Empowering the urban poor through community-based slum upgrading: the case of Bangkok, Thailand

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1. Introduction

Thailand has received praise over the last few years for the implementation of its innovative, participatory slum upgrading project, entitled Baan Mankong ("secure housing"). This program was introduced in 2003, with the target to have "cities without slums" within five years, across Thailand. While the target was ambitious, it gave the program momentum, as low-income communities across the country started taking community savings groups seriously, and joining other communities to form networks to survey the housing situation in their city, and draw up an upgrading plan of action. The Baan Mankong program fosters cooperation between low-income communities, government authorities (from municipalities to public land owners), architects, planners and NGOs. While the target of cities without slums is yet to be reached, figures from June 2009 show that over 80,000 households across Thailand have benefited from upgrading, covering 1,300 communities, and the movement is now taking on a life of its own, through the National Union of Low Income Community Organisations (NULICO).

This paper seeks to demonstrate that a participatory upgrading process allows communities to bypass economic and institutional constraints in order to meet their housing needs, creating opportunities for collaboration between society and the state, and ultimately, a more sustainable form of urban development.

2. The Baan Mankong process

Baan Mankong targets low-income settlements lacking security of tenure. Communities need to set up savings groups, so that residents can save enough to qualify for a government loan, of up to 150,000 baht per household (1 baht = 33 USD in June 2010), to build their new house, or to purchase land. Each household needs to save a 10% deposit to qualify for the loan, which can be repaid over a period of 15 years, and the loan is managed by the community cooperative. The community should also elect a management team – whilst all low income communities in Bangkok are required by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to have an elected committee, the Baan Mankong team is often a mix of this committee and those who run the cooperative. Having a management team ensures accountability – all too often in the past, communities have given up on their savings groups as money disappeared or funds were mismanaged.

An important actor in the implementation of the Baan Mankong program is the Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI), a public organization with a remit to support community organizations and civil groups across Thailand. Under its previous guise as the Urban Community Development Office, it worked to promote the formation of community savings groups, and when combined with the Rural Development Fund to become CODI in 2000, the organization was put in charge of a revolving fund for microcredit purposes. It therefore was the right actor to assist communities in the participatory process of Baan Mankong upgrading, with its public organization status allowing it to bridge the gap between the government and civil society groups, acting as an "instrument of inclusion" (World Bank, 2001). CODI's view of past Thai housing policies is that they failed due to their very centralized, hierarchical structure, focused on (frequently unfeasible) construction targets

and seeing the poor as beneficiaries, rather than forging a relationship with them: the formal housing system was pitched against an informal culture, with no social dimension to housing policies (CODI, undated). Thus Baan Mankong signified a change in strategy, from a supply-side policy to a demand-driven policy.

Upgrading comes in many forms, from complete demolition of the settlement and reconstruction of homes, to simply upgrading infrastructure facilities. However, all communities should negotiate tenure beforehand, whether it is to lease or buy the land, or a new site, and CODI can assist in these tenure negotiations: for example, it has secured MOUs with the Treasury Department and the Crown Property Bureau, both very large land owners in Thailand. Tenure is always granted on a collective basis – this is a way of ensuring participation, and a sense of collective responsibility in the process, which are necessary components for sustainable outcomes.

3. Methods

This paper draws on material collected during PhD research in Bangkok in 2008 (Archer, 2009). While secondary source material such as newspaper articles and publications by CODI and other sources were used, interviews were the major source of primary data. These interviews were with community leaders and community residents in four upgraded communities in Bangkok, as well as other stakeholders in the process, from government officials to academics. Focus group discussions were also held in upgraded communities, and meetings at various levels, from community and slum network meetings, to academic and government-level conferences and meetings, were attended, as a participant-observer.

The transcripts of interviews and conferences were analysed qualitatively, through themed coding. Interviews were carried out in Thai, by the author, with the assistance of a translator. The author chose to study only communities in which upgrading was complete, or very near completion, as this would provide insight into the outcomes of the upgrading process, and how relationships had been changed as a result. This meant a certain reliance on retrospective questioning and before-and-after questions, though all steps were taken to ensure that questions were not leading or biased in any way. The author was also aware of the risk of respondents giving answers which they might think were the "correct" responses, or that they might be suffering from "survey fatigue" due to the large interest displayed by researchers in the project, though this did not appear to arise as a problem.

4. Results: Bangkok case studies

By examining the experiences of communities in Bangkok which have undergone the upgrading process, it is possible to see whether, and in what way, community residents have benefited from upgrading, and how intra- and inter-community relations have changed as a result, if at all. The communities are Bang Bua (BB), Bonkai (B), Ruam Samakee (RS), and Klong Toey 7-12 (KT), and all undertook full reconstruction of housing, in a more orderly layout. The four case study communities were all squatting on government-owned land prior to upgrading, and in all cases managed to negotiate a collective lease with the landowner.

Bonkai community, located on land owned by the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) joined the Baan Mankong project after a large fire razed much of the community in 2001. Ruam Samakee is also on CPB land, and they negotiated a land sharing agreement to allow complete reconstruction of the community in a more orderly layout. Bang Bua community is located on Treasury land and is also an example of reconstruction and reblocking, whilst Klong Toey 7-12 is on Port Authority land, and the community was relocated from their previous site about one kilometre away. These communities were some of the first Baan Mankong projects in Thailand.

4.1 Tenure security

Because Baan Mankong means "secure tenure", residents were asked whether they felt that tenure security had improved as a result of upgrading, and in the majority of cases, they did, as Table 1 shows. However, the respondents' comments also revealed that for many, tenure security rests on many factors other than simply the lease.

Table 1: Perceptions of security of tenure following upgrading process

	Community	Same	Increase	Decrease
Your perception of security of tenure (Frequency)	Bang Bua	3	21	0
	Klong Toey	3	12	6
	Ruam Samakee	3	16	0 (1NA)
	Bonkai	0	19	0
Total frequency		9	68	6
Percentage		10.84	81.93	7.23
Your willingness to invest further in your house (frequency)	Bang Bua	2	22	0
	Klong Toey	8	13	0
	Ruam Samakee	3	15	0 (2NA)
	Bonkai	1	18	0
Total frequency		14	68	0
Percentage		17.07	82.93	0

What is striking is that all the respondents who feel that tenure security has fallen are from Klong Toey 7-12, while only in Bonkai do all respondents feel that tenure security has increased. There are a number of possible reasons for the lack of an absolute increase in perceptions of security. Firstly, the leases given to the four communities differ. In Klong Toey, the Port has agreed to a short-term lease of 3 years, to be renewed at least five times, guaranteeing the community 15 years on the land. In Ruam Samakee and Bonkai, the CPB has agreed to a 30 year lease, whilst the Treasury has agreed to the same in Bang Bua, though also on a three-year rolling basis.

Misinformation or lack of information is one reason that perceptions of security are low. For example, different respondents in one community gave differing time frames for the length of the lease. Another cause of perceived insecurity lies in community leadership. As KT7 says, *"seeing leaders argue among themselves made my confidence fall in security",* since the leaders represent the community to outside parties such as the landowner.

Perceived insecurity could reflect the difficulty some of the community residents have in keeping up with loan repayments, as RS4 explains: *"The house is secure but the general picture is not secure, if I can't repay for 5-6 months I may lose my right [to the house]".* With economic difficulties, repossession fears may increase.

Many respondents feel that while their house is secure, the land on which it is built is not. For RS6, *"Baan Mankong is good, but it would be better if we could own land so that it would really be my house".* However, government land cannot be sold to private parties, and if this were clarified, it would decrease feelings that the government does not fully accept the residents. Getting a house registration with the local district office is seen as one step in guaranteeing security, a step which faced numerous delays in Ruam Samakee. Having title is important, as KT20 explains, *"I still have no title, no right. If I die my children will have to fight to keep the house".*

For some, insecurity remains a distant threat. Residents are aware that the landowners are missing out on financially lucrative uses for the land, and therefore keeping their options open, like B1 explains: *"It's meant to be a 30 year lease, but we have to renew it every 3 years. The CPB is not stupid…they won't give long leases anymore, only short ones".* Klong

Toey 7-12 has faced the most serious eviction threats in the past, and because the Port is still active, it is more likely to need the community land than the Treasury is to use Bang Bua's land. Some residents also feel that having built their new homes, they can no longer be evicted, at least not without substantial compensation, as the government respects the investment they have put in the homes.

For a minority of respondents, gaining secure tenure is a negative thing which comes at a price, as *"security means that you have to pay more for rent and interest [on the loan]"* (KT3). Another respondent feels tied to the community by the housing loan repayments. According to B7, *"we are unlikely to have been evicted beforehand anyway"*, so a lease offers no major benefit, but rebuilding was necessary after the fire. However, most respondents see secure tenure as a positive thing, as KT11 sums up: *"Security of tenure only has benefits, there is no fear of eviction"*.

The fact that respondents realise that their tenure security is not absolute has therefore affected their willingness to invest further in their housing, as KT8 explains, *"If this place is truly Baan Mankong, poor people could plan their lives. If truly secure, I would invest more in my house, paint the house, but there is still the risk of the lease not being renewed, so we are worried about investing more. We're therefore investing only about 40% in the house, not fully. We prefer to save the other 60%"*. However, the majority would like to continue improving their homes, also reflecting the fact that many households ran out of money before finishing their homes. In line with Sufficiency Economy principles advocated by the King following the 1997 economic crisis, this will be done gradually.

Tenure status defines how these low-income households are regarded by outsiders, as respondent RS5 expresses: *"Now it's secure in that we're leasing, the government accepts us"*, and BB20: *"Now that we've done Baan Mankong, the expressway authority can't come and force us to move."* Gaining official status as government tenants means that the residents are no longer at the bottom of the pile, the first to have to make way for infrastructure plans, though BB19 remains reserved in judgment: *"[there is a] possibility of new roads or trains so it's never perfectly secure"*.

The respondents' answers reflect a degree of adaptive preferences, as they are realistic about what is feasible. Having faced the possibility of eviction for many years, they accept that their new tenure status is unlikely to be permanent, but better than nothing: *"Land is still insecure, but more secure than before. We have a lease now"* (B6). The question remains whether the residents will now aspire to more, having demonstrated their capacity to negotiate leases and build new homes. Additionally, will this, combined with the increased sense of security, however short or long term, help to ensure the sustainability of these new homes and improved infrastructure? The degree of sustainability will depend in part on the community's capacity for collective action, both at the community and network level.

4.2 Collective action

When residents were asked what it was they felt made Baan Mankong possible, they gave a range of responses to this open-ended question.

Table 2: What made Baan Mankong possible? (Frequency)

	Money	Loan	CODI	Coll. action	Gov't	Thaksin	Savings	Builders	Leaders	Others	Total
B	1	0	1	12	3	0	2	0	3	1	23
BB	3	1	1	8	3	2	1	3	7	0	29
KT	0	2	2	8	1	4	0	1	5	1	24

RS	1	1	6	9	4	1	1	0	1	4	28
Total	5	4	10	37	11	7	4	4	16	6	104
%	4.81	3.85	9.62	35.58	10.58	6.73	3.85	3.85	15.38	5.77	100

The results demonstrate that the respondents recognise that their ability to work collectively within their community made Baan Mankong possible: *"Fighting for what we wanted made this possible"* (KT17); *"the unity of the people"* (RS16); *"the willingness of people to participate, help each other"* (B1). The community leadership is the second most popular reason: *"the leader and committee, we wouldn't know anything without him"* (BB21). A number of respondents cite the cooperation between leaders and community residents. Therefore, "in-community" reasons of collective action, leaders, savings and builders form 58.66% of the reasons, highlighting how horizontal ties at the community level are recognized by community members as important in order to achieve community development. Thai low income communities have a propensity to participate and co-operate, forming close-knit networks through their daily interactions, and as Korff (1986) found, the strength of social networks in slum communities mean that residents often do not move out even as they move up the social and economic ladder.

The government is cited as another major reason for upgrading success, along with CODI: *"Without CODI and their loans, Baan Mankong would not be possible"* (KT13). People's savings and other money sources are regarded as more important than the loan, reflecting the self-help aspect of this project. Because a number of respondents cite former PM Thaksin directly, he is distinguished from the 'government' as a reason, as it was under his premiership that Baan Mankong first started.

4.3 The role of slum networks

One of the outcomes of the Baan Mankong program has been the formation of a network of low-income communities, called NULICO (National Union of Low Income Community Organisations), which puts into practice the program's ideals of knowledge sharing between communities. The two core aims of NULICO are:
1) to solve the problems of community organisations of the poor in cities;
2) to collectively push forward policy changes with the state.

The NULICO website (www.nulico.com) emphasises that community residents need to be at the core of Baan Mankong upgrading.

NULICO links the urban poor, which gives them access to more resources and hence power, as well as sharing of experiences, and with this they can achieve change. The network members have created an identity for themselves around their ability and willingness to upgrade, calling themselves the *chao chumchon baan mankong prachar samakee*: the united citizens of Baan Mankong. Khun Lek from CODI explains that the distribution of society means *"the poor get a very small plot, politicians get half, and civil servants get some. NULICO joins up these small plots held by the poor so that the poor people have more space in the city, so that the poor can come out and speak at the district level"*. The process of fighting for their communities has brought residents together: *"they have all been fighting, have been squeezed, by government offices, land owners, they have gone to jail and so on, over 10 years... They have gained more than houses, they have friends, they know each other for at least five years so they have closeness from fighting together, the poor are like relatives… To be heard they have to be numerous. They get power from numbers. People won't listen to one community, won't listen to 10, so they need 100."*

Community members active in NULICO explain its importance in terms of the limitations of CODI's ability to help the poor, despite being a government agency. According to Khun You, *"poor people are getting together to fight for land because they don't have back up, CODI*

doesn't have the strength and manpower to help everyone, so they are getting poor people to help themselves". For Khun Tim, *"Desperate community members set up NULICO because no one was helping them, the CODI organisation used to be small. … If we don't work collectively, the government doesn't care about people"*. NULICO was formed with Baan Mankong at its core, as another NULICO member explained: *"We have to help others who haven't done Baan Mankong yet… Before Baan Mankong we struggled to find people to help us, this way there is no need to wait for government or district help"*. NULICO emerged from the community residents, as a reaction to the lack of representation and solutions from the state.

According to Khun Praphart from Bang Bua, *"CODI doesn't have much strength, so the community residents have to use their strength... NULICO stays constant as the government and CODI can change"*. NULICO has maintained the momentum to keep the Baan Mankong project going, and now, *"people look at us as the heart of Baan Mankong"*. However, this does mean the network is very narrowly focused on housing issues, at least for now, though it also has a social welfare fund.

NULICO carries out its work through different specialised "teams": management, information exchange, social welfare, construction, infrastructure, inspection, and finance. The Bangkok region holds a monthly meeting for all members, as well as meetings for the different "teams". NULICO representatives also attend meetings of more localised networks, such as the Bang Bua canal network, acting as discussion facilitators.

NULICO puts into practice the Baan Mankong ideals of "information exchange" and "learning by doing". As community residents who have already completed upgrading and know best what the experience entails, they are better placed to inform their counterparts than government bureaucrats who view things from afar. As one NULICO member said, *"sometimes I visit two or three communities in one day"*. NULICO team members can advise communities, for example those in the process of drawing up an application for Baan Mankong funding, checking community savings group accounts, or inspecting the building work carried out by contractors. The advice given by NULICO members reflects their own experiences, and is realistic in expectations. NULICO meetings are learning and exchange platforms, as many communities are ill-prepared to begin Baan Mankong.

There are also teams of builders, composed of community residents with masonry, carpentry, plumbing skills, who can be hired to build houses in other communities, at lower rates than those offered by contractors, thereby generating jobs and collective business skills. In Bangkok, there are 52 teams of community builders, composed of 2000 people (CODI Community News, 2008, 112:3). These teams have built 38 upgrading projects, covering 5609 units (http://www.codi.or.th/housing/selfbuild.html, accessed 12/2/09). These community builders are important because they free residents from contractors, with whom they have often had bad experiences, and who many not be understanding of the financial constraints faced by residents.

NULICO also runs its own welfare fund, to which members can contribute. Additionally, events like a community sports day are held to build team spirit outside the context of housing. Members all wear green shirts, symbolising their unity, and there is a NULICO song. Therefore, NULICO performs a "family" role for its members, providing support in areas other than upgrading. NULICO are creating an identity for the urban poor, as a group capable of providing for their own welfare and development.

NULICO as an organisation is not afraid to make its views known if it feels that the community members are being neglected by the powers above. Because the needs of the poor stay the same despite constantly changing governments with differing policies, NULICO plays a role in ensuring continued funding for Baan Mankong projects. In January 2009,

approximately 100 NULICO members demonstrated at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to request continued funding for Baan Mankong from the new government, after CODI funds bottomed out. Though the tone of the demonstration was very friendly, the leaders were clear that if their demands were not met, *"we will fight, not just four regions like today, but [representatives from] all seven regions will come"*. Their rhetoric emphasised the distance between the government officials and the poor: *"if they [the government] don't believe us, we can send them to see our projects, to compare the NHA and Baan Mankong, and which meets the needs of our people"*, and *"Mr Minister, you are sitting in your ministry, you should come and look at your brothers and sisters on the ground"*. The demonstrators also clearly identified themselves as lower class people: *"for human security, you need to look after everyone, not just high and middle class people, you have to look after the bottom class"*, reflecting the fact that social identity is defined by the networks a person belongs to, and this network in particular wants to narrow the gap between the state and the poor.

4.4 Why do people join NULICO?

A short written questionnaire was administered to 17 NULICO members during a Bangkok region team meeting attended by many of the "core" group of NULICO volunteers. Of the 17 respondents, ten were female and seven were male, with an average age of 48. None of them were from a community which had fully completed Baan Mankong upgrading, though 11 communities were in the process of doing so. The demographic information displayed in Table 3 below show that as most have informal jobs, this gives them the flexibility to do NULICO work. They are generally not the main wage-earner in their household. Thirteen also hold positions on their community committee. The majority of respondents displayed a high level of commitment to their NULICO work, with a number of them regarding it as a full-time job.

Table 3: Demographics and time-commitment of NULICO members

Occupation		NULICO team position		Days a week on NULICO work*	
Vendor	4	Information	4	1-3	5
Seamstress/laundry	3	Infrastructure	4	3-5	7
Labourer	1	Social	5	6-7	5
Housewife	2	Management	3		
Business	1	Not on team	1		
No work	5				
Other (bus driver)	1				
Total	**17**		**17**		**17**

* Those who answered a range of up to 3 days were put in the 1-3 category, while those who gave a range of 3 or more were put in the 3-5 category.

The respondents were asked why they were working with NULICO, and the answers reflect a desire to help other "brothers and sisters" in a similar situation of need, and by extension, to help Thai society as a whole: *"To help society and develop housing, and develop strong communities"*; *"I was in need, and want others in need to have secure housing for their children, and to help Thai society"*. Others see it as a way to change government policies: *"to solve the problem of getting government land for communities, and of regulations not being appropriate"*. Other responses reflect the lack of help from other parties: *"[it's] hard to find people to work on this, to solve problems of lack of secure housing"*. There is also a sense of pride in doing things for themselves: *"when working together with ordinary people, it makes us build up strength and pride"*. These responses demonstrate the altruistic nature of the community residents – though they are themselves busy upgrading their own communities, they want others to benefit from their knowledge so that their lives can be improved too.

Norms of self-sacrifice which exist within communities extend across communities. This is solidarity in action.

When the NULICO members were asked what they regarded as the main problems when helping communities to upgrade, the responses can be distinguished as in-community factors and external factors. Nine respondents cited a lack of understanding from the community residents themselves: *"residents don't understand, think it's impossible"*; *"residents… think the leader wants to do it for own benefit"*. Other community-based problems included a lack of participation, being taken advantage of by the leader, divisions within the leadership, and unwillingness to participate in savings groups. The external problems cited included unfriendly building regulations, getting secure tenure over land, and lack of support from organisations. With a clear understanding of the challenges, they can develop a plan of action to resolve these problems.

When the respondents were asked for suggestions to improve the Baan Mankong scheme, many responses focused on in-community improvements, such as better management in communities, having clear community plans, improving understanding of the residents, and getting more participation. However, there is also a need to increase understanding from the government itself, with more participation from and cooperation with government agencies and other organisations. In particular, low-income communities often fall foul of strict building and planning laws, such as minimum road widths: in upgraded communities with extremely limited space, if these minimum widths were obeyed, there would be no room for the houses. Therefore, NULICO can push for officials to allow exemptions to these types of regulations by building understanding of their limitations.

4.5 The next step: City Development Funds

Because the Baan Mankong project is government-funded and subsidized, it means that the relationship between the urban poor and the state shifted from being one of resistance – against eviction – to one of dependency, at least with regard to financial support. However, this financial support is volatile, as communities realized in 2008 when the CODI revolving fund ran dry. As a result, many new projects could not go ahead as there was no money to be given out in loans. Whilst CODI eventually received fresh funds in 2009 from the government and sold some outstanding community loans to the Government Housing Bank (ACHR, 2010), the precarious situation of the Baan Mankong project at that moment made community networks realize their need for financial independence. As a result, two local networks of communities decided to take steps to form their own City Development Funds (CDFs): the Bang Khen district community network in Bangkok, and the Chum Pae town community network, in North Eastern Thailand.

The Bang Khen district community network, of which Bang Bua community is part, was already very strong due to its history of working together on environmental problems and then on Baan Mankong. As part of the upgrading process, the community residents, along with local municipal officials and a nearby university, undertook a district-wide survey of the housing situation in Bang Khen, including the number of households, how many faced housing problems, and land tenure data. When some communities were hampered in the Baan Mankong process by CODI's funding shortage, the idea of linking together all of the communities' savings groups into one district-wide fund, the CDF, arose, to be supported by contributions from the district. Though the savings are not pooled, and each savings group maintains its independence, the collective savings of the network amount to 1.45 million baht, and each community savings group makes a contribution to the fund.

This CDF will allow communities in Bang Khen to obtain loans from the fund for communal projects, at an interest rate of 4% per annum, of which 1% will go towards management costs, 1% will go towards the community's welfare fund, and 2% will go back into the CDF.

As well as continuing to promote the capacities of communities to cooperate at a local level with the relevant agencies to solve their land and housing problems, this fund gives the low-income communities a measure of independence, as they are no longer reliant upon loans from CODI, which, as a government-funded agency, is liable to funding cuts. Thus, the communities which have not yet undertaken Baan Mankong upgrading in Bang Khen have the guarantee of funds being available.

Because the money is the CDF is used as a revolving fund, this presents an incentive for residents to repay the loan regularly and promptly, so that others can benefit. Because part the money in the fund comes from their contributions, they may feel more responsibility over it than the government money which comes through CODI loans. The system of ensuring that committee members take responsibility over loans means that they will be careful to check that those who take on loans have the means to repay them, to decrease the chances of non-performing loans. Another advantage of using CDF money to fund housing projects is that it frees up the CODI loan which would otherwise have been disbursed, to fund upgrading in another community, thus residents are helping not only themselves, but others in a situation of housing need across Thailand.

The CDF is also a more flexible financial tool than a loan from CODI, which requires bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures before approval and disbursement. CODI loans can only been given to projects which meet its criterion, like the fact the whole community has to be ready to upgrade, and the land must be leased or owned collectively. This rules out loans for those who may own their land but still be living in poor quality housing (which is more likely outside of Bangkok), because Baan Mankong only allows collective land title. For communities which are not ready to collectively upgrading, using CDF loans to help those who *are* ready to upgrade can spur on further action by the rest of the community to follow suit, once the first households have demonstrated that it is possible. Thus, in one Bang Khen network community, two households have benefited from a CDF loan to build new homes, and two others are following suit, while the rest of the community prepares itself to apply for a CODI loan for Baan Mankong upgrading. In Bang Bua community, money from the CDF helped to pay for "central homes" for two elderly and disabled community members who could not otherwise have participated in Baan Mankong.

While the CDF in Bang Khen is currently being used mostly to encourage housing improvement projects, it can also provide income-generating loans and fund educational and welfare projects. In this way, community development will extend beyond solely housing issues. The aim is to encourage other cities to set up their own CDFs as Bang Khen district and Chum Pae town have done, so that communities can continue to improve their living environment and increase their control over the process. For a CDF to be possible, the community network need not only be strong between communities, but with local authorities, as their collaboration is needed to provide technical support, approve building plans and other official matters, though they may also extend contributions to the fund. The CDF is also open to external sources of funding, such as the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) program, run by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), which funds small and large community upgrading projects. Thus, having a CDF opens up possibilities for communities, by ending their dependence on government funding, and sustaining the participatory process encouraged by Baan Mankong, allowing for more far-reaching community development.

5. Conclusion

This paper has outlined how a participatory slum upgrading process has spurned communities on to take community development into their own hands, through the creation of NULICO and CDFs. This has been possible largely due to the dedication of a number of community members and representatives, who now see volunteering for the cause as an almost full-time job, and CODI also plays an important role in assisting these community-led initiatives, with technical as well as financial assistance. When CODI couldn't financially cope with the scale of the upgrading movement, CDFs were introduced as an alternative, and though there are only two so far, these can facilitate the continuation of the upgrading momentum, and continue to keep community residents actively involved in the development of their city.

When considering housing solutions for the urban poor, security of tenure is a vital consideration – not only with regard permission to stay on site, but to allow the poor to gain acceptance as legal members of the city, with access to resources and services this entails, and social recognition. Rather than the evictions of old which banish the poor to the city outskirts, Baan Mankong aids the integration of slum-dwellers into society at large by giving them decision power through "horizontal power delivery", creating horizontal linkages between peer groups in the city and allowing the urban poor to form one big community (Somsook, 2005). It is through this big community of the poor that they can continue to ensure their voices are heard as part of the city, something which is all the more important given Thailand's current political climate of divisions.

Sustainable urban development is not only about physical form, but also the social relationships within a city. A participatory approach can take some of the burden off the government to provide all the housing, which it cannot do, and instead create a relationship of partnership with the poor. Indeed, local officials who were previously reluctant to help the poor communities have now, in certain cases, forged close relationships with the community members. Beginning with Baan Mankong, the upgrading process now continues beyond housing, by promoting linkages within and across communities to find their own solutions to state and market failure. Increasingly, the community residents are gaining credence in the eyes of official bodies, as urban residents who can contribute solutions to housing problems through a participatory process.

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