

REPORT

Roundtable on inclusive urban development in Metro Manila



Photo and text: Lucy Oates



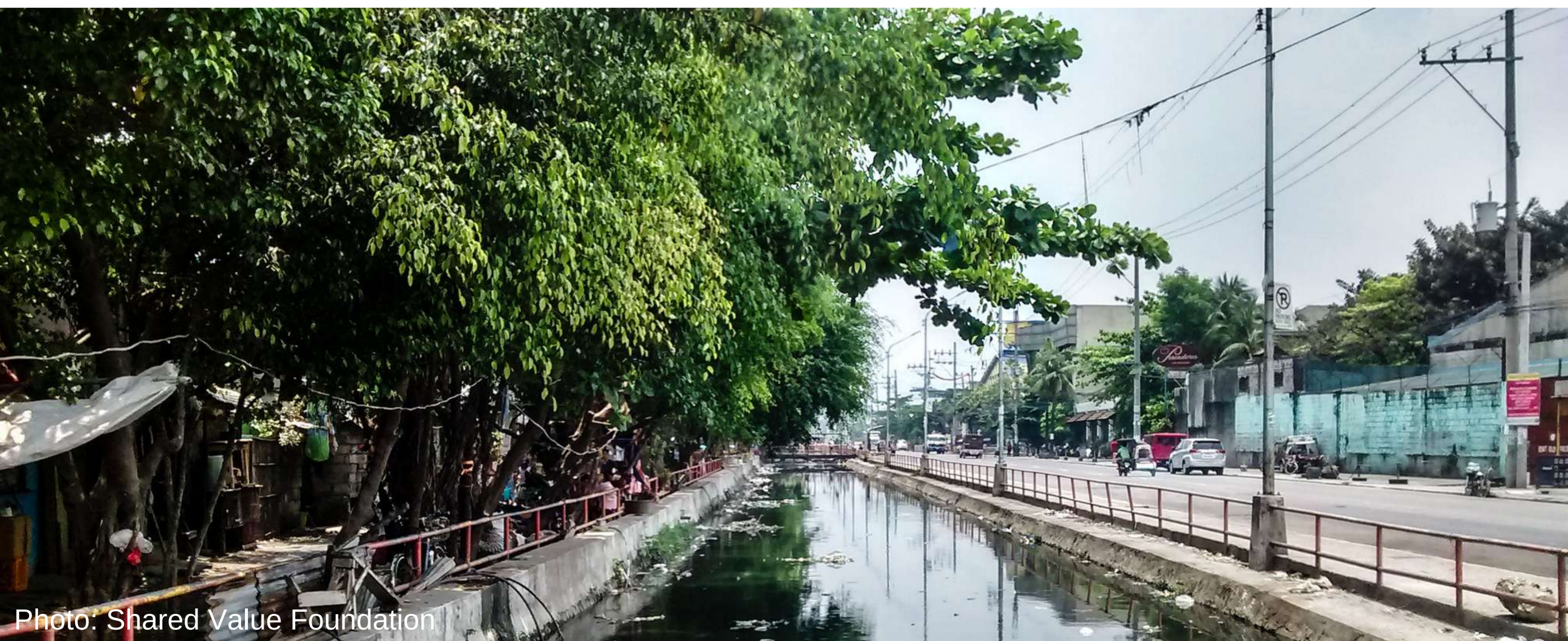
Background

It is projected that by 2050, almost two-thirds of the world population will be living in cities. Rapid urbanization – and how to make it inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Population growth means that more people will be competing for less land. As a consequence, land scarcity and speculation as well as infrastructure development and the imperative to create “world class cities” have caused an unprecedented surge of investments related to land in urban and peri-urban areas. In many of these cases, local people and communities are only consulted after plans have been made, if at all.

Metro Manila is one of the largest cities in the world, with a current population of around 14 million – this is projected to reach 17 million by 2030. The greater urban area is already home to an estimated 22 million. Its location in a river delta makes it particularly susceptible to water-related problems such as flooding and land subsidence, and it is one of the most vulnerable cities in the world to natural disasters. These factors combined all mean that Metro Manila faces unique and complex urban challenges which cannot be addressed by one actor alone.

This local roundtable discussion was an open discussion about the land-related urban development issues specific to Manila, and about the plethora of “plans” which are currently being designed for the city (such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan). During this discussion, participants were asked to identify and define priority issues. The outputs of this roundtable will be used as input for the next CITYforum meeting in 2018.

The CITYforum is a multi-stakeholder network of policy makers, practitioners, private sector representatives and researchers from Jakarta, Indonesia, Manila, the Philippines, and the Netherlands which provides a platform to share experiences, bridge the gap between sectors, and facilitate both intra- and inter-city learning in relation to land-related issues, focusing on the adequate involvement of diverse communities in decision-making processes, as well as the role of different stakeholders in making both Jakarta and Manila inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. The kick-off meeting for the CITYforum was held in Utrecht, the Netherlands in September 2017. A synthesis CITYforum meeting will be organised in Utrecht, the Netherlands in early 2018 to discuss the key findings from the local meetings and to define a follow up agenda.



Introduction

This report captures the discussions and key points from the *Roundtable on inclusive urban development in Metro Manila* which was held at Balay Internasional, University of the Philippines (Diliman Campus) on Thursday 9th November 2017.

First, key priority issues in the city were identified. Each priority was then further defined, exploring the causes and effects, and the stakeholders. We finally discussed how a multistakeholder group such as the CITYforum could help to move things in the right direction, suggesting certain activities that could be taken up as part of a follow-up agenda.

Identifying key priorities

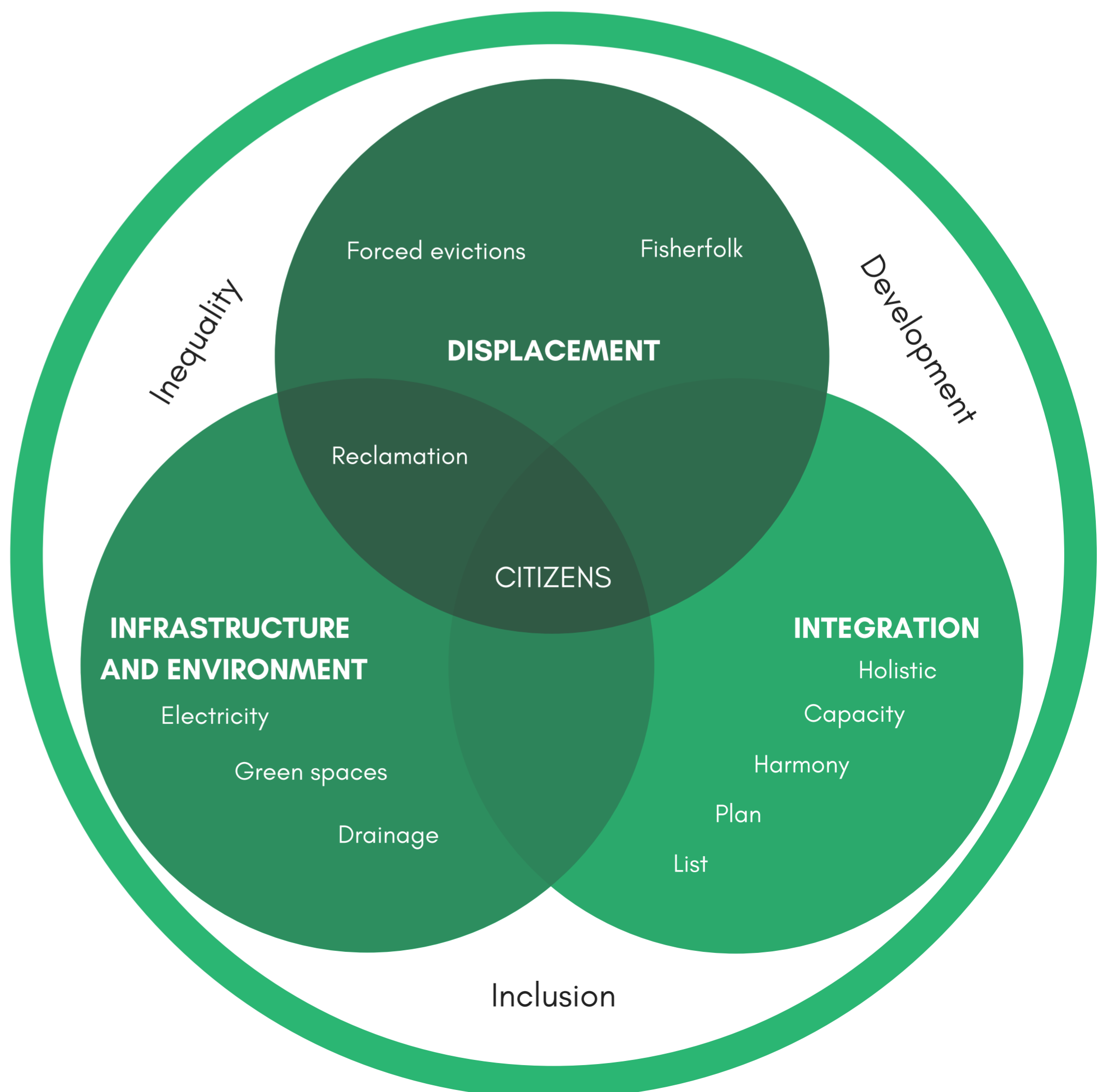
Participants were first asked to introduce themselves and their organisational affiliation or background, and also to choose one word which they find most important when discussing land-related urban issues in Metro Manila. Once everyone had presented themselves and their words, participants were asked to group their words where relevant, creating categories which represent the key priorities for the group to focus on.

The resulting categorization is presented below, showing the three key topics identified were:

- **DISPLACEMENT**
- **INTEGRATION AND HARMONIZATION**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

It was agreed that inequality, development and inclusion should be cross-cutting themes running through all discussions. Current processes of urbanization are unequal and in many cases, the most vulnerable are not benefiting from the changes. It was also agreed that all discussions should have citizens at the centre - the city should be developed by its inhabitants for its inhabitants.

Note: some words (including "capacity", "electricity" and "evictions") were repeated - this is not shown in the diagram.

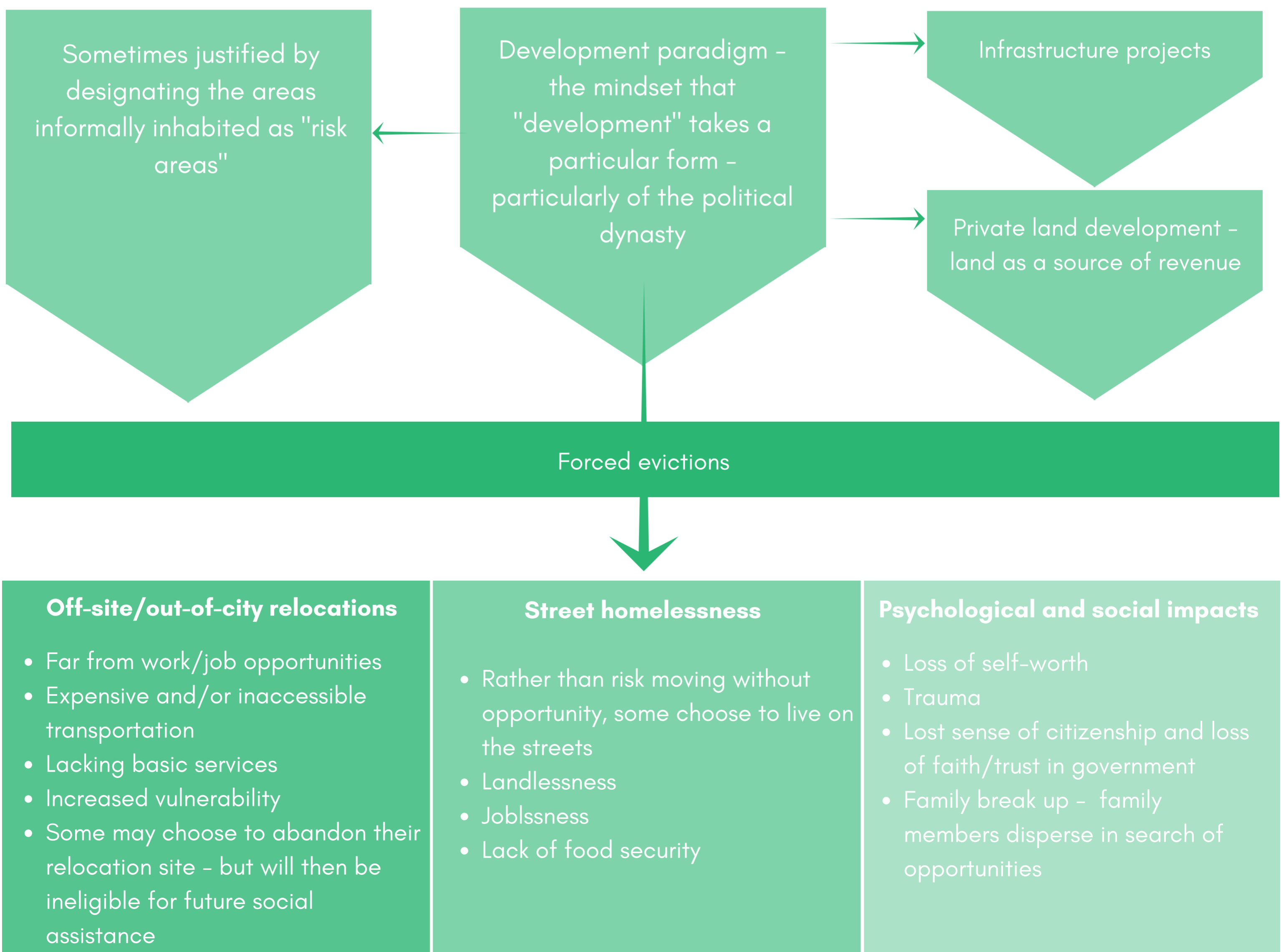


Displacement

Increasing competition over land in the megacity is resulting in the eviction of thousands of so-called "squatters" who are currently residing in informal settlements. Evictions are often forced and rarely inclusive. They are frequently violent and always cause distress. "Qualified" families may be re-housed, though it is unlikely they will be consulted on their new location, which could be miles from their jobs and social networks; others are not even offered resettlement.

Land reclamation in and around Manila Bay is a particular threat, especially for communities of fisherfolk whose livelihoods depend on their access to the Bay but who are (to be) removed to make way for massive urban projects in which there is no place for them. In some cases, these people are offered small amounts of cash in compensation (usually no more than 15,000 Philippine pesos, equivalent to 300 USD) but this concession does little to help families who are resettled without consideration of their livelihoods. Some resettled families may abandon their new homes, but this would leave them ineligible for future social assistance.

Unfortunately, "communities are seen as part of the problem, not part of the solution" and therefore, under the guise of "development", they are removed to make way for things that *are* considered solutions, such as infrastructure and urban growth. Participants discussed the root causes of the displacement and the manifestations of the issue, producing the flow diagram below.



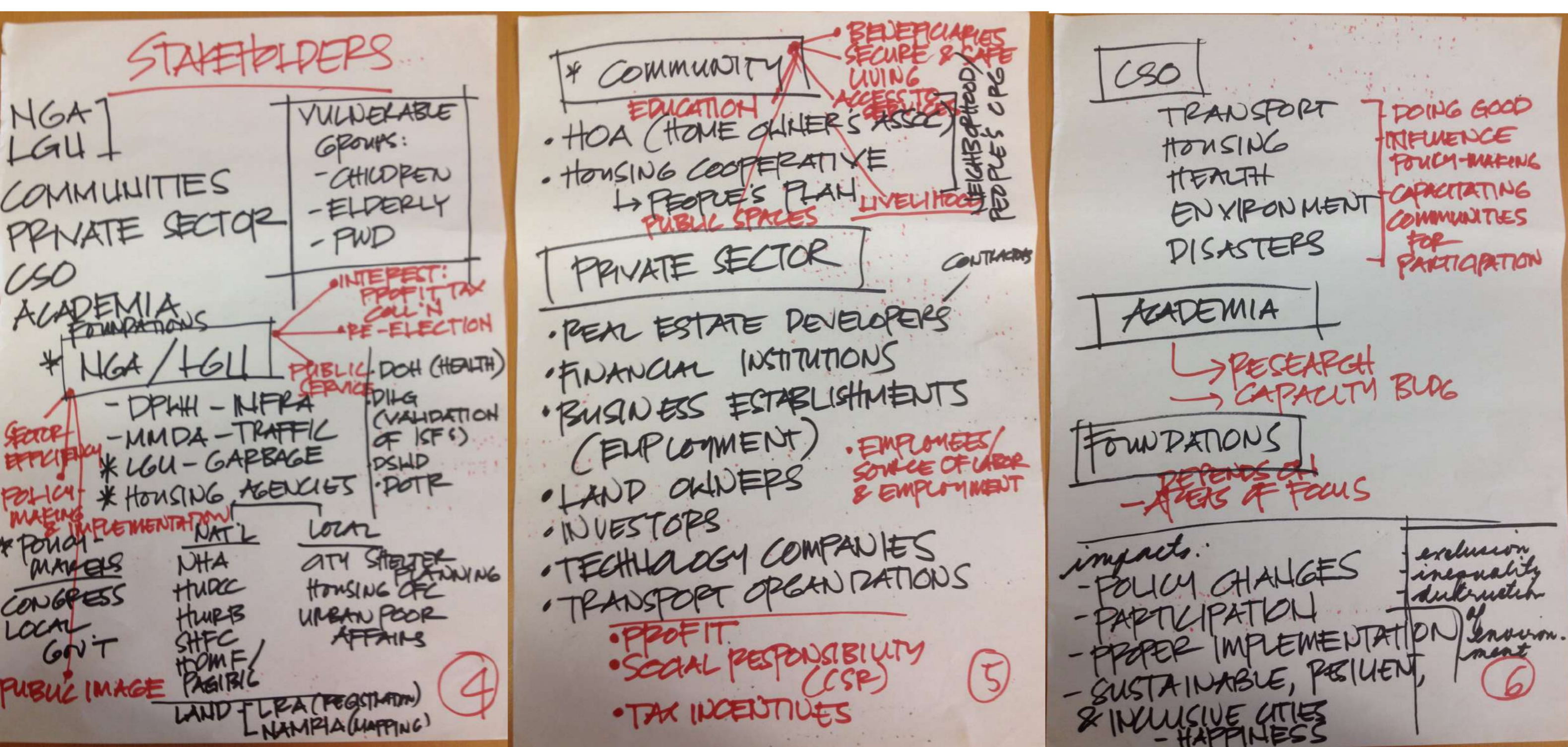
Integration and harmonization

As was also discussed in the CITYforum kick-off meeting, challenges such as inadequate service provision, persistent poverty, and environmental degradation do not adhere to administrative boundaries and cannot be addressed in isolation. Urban development is complex and requires interaction and cooperation between and across different governance units, scales, sectors, and temporalities.

This approach is proving difficult to execute in Metro Manila, where city planning is currently not well integrated. Participants were unaware of any overarching land-use plan nor inventory of all existing development projects, which means conversion tends to be ad-hoc and driven by the self-interest and agendas of those with power and/or money. Urban planning does not encompass the wider metropolitan area, including the rural hinterland, as demonstrated by rapid rural-urban migration - which also serves to exacerbate the issues associated with unplanned growth as informal settlements continue to expand.

Participants attempted to list some of the primary stakeholders involved or interested in land-related urban development in Metro Manila, producing the complex web shown below. Participants concluded that there are many stakeholders involved - and that these stakeholders are working in silos rather than following a coordinated plan or regularly engaging in participatory dialogue, meaning there is currently no truly holistic approach to urban development.

There is also a weak governance structure, perhaps in part due to a lack of capacity of implementing agencies - in particular of local government. Governmental bodies are organised into a multitude of different units, each with its own responsibility (see image of page 4 below, far left), meaning that the high level of bureaucracy can serve to hinder processes of securing access or ownership of land - and further, can serve to conceal unfair or unjust practices. This structure also makes it extremely difficult for local communities to make contact with the right person in the right department to raise any issues which they may have, or to seek assistance with dispute resolution.



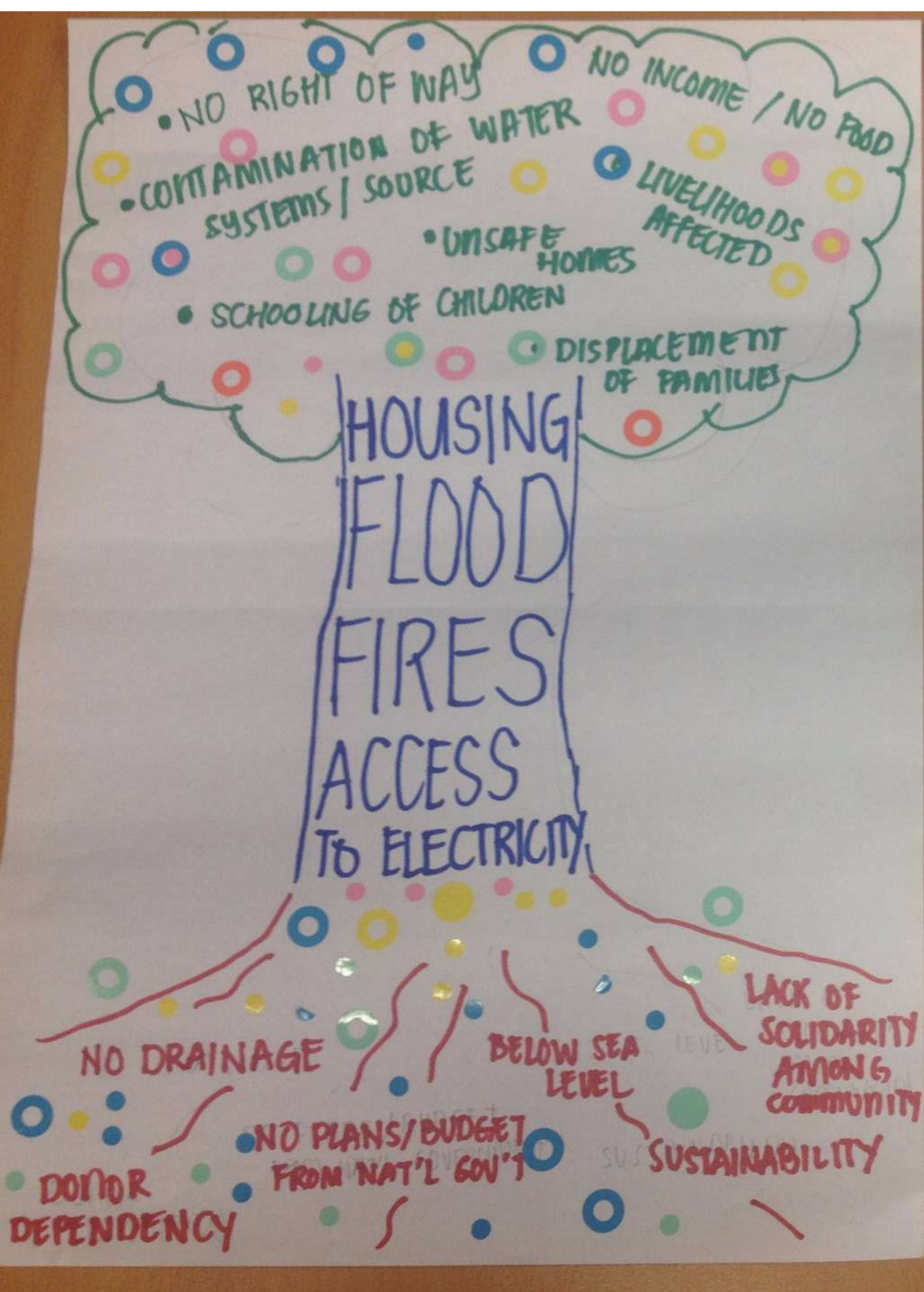
Infrastructure and environment

Metro Manila is extremely vulnerable to environmental shocks - according to the UN, when exposure to natural disaster is considered alongside "economic and mortality vulnerability", it is the most at risk megacity in the world (United Nations World Cities in 2016 Data Booklet).

Various environmental and infrastructural issues compound this vulnerability - flooding is the most severe manifestation of the problem. Land subsidence due to excessive groundwater pumping and climate change-related sea level rise mean more flooding; this problem is exacerbated by a lack of adequate drainage systems. The ongoing land reclamation in Manila Bay further complicates these issues - as one participant put it, "we try to build on water because there is no more land". This contributes further to rising water levels in the Bay and exacerbates land subsidence - and also threatens the Bay's rich biodiversity.



Photo: Shared Value Foundation



Drainage and water provision (see above photo) is not the only infrastructural service which is lacking in the city. Access to (formal) electricity is also extremely hard to come by for those living in informal settlements, which are renowned for the "spaghetti wires" which crisscross the slums. The combination of uncovered electrical wires and flooding regularly causes fires to break out.

Participants worried that the city was becoming "donor dependent" - and that although donors were stepping to respond to disasters repeatedly, Metro Manila was being hastily rebuilt again and again in poverty with little emphasis being placed on making the reconstructed city more resilient to future shocks. Even in a post-disaster setting, companies and governments stick rigidly to their mandates and do only what they *have to do*, meaning that environmental and infrastructural deficits always seem to be "left to someone else".

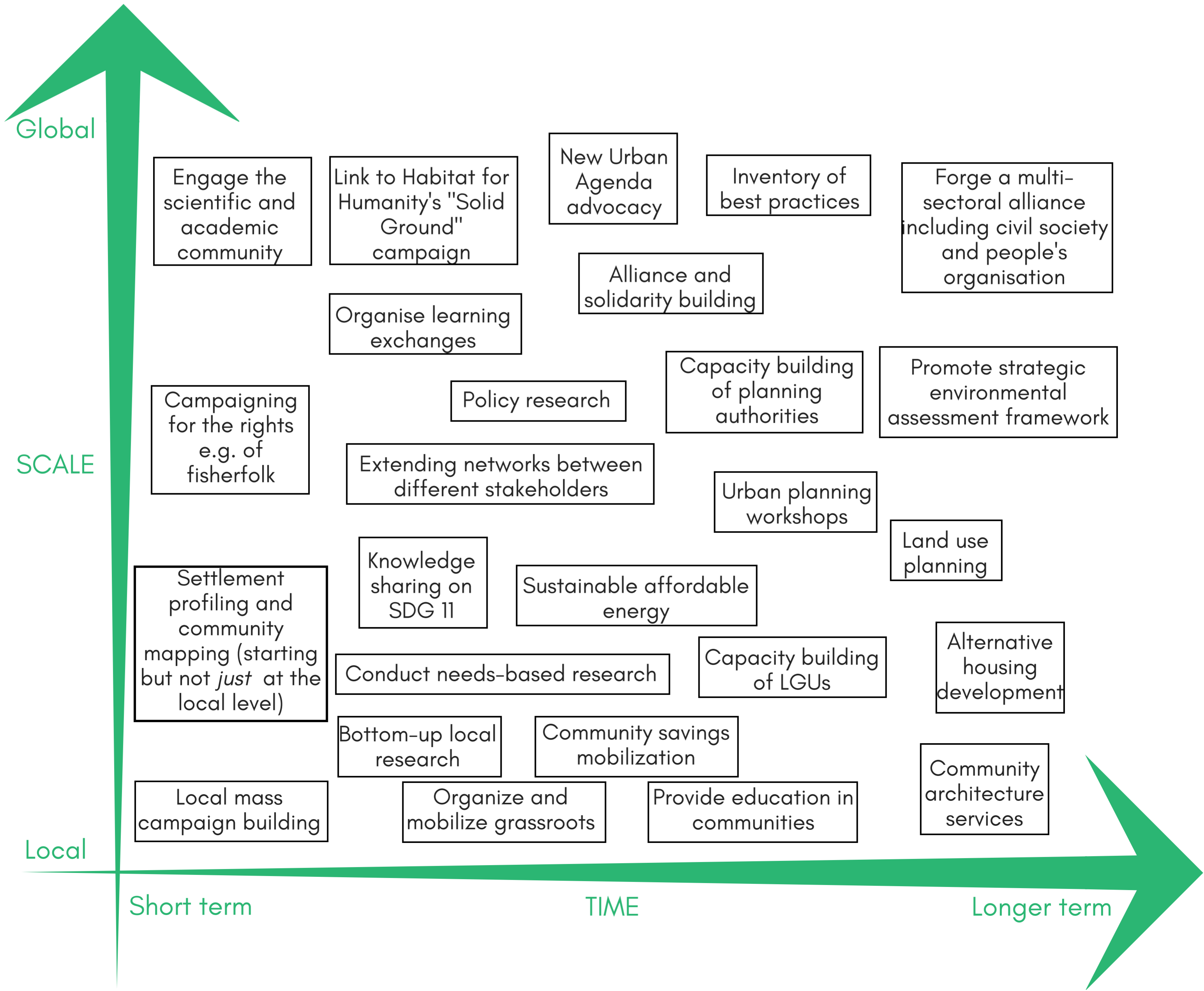
Participants designed the "problem tree" shown on the left to illustrate the problem.

Moving in the right direction

Understanding the problems we face is key to moving towards solutions, and this roundtable was key in highlighting and defining some of the priorities in relation to land and urban development in Metro Manila, as well as contributing to the design of a preliminary cross-sectoral agenda that would address needs and requirements on the ground.

The information gathered during this roundtable will be used at the CITYforum synthesis meeting to define a follow-up agenda for work in both Jakarta and Metro Manila - an agenda which will be collaboratively designed with all interested stakeholders and which will be agreed upon by participants of the CITYforum group and the participants in the meeting which was the subject of this report.

To already think about what this multistakeholder group could do to move things in the right direction, participants of the roundtable came up with some concrete actions that could be part of the CITYforum's strategy going forward, drawing on the strengths and expertise of the group who was present. Participants plotted their proposals on a scale from local to global, and from short term to long term (see diagram below).



Action

Based on the discussions at the roundtable on drawing from the above diagram, particular actions that the CITYforum group could think about following up include:

- ✔ Bringing together diverse stakeholders to form cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary alliances, who can share experiences and knowledge, and reach joint solutions.
- ✔ Conducting research and filling knowledge gaps both at to local (such as bottom-up needs assessments) and global (such as lessons learned and best practices from cities around the world) levels, and making the data widely available and openly accessible.
- ✔ Facilitating capacity building and trainings for various groups, particularly local government - both technical and in accessing funding.
- ✔ Raising awareness of the issues locally, nationally and globally through campaigning and advocacy.



Participants

Government

Feroisa Concordia - Public-Private Partnership Center of the Philippines
Dionne Marga Larin - Public-Private Partnership Center of the Philippines
Kreeher Bonagwa - Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor

Private sector

Charlie Ayco - WeGen
Kathrina Consuella Galang - Arcadis Philippines

Civil society

Brenda Perez-Castro - Habitat for Humanity International
Jane Katz - Habitat for Humanity International
Carly Kraybill - Habitat for Humanity International
Clemonte Bautista - Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment
Angelina Neo - UNDP
Dario Cubelo - Philippine Action for Community-led Shelter Initiatives (PACSI)
Jam - Pamalakaya Pilipinas (National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines)
Leon Dulce - Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment

Community members

Anita Catina - SAMAPIL Homeowners Association in Catmon
Janet - SAMAPIL Homeowners Association in Catmon
Flora Sta Maria - SUNRISE Homeowners Association in Catmon
Cathy - SUNRISE Homeowners Association in Catmon
Janet - SUNRISE Homeowners Association in Catmon
Teofilo - Damata Kadima Sunrise Village Housing Cooperative in Tonsuya
evin - NILAD Community Organisation Network

Academia

Ricardo Sandalo - University of the Philippines College of Human Ecology
Anna Marie Karaos - John C. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues
Ric Reyes - Pasig Libre Civil Society Movement/PhD researcher
Ebenezer - University of the Philippines College of Law/UNDP
Olivia - University of the Philippines College of Architecture

Author: Lucy Oates

For more information, visit www.landgovernance.org or contact
LANDac at landac.geo@uu.nl