



MAFESO (NGO) network meeting on urban Agriculture

Planning in a Changing Environment

The Case of Marilao in the Philippines

Marilao is a municipality with approximately 15,000 households located on the fringe of Manila in the Philippines. A few years ago, Marilao's authorities faced a typical peri-urban dilemma. With only 2,625 hectares of land area, just five kilometres from Metro Manila, Marilao's mayor could not find affordable land for a new waste disposal site. There were more than 850 business firms and housing projects that competed for the use of municipal land.

The answers to the challenge "Where do we bring our waste?" posed in 1995 by the mayor, involved complex concepts high in capital investment requirements, but no affordable nor practicable ideas. The precarious situation was emphasised during a series of community planning workshops in 1997, in search of reducing waste by getting all major stakeholders involved. With the gigantic waste problems of Metro Manila in mind, Marilao's authorities decided to go a different way.

The problem, however, was that the anticipated involvement of the community had to be tested in a country where the style of municipal governance is predominantly administrative-oriented rather than participatory. Planning has purely been a technical matter guided by a corresponding manual. However, the preparation of the development plan as wanted, required interactive consultations with different sectors of the community. Most of the planning officers found it difficult to organise such multi-sectoral consultations. The tools and methodologies required for participatory processes had to be adopted from the NGO community. It was even more challenging to apply them in an environment, which is traditionally managed in a regulatory style. Moreover, experience has shown that a regulatory framework alone is hardly effective, even in the Philippines, which has one of the most stringent environmental laws in Southeast Asia.

Thus, a new style of local governance was required. The basis for this new style was given in 1992, when municipal local government units (MLGUs) were mandated by law to be autonomous

with specific powers, functions and revenue. The mandate was anchored in certain principles, among which is the pursuit of ecological balance and participatory processes of managing development. Each of these 1,525 units in the Philippines can have their own interpretation of these two principles, given their actual conditions and management capacity to change them. Within this favourable atmosphere for nearly autonomous local governance, the municipal authority of Marilao together with NGOs, started in 1996 to brainstorm on appropriate solutions, more stakeholder participation and on investment programmes to overcome the waste crisis. It was estimated that the current landfill would be full in about 3-5 years. Another study revealed that almost 50% of the current content was biodegradable waste; 30% could be recycled and only 20% consisted of non-usable materials.

Both the leaders of the municipal local government units and of the NGOs decided to look for ways to recover the major portion of the waste. Four months later, a proposal was finalised for the municipality to establish a composting facility, while the NGO commu-

Leoncio S. Duran, Jr., *Honourable Mayor of Marilao, Bulacan, the Philippines* ✉ marilao@bulacan.ph

Joseph H. Batac, *Municipal Planning Officer, Marilao, Bulacan, the Philippines* ✉ batacjo@bulacan.ph

Pay Drechsel *International Water Management Institute (IWM)* ✉ ibsrasm@africaonline.com.gn

nity would address the necessary change in behaviour of the main waste generator: each and every household.

To ensure the stable supply of organic household waste, source separation was initiated at the household level in late 1997, followed by different campaigns in the next two years. The activities in these campaigns involved workshops, cross visits, seminars, training, video films (on community cable TV), the playing of jingles during collection, providing the collection crew with a uniform, heralding the message of segregation, printing of calendars and community newsletters, and periodic letters from the mayor. The costs of these activities were shared between the NGOs and the municipality.

In general, principles of marketing were employed for all activities, starting with an analysis of the clientele as to their existing knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP). The ideal profile of potential clients was formulated and its 'appeal' determined. The distribution channels as

Breaking with traditional training habits

well as the promotional activities were then set up. NGOs drove the process of product development for community change. The process utilised participatory planning techniques that were designed by the NGO. The planning interfaces again involved both the NGO leaders and the municipal staff, and were placed within the Municipal Development Planning Council (MDPC). Each year, a work plan was agreed upon and translated into investment by the municipality. The agreement only takes effect after a series of consultations with community stakeholders and the mapping of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as of external threats and opportunities. Then, the identification of strategies, followed by a consensus on the preferred strategy, the translation of this consensus into activities, and the municipal investments as well as NGO counterpart to implement the strategy. These investments included developing models on urban agriculture and improvements on the collection system for solid waste management. From 1995 to 2000, a total of USD

10,000 was allocated for developing models on urban agriculture. The investment for the collection system reached USD 15,000.

THE NURTURE PLAN

The regular supply of biodegradable waste allowed the municipality to produce compost at a rate of approximately one ton per day using a compost fungus activator to reduce the composting time from three months to one month. The set-up of the technology needs both waste from urban households and agriculture. Initially, the compost was given to urban farmers together with seeds and tools. When the municipalities realised that the compost supply could not cope with the demand, and farmers also asked for application guidelines and related information, the NURTURE plan (*Networking for Urban Renewal Through Urban Ecology*) was established.

The NURTURE plan identified the farmers who practised solid waste segregation and have open spaces within their yards and/or in the contiguous areas. Three strategies were identified on priority crops: (i) food security, (ii) recreation and aesthetics, and (iii) livelihood. The farmers targeted for "food security" are the urban poor who cultivate high nutritive crops that supplement for micronutrient deficiency, especially among children. The target group for "recreation and aesthetics" is middle class households who grow ornamentals and plants with fragrant flowers; and the "livelihood strategy" addresses farmers with growing potted crops/flowers and produce during the off-season.

All three groups encountered the problem of access to land. The NURTURE plan addressed this by developing compact gardens with standard soil composi-

tion. At first, the plan targeted appropriate application guidelines, but it had to struggle with large inner-urban variations in soil quality, and some urban areas even had no soil at all but only concrete. Yet they faced a demand from farmers using pots and other containers to grow vegetables or flowers. To address this situation, the municipality carried out a series of practical experiments in 1999, which resulted in a standard substrate with the compost as the predominant material for pot cultures and raised beds with rain shelters.

The farmers were organised under the umbrella of the Marilao Federation of Service Organisation (MAFESO). The MAFESO is a network of 75 community-based housing associations, church/religious groups, sectoral groups like women and transport workers, and civic clubs. In each of these organisations, there are numerous members who have been actively involved in the activities of solid waste and urban agriculture. These members periodically plan and discuss the activities within a working committee under the MAFESO and the Municipal Development Planning Council (MDPC). The members were critical in technology applications and testing, land access arrangements and implementing the investment plan as approved in the MDPC.

THE MESSAGE IS SPREADING

Metro Manila launched a segregation campaign that ended in failure just a few weeks later. After a meeting with Mayor Duran of Marilao, the chairman of the Government of Metro Manila instructed his senior staff to study the Marilao model via one-day cross visits. Several more local governments went to Marilao for a cross visit to learn about the project. In addition, national government as well as

REACHING HOUSEHOLDS AND URBAN FARMERS

Initially, the adoption of the practice of waste segregation was slow but accelerated over time. The municipality offered as incentive a predictable and reliable collection of the *segregated* waste, and a reliable waste collection means a lot in Marilao. Within three weeks, the 500 households in the area adopted the practice, seeing that the waste collection really was predictable and more frequent. After three months, a next area with 400 households decided to adopt the practice. Another 2,000 households from the contiguous area followed six months later, and the municipality had to buy more collection vehicles to keep the promised collection frequency. Today, almost all the 15,000 households of Marilao benefit from the system by providing source separation.

donor agencies published articles on the project, and in April 2000, the wife of Philippine President Estrada visited Marilao to learn about urban agriculture. Officials from the largest NGO in Metro Manila working on solid waste management and recycling accompanied her.

All of these interested groups and institutions had one common question – How did the programme start? The Marilao experience showed that the way to success is a stony one, which challenges old structures and planning habits. The required shift in mindset and style of gov-



Joseph Batac

Composting has been promoted by the national government under a specific programme since 1990, but it was more wishful thinking than implementation. Marilao was probably the first municipality actively implementing this policy.

The compost 'bed'. The bed layers are alternately household waste and agricultural waste

ernance to manage development with community change can only happen when there is a strong political will. This is necessary to motivate the NGO community as well as the households. Once this political will is in place, the technical aspects can be modified with a greater degree of tolerance for correction in the context of improvement. The Marilao experience also showed that Municipal Planning can serve as a focus of development, as long as the commitment of the local government is ascertained, and is characterised by a more managerial style. This commitment then easily translates into investment for community mobilisation and logistics for both short and long term.

PLANNING FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE : A REVIEW OF TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR URBAN PLANNERS

Quon Soonya. 1999. CFP Report Series. Report 28, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Ottawa.

Based on published and “grey” literature and a survey of 26 urban planning professionals from 18 cities around the world, key planning-related constraints facing urban farmers were identified as well as possible responses to these constraints. Land-use issues are of particular concern to urban farmers. These issues are compounded by the urban planning policy context through, amongst others, a lack of formal recognition. Important recommendations cited in literature and from planners are changes to the land-use planning policy level, participation in new multi-disciplinary institutions responsible for all facets of urban agriculture in a community, and establishing records of urban agriculture. It was found that urban planners have opportunities to permit and support urban agriculture, given their position as regards decision-making at the various levels. Planners could use their influence for change, forge alliances and facilitate opportunities for urban farmers.

URBAN LAND TENURE AND PROPERTY RIGHTS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A REVIEW

Payne G. 1997. London: Intermediate Technology Publications (ITP). ISBN 1_85339_400_9: GBP 12.95 (pbk).

Payne has provided an annotated and very thorough literature review on a very important aspect of urban agriculture. Indeed, urban land tenure and property rights play an even more vital role than in rural areas. Often, there are frictions between different systems, particularly in urban areas where land is scarce and expensive. Access to credit very much depends on the definition of property rights. Changes in ownership may have very drastic effects on prices of land and, therefore, its use by the urban poor. In this publication, the main tenure types are catalogued and explained: customary tenure, private tenure, public ownership, religious concepts and indigenous vs. imported concepts. The author concludes that careful analysis of the existing systems should be carried out before embarking on major reforms. This is all the more so since tenure measures as a policy tool are rather inflexible in comparison with fiscal and monetary policies. Interestingly, full tenure turns out to be not essential to increasing levels of tenure security. In Botswana and Indonesia, the establishment of a statutory system (i.e., by the state) was firmly grounded on traditional principles. At the end, we find an elaborate, annotated bibliography and a very welcome glossary of terms. There is also a typology of the main categories of land tenure.

AESTHETICS, FUNCTIONALITY AND DESIRABILITY OF THE SUSTAINABLE CITY

Culot Maurice 1997. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin Ireland. ISBN 9282749231

This publication addresses the renewed focus on the desirability of the city, a phenomenon as essential as ecological perfection and economic health for a city to survive in the long run. The author looks at urban forms placing modern and functional architecture, which breaks with tradition and advocates zoning and separation of functions, against European city-building tradition, with its consistent mix of human activities. The report concludes with recommendations for representatives and officials making a plea for this renewed pluralism. This renewed interest stems from a too-long reign of functionalism that left no space for the human need for buildings that are evidence of an alternative to the destruction and loss of the European city. Briefly put: we should strive again for the ‘city of desire’.