first at police headquarters before turning her over to the Metrocom Intelligence and Security Group to be further questioned and tortured with electrical wires on her hands and breasts until she was so emotionally and physically stunned that she could no longer speak. Only after considerable international outcry including an outpouring of letters from Christian and human rights organizations, and the mounting discomfort of World Bank officials observing the Marcos regime’s actions, did Herrera’s lawyer, Jose Diokno, finally succeed in having her released.

These deliberately aggressive legal and symbolic actions completed the transformation of poor self-built communities into illegal, criminal communities of squatters. Slum clearance could only succeed at a large scale with this clear division between formal and informal dwellings, between legitimate and illegitimate occupation. During Marcos’ regime leading up to and including martial law, seven agencies helped put into motion resettlement campaigns designed to clear central urban property for more “productive” uses: they were the People’s Homesite and Housing Corporation, the Presidential Assistant on Housing and Resettlement Agency, the Tondo Foreshore Development Authority, the Central Institute for the Training and Relocation of Urban Squatters, the Presidential Committee for Housing and Urban Resettlement, the Sapang Palay Development Committee, and the Inter-Agency Task Force to Undertake the Relocation of Families in Barrio Nabacaan, Villanueva, Mismis Oriental.<sup>11</sup>

This process of criminalization and delegitimization did not occur merely because Marcos established martial law; state-managed slum clearance programs reflected a broader consensus on the part of the ruling class that Manilan housing markets needed to be put in order; more room made for

industry, trade, and tourism; and a more modern, smoothly functioning city plan developed to facilitate the movement of goods and people into and out of the primate city. Even when Corazon Aquino and subsequent administrations at first tempered, then removed Marcos' 1975 Presidential Decree with Republic Act No. 8368 (Anti-squatting Law Repeal Act of 1997), a new 1992 Lina Law (Republic Act No. 7279, Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992—An Act to Provide for a Comprehensive and Continuing Urban Development and Housing Program, Establish the Mechanism for Its Implementation, and for Other Purposes) maintained the illegality of “professional squatting” and “squatting syndicates.”

Tellingly, the World Bank prided itself on “stay[ing] out of the political fray” and not criticizing the Philippine government, despite intense pressure to do so, especially during the years of martial law.<sup>12</sup> By remaining neutral in the midst of political upheaval, World Bank officials believed they could help establish urban housing upgrading programs that would “enormously improve the living conditions of the poor and the displaced—on a scale comparable in Asia only to public housing activities in Hong Kong and Singapore.”<sup>13</sup> World Bank officials repeatedly underscored the difference between their in situ upgrading schemes and the disruptive, politically volatile removal and resettlement of large central-city informal settlements. Strangely, then, the World Bank claimed neutrality and yet also claimed credit for urban upgrading programs designed to render Manila legible to global capitalism—this at a time when the Philippine government actively pursued a diametrically opposed program of mass clearance.

### Slum Upgrading Versus Resettlement

The World Bank's stance on large-scale resettlement programs was a relatively new one, a position birthed in global experiences and, in particular, on aided self-help projects in West and Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank benefited from late entry into the work in international housing, beginning its work as it did decades after the U.S. Agency for International Development, the various regional development banks, a host of United Nations technical missions, and, eventually, the formalized UN Centre for Human Settlements and UN Development Programme. When the World Bank did finally begin work in urban poverty and housing in 1972, its officials almost immediately had to grapple with the economic and political repercussions of large-

scale clearance. By the mid-1970s, the World Bank had already begun doubting the efficacy of aided self-help projects, particularly in West and Sub-Saharan Africa, where World Bank-funded projects had removed squatters from their in-city residences and relocated them to remote sites with better amenities and formal titles.<sup>14</sup> Such programs, while certainly appealing to local governments, generally failed to meet cost recovery criteria and had the added negative of stirring up considerable animosity from potential relocatees, most of whom had little interest in moving hours away from the urban core. It was precisely because of these reasons that the World Bank chose to experiment with slum upgrading in Indonesia and the Philippines as two first test sites for gradual housing improvement on-site and the provision of smaller amenities as opposed to wholesale resettlement.

In a somewhat surprising turn of events, World Bank officials found their concerns with cost recovery aligned them with informal dwellers and humanitarian, Christian, and charitable organizations. All of these groups urged slum upgrading over any massive resettlement campaigns, albeit for different reasons. In a further twist, the latter—humanitarian, Christian, and charitable organizations—generally found it difficult to believe that the World Bank supported small-scale, on-site upgrading and that it did not secretly fund the Marcos regime's massive Tondo resettlement campaigns. Church leaders, Amnesty International, and an array of interested individuals repeatedly wrote impassioned letters to the various officials in the World Bank's East Asia and Pacific programs, as well as to World Bank president Robert McNamara, denouncing what they believed to be World Bank support for Marcos' torture and repression of informal dwellers' organizations and Herrera in particular. The World Bank's East Asia and Pacific programs director Gregory Votaw responded again and again with letters explaining, "The Manila Urban Development project thus marks an important step in assisting the government in developing policies of slum development relying on site development, rather than relocation of local people, which is a policy which has long been supported by both the people of the Tondo and by the Bank," but the World Bank's self-defense seemed to have fallen for the most part on deaf ears.<sup>15</sup>

Combing through the archival records held by the World Bank in Washington, D.C., and by the Philippine government in the National Housing Authority (NHA) in Quezon City, it is difficult to trace precisely when the World Bank turned away from massive resettlement in favor of slum upgrading in Tondo. Nor is there documentary evidence to support or refute World Bank officials' claims that they were not involved in the political suppression



of informal dwellers' organizations. Research uncovers more questions than answers: Why were Tondo leaders so thoroughly convinced the World Bank ideologically and financially backed the NHA's resettlement schemes? Did they have any evidence that the World Bank invested in the resettlement of Tondo residents or the breakup of specific political organizations? And given the World Bank's undisputed interest in Philippine housing, why did almost none of the Philippine government's massive urban clearance schemes make their way into World Bank records? Instead of looking at what were clearly the most pressing issues in NHA and ZOTO records, World Bank records carefully traced the long-term impact of small on-site upgrading experiments. In one report by A. Pellegrini, Urban Projects Department head, for instance, the World Bank official stated, "Agreement has been reached between the [branches of the Philippine government] that an upgrading program for blighted areas in the MMA [Metro Manila Area] should be progressively expanded from demonstration projects at Tondo Foreshore . . . to the comprehensive upgrading of community facilities for all slum (low-income and unserved) areas throughout Metro Manila, so that these areas will be transformed from their present status to communities which contribute positively to the overall growth of Metro Manila."<sup>16</sup> Conversely, on the side of the Philippine national government—whether during the Marcos, Aquino, Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, or Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presidency—abundant records indicate the NHA not only prioritized but had no problem publicizing its interest in resettlement over on-site upgrading. This was as true for smaller city-managed housing authorities as for the NHA, and for obvious reasons: city officials sought slum clearance not because they were solely motivated by concerns with poor families' living conditions or their exposure to "danger sites" like rising estero waters and proximity to the rails, but rather because they needed to find a compromise between the human rights of informal settlers and the need for modern infrastructure.

From the point of view of the Philippine government, resettlement simply had to occur for large-scale infrastructural projects to proceed and for the city to operate successfully as a global hub. Put bluntly, successful resettlement programs needed to move marginal workers out of Manila and keep them from returning to prime urban real estate. (Roger Rouse aptly described this process as the warehousing of excess labor on peri-urban sites.) The NHA focused on precisely these goals, with a 1978 Slum Improvement and Resettlement Program helping over forty thousand families find employment on decentralized sites like Dasmaringas, Sapang Palay, and Carmona. The NHA

proudly noted less than 2 percent of the total population returned to Metro Manila, according to NHA general manager Gaudencio Tobias. At the same time, World Bank funding kept slum upgrading programs vibrant, with a Zonal Improvement Program targeting thirteen “depressed areas” in Metro Manila for upgrading. When World Bank housing programs in Metro Manila dwindled in the 1990s, however, the NHA’s emphasis on resettlement became much clearer, as annual reports all highlighted the grinding poverty of inner-city informal settlements and the healthful, homeownership-based resettlement communities on the outer reaches of the metropolis. Upgrading helped in the immediate crisis, but resettlement provided answers for the long run.

### Owning a Home in a Resettlement Community: A Slum Clearance Success Story?

According to NHA officials, the happy ending to slum clearance and resettlement was not merely the cleaning up of critical urban space; it was the prosperity and increased political and literal “buy-in” of families whose lives had been improved by the move. When asking relocatees to summarize their feelings about their new homes, however, families gave more complex answers. In particular, individuals relocated from various parts of Metro Manila to Northville V in Batia, Bocaue, Bulacan (roughly nineteen miles north of central Manila and two hours away by car because of traffic congestion and the absence of public transportation), repeatedly underscored the problem of location. Location mattered because it was tied to work: even if new housing sites had much safer play spaces for their children, even if air quality was vastly better, and even if residents had new opportunities to grow foodstuffs, jobs remained in the city. Ultimately, residents needed to figure out a way to survive on virtually no income, commute four to five hours a day, or send part of the family back to Manila or elsewhere to work.

Many opted to break apart families in order to survive. One of the proudest homeowners during my site visit in 2013—a block leader and active participant in the homeowners’ association (HOA)—freely admitted that she would not be able to afford her mortgage if her two sons had not successfully obtain overseas employment in Riyadh. Tita Baby, as she was known to her friends and neighbors, openly admitted she was “blessed more than most.” Nonetheless, in what felt very much like a rehearsed performance coordinated



Figure 4.1. Homeowner and family members in front of their home. January 8, 2013. Photo by author.

with visiting NHA staff, she gladly discussed the benefits of homeownership, noting, “I can say my home is mine.” This first, unequivocal praise for homeownership grew more complicated with further conversation, however: in fact, Tita Baby had originally forfeited her property in the province of Nueva Ecija in order to move into a 1,000 pesos-per-month railway rental one meter from passing trains in central Manila. In other words, she had readily given up homeownership for a tenuous existence in an informal urban settlement along the rails. Only with the financial security of her sons’ remittances and the coincidental timing of the NHA’s resettlement program did homeownership again become a priority, fueling a sense of personal dignity and stimulating more investment. With the security of steady remittances from her two sons, Baby showed considerable initiative, selling children’s clothes for extra money, redoing all of the interior plumbing in her new home, building a new kitchen, carefully decorating the interior, and planting a lush edible garden on the thin strip of land surrounding her home.

Conversely, many of Baby’s neighbors exhibited very little of her enthusiasm for homeownership. According to widowed homeowner Marive Fernandez, “I used to wash clothes and make 150 pesos a day—just enough for one meal. Now I have no income. If I can’t eat every day because I have no money, if Meralco [a power company] is going to cut off my electricity, how am I going

to pay my mortgage?” Fernandez’s neighbor across the street had even less interest in discussing the merits of homeownership or progress on his mortgage, being an illegal renter in a unit meant for owner occupation. Another couple a few houses away complained bitterly that they had had no choice but to become homeowners after the government demolished their informal settlement in central Manila. More than homeownership, this couple longed for the compensation check promised to them by the Philippine government and supposedly issued by the South Korean company developing railways on their former site of residence. (According to NHA officials, no such compensation had ever been promised, much less delivered.) Still other residents grumbled about the difficulties of living so far away from their old rental properties—this despite the fact that many of this last group were HOA leaders in the current settlement and fire victims from Tondo and Navotas. When asked what homeownership meant to them, these HOA leaders concurred that the single best word to capture the experience was “sacrifice.” They did not take kindly to suggestions that they return to informal urban dwellings, however, responding with considerable hostility, “Why would we do that? We are not professional squatters! We are invested in our homes!”<sup>17</sup>

While freely employing the rhetoric of the government, then, homeowners thought of their tenure type as an obligation and a sign of their law-abiding status rather than as a source of credit or a personal achievement. When it came to house pride, it was not tenure type but rather visible standards of living—indoor plumbing, the quality of the furniture, the size of the television, and the like—that delineated class differences within a low-income resettlement community.

Clearly, homeownership in Metro Manila has evolved in considerably more complex ways than the owner investment and savings scheme envisioned by the World Bank or the NHA. In some ways, homeownership has backfired: for many relocatees, it is part of a welfare program they had and continue to have little choice but to accept. Those families rejecting homeownership and resettlement were offered a single small cash payment from the NHA and expected to move back to their rural province of origin; those turning down both resettlement and the cash payment were met with a potent force one housing official called “forcesuasion.”<sup>18</sup> Once resettled, homeownership locked residents at the furthest edges of economic well-being, most far removed from their now-forfeited city jobs and unable to pay for their daily needs, much less for their mortgages. Livelihood training did not seem to elicit much interest, either, despite the repeated complaints about job access; according to one teen

participating in a soap-making training session, "I'm just here because they came [pointing at two friends]. My parents are not here right now." Some government workers expressed frustration with the constant refrain about lost work, stating, "They left their jobs in the city? What job? Job as a pickpocket?"<sup>19</sup> Whether for legitimate or illegitimate work, one fact was irrefutable: homeownership dispersed families and broke apart cramped, communal urban living spaces; it could reduce access to economic security instead of generating entrepreneurial activity through new lines of credit. Worse, it turned marginal settlers into criminals if and when they chose to return to Manila as "professional squatters."

Still, the NHA continues to promote homeownership as a corollary to resettlement. In part, this is because the NHA itself has few choices. It is caught, as one Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council worker put it, "between what investors want and what poor people need."<sup>20</sup> While NHA workers acknowledge that in-city housing is more desirable, the government cannot generally afford large housing programs on more expensive urban real estate, nor can they justify offering homeownership at prices low enough to be affordable to the lowest income bracket. (The NHA's recent, in-city, medium-rise housing program only offers a very limited number of multiple-family units for rent for this reason.) Given financial limitations and given the obvious need to do something about living conditions in central Manila, the NHA continues to implement what its workers freely admit is an imperfect rehousing system.

Tellingly, resettlement communities continue to rely heavily on philanthropy—both domestic and international—for basic life necessities like clean water and health services. Nongovernmental organizations such as Gawad Kalinga and Habitat for Humanity work with the NHA in the physical construction of housing units on peripheral sites; smaller NGOs like Operation Blessing Foundation, Entrepinoy Volunteers, Life Project for Youth, and Sige Foundation help dig wells and provide livelihood training; and Salesian priests and Protestant missionaries of wide-ranging denominations provide mobile dental and physical health clinics. The scale and scope of informal settlements is so immense, and the poverty so deep and visually striking, that it comes as no surprise that the majority of the 291 NGOs counted by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification are involved in some way in helping provide decent shelter and bettering living conditions for these communities.

Of the various efforts, the large media broadcasting company ABS-CBN has had a noticeable impact in the informal settlements crowded along the

waterways of the Pasig River in Greater Manila. Gina Lopez, a member of the Lopez Group that owns ABS-CBN, played and continues to play a prominent role in directing the resources of the conglomerate toward estero cleanup and resettlement campaigns.<sup>21</sup> In addition to funding various efforts through the media giant ABS-CBN, Lopez helped mobilize and organize various individual private donors ranging from members of her own family to interested foreigners like the sheikh of Bahrain. Corporate sponsors also play a major role, as in the case of a resettlement community of over five thousand residents in Barangays Dayap and Santo Tomas, where ABS-CBN and the NHA worked hand in hand with the enormous food, beverage, and packing conglomerate San Miguel Corporation, together erecting housing units, an elementary school (complete with school supplies), day care centers, and a medical clinic.<sup>22</sup> The Ayala Group and Sunlife contributed as well, making at least some low-income homeownership programs the beneficiaries of corporate charity.

Homeownership is a key part of what volunteers and donors have bought into ideologically; one ABS-CBN worker explained that she wanted residents to “break free from slum thinking and become independent.”<sup>23</sup> For those not living under bridges or those fortunate enough to have homes beyond the three-meter boundary from the edge of an estero, relocation and cleanup campaigns seem to be having exactly the positive effects anticipated by ABS-CBN’s Kapit Bisig para sa Ilog Pasig (“linking arms for the Pasig river”) river rehabilitation project workers. Property values continue to rise because of the improved amenities and perception of safety; some homeowners have invested considerably in their properties, building extra additions and rooftop rooms and placing decorative plants along the new riverfront walkway. Community development programs such as the River Warriors program have mobilized and trained former estero dwellers to continue the heroic effort of cleaning up polluted waterways and planting vegetation along the embankments as both decoration and a flood prevention method. “The esterros used to be very ugly and polluted, with criminals and drug dealers,” one resident observed. “Now it’s a place for people.”<sup>24</sup>

ABS-CBN has been particularly skillful in bringing together various efforts—public and private, local and international—to work on different aspects of community development, housing construction, and welfare programs in resettlement programs. Some participants, like the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation, have contributed to resettlement communities explicitly as part of their larger mission to help indigent native peoples own their own



Figure 4.2. Corporate and nonprofit organizations play critical roles in providing basic amenities like water at the Southville resettlement site in Calauan, Laguna. June 10, 2013. Photo by author.

home. (Besides its work in the Philippines, the foundation also funded native homeownership campaigns with Housing and Urban Development in Hawaii, including a 2004 turnkey development program on the Freitas Dairy site in Waianae Valley.) Most recently, Habitat for Humanity launched a Home Improvement Microsavings Program with Citi Foundation (August 2012) in order to “encourag[e] 3,000 low-income families to save money for home improvements, particularly to mitigate against natural disasters.”<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

When looking at slum clearance programs in Greater Manila at the end of the twentieth century, it becomes clear that housing policies cannot be understood as simply local, urban, national, or transnational. Resettlement programs operated and continue to operate simultaneously on multiple scales: they take shape in response to domestic politics, to local ideas about how to succeed in an international marketplace, to globally exchanged “best practices” as conveyed through the neoliberal agendas of international financial institutions like the World Bank, and perhaps even to indirect demands of foreign investors and tourists. The transnational aspects of slum clearance highlight just how many actors play roles in globalizing cities like Manila, and how complex the negotiation of rights can be. The stakes are high, with homes saved or lost in the process. It makes sense, then, that we study slum clearance at all levels, whether local, national, transnational, or global.