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Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

Defeating a Political Dynasty: Local Progressive Politics through People Power Volunteers for Reform and Bottom-up Budgeting Projects in Siquijor, Philippines

Hara Tamiki*

Despite its much-touted agenda to fight poverty and corruption, the Aquino administration was not able to produce good results during its term at the national level. However, some political forces and policy reforms that emerged with the administration achieved remarkable change at the local level. This paper explores the case of Siquijor Province, where an entrenched political dynasty was defeated in the 2013 and 2016 elections by candidates supported by the Liberal Party and its allied forces, Akbayan, and analyzes factors that brought this change by focusing on activities of People Power Volunteers for Reform, the impact of bottom-up budgeting projects, and the mobilization of powers of the national government through personal relationships. It also notes achievements of the Aquino administration at the local level, provides a critical perspective to the elite democracy discourse that sticks to a static view of Philippine politics, and clarifies local practices by progressive forces that confront oligarchy.

Keywords: political dynasty, oligarchy, local politics, progressive politics, People Power Volunteers for Reform (PPVR), bottom-up budgeting (BUB)

Introduction

“Panahon na para ipasa ang isang anti-dynasty law (It is time to pass an anti-dynasty law),” Philippine President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III said in his last State of the Nation Address on July 27, 2015 (Sabillo 2015). Despite the provision in the 1987 Philippine constitution prohibiting political dynasties, no law has been enacted to implement it.¹⁾ Aquino’s statement was interpreted mainly as an implicit criticism of Vice President

* 原 民樹, Faculty of Commerce and Economics, Chiba University of Commerce, 1-3-1 Konodai, Ichikawa-shi, Chiba 272-8512, Japan
e-mail: tamiki.h.1985@gmail.com

1) In general, the term “political dynasties” is defined as “traditional political families or the practices by these political families of monopolizing political power and public offices from generation to generation and treating the public elective officers almost as their personal property” (Park 2008, 120).

Jejomar Binay, who was seeking to lift term limits for elected officials and planning to run for the next presidential election in 2016.²⁾ Aquino's appeal for the enactment of the law sounded ironic because he himself was a scion of the Philippines' most famous dynasty. Nevertheless, Aquino knew well that his supporters were calling for some form of an anti-dynasty policy. Columnists and scholars often criticize political dynasties in various media, and it is a common view that political dynasties in the Philippines have too much power and need to be constrained in some way.

From a general point of view, political dynasties' influence has been strengthened rather than weakened over time. Table 1 shows that ratios of members of Congress who belong to political dynasties have increased as a long-term trend since the People Power or EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos Avenue) Revolution.³⁾ The anti-dynasty bill proposed by the 16th Congress (2013–16) was shelved due to opposition from powerful lawmakers (many of them dynasts themselves).

This has sustained a framework that regards the post-EDSA period as the restoration of elite democracy. As JPaul Manzanilla points out:

what has been achieved in the Philippines thus far is the return of formal democracy, oftentimes called “oligarchic politics,” “cacique democracy” and “elite democracy” where a freewheeling democratic system has further entrenched the landed and business few who made officialdom bow to their interests. (Manzanilla 2016, 13)

Certainly, elite democracy has continued until today, and political dynasties have retained control over the formal democratic system that people regained through the revolution.

At the same time, however, elite democracy is neither static nor changeless. While recognizing the limited possibilities for change during the post-EDSA period, several studies focus on positive changes after the revolution: “The Philippines may, in fact, now be entering a potentially significant phase as popular forces, challenging the rule of oligarchic elite, strive to deepen the democratization process and institutionalize people power” (Quimpo 2008, 7). On the other hand, many studies view the People Power Revolution as a political event with a clear beginning and end. Scholars such as Nathan Quimpo think of it as a long-term development of progressive visions created during the anti-Marcos movement.

When we consider the legacy of People Power today, the Aquino administration

2) Aside from his well-known aspiration to be the next president, Binay was building his own political dynasty in Makati. This seemed to be another important reason why he wanted to lift term limits.

3) The EDSA Revolution was the popular political movement that toppled the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. It is also known as the People Power Revolution or February Revolution. This movement supported Corazon Aquino as the new president and led to the restoration of democracy in the Philippines.

Table 1 Political Dynasties in Selected Philippine Congresses

| Congressional Term | Number of Representatives with Relatives in Elective Office (House of Representatives) | % | Number of Senators with Previous Senator Family Members (Senate) | % |
|--------------------|--|----|--|----|
| 8th (1987–92) | 128 | 62 | 6 (of 24) | 25 |
| 9th (1992–95) | 128 | 64 | — | — |
| 11th (1998–2001) | 136 | 62 | — | — |
| 12th (2001–4) | 140 | 61 | 7 (of 24) | 29 |
| 15th (2010–13) | 155 | 68 | 10 (of 23) | 43 |

Source: Bello *et al.* (2014, 265).

(2010–16) is a remarkable time to be examined because Noytoy Aquino was an icon of “New People Power.” Corazon Aquino, his mother and the original icon of People Power, passed away in August 2009. The subsequent national mourning and memory of her era pushed her son to become a presidential candidate and gave him a strong support base. On May 10, 2010,

Noytoy Aquino was elected president of the Philippines with a landslide margin. The media and civil society agreed: it was “People Power masquerading as an election.” Indeed, for many Filipinos, the elections sparked memories of the recent past, specifically the bloodless revolution of 1986. (Claudio 2013, 2)

Noytoy Aquino became not only the new icon of national memory but also a catalyst of common political agendas among his support groups through the election campaign. While some people were skeptical about his main promise of poverty reduction, his active support groups took it seriously and hoped to contribute in a practical way to reducing poverty. Aquino’s New People Power vitalized grassroots organizations and created the possibility to “deepen the democratization process and institutionalize people power.”

Even after Aquino finished his term, these aspects of his administration were not well analyzed. It is necessary to examine how New People Power, vitalized through the election campaign of 2010, has materialized itself and what political impact it has had. Therefore, this paper will argue the case of Siquijor Province, where a political dynasty was defeated in elections by Aquino’s Liberal Party (LP) and its coalition party, Akbayan.⁴⁾

4) The Liberal Party is the second oldest extant political party in the Philippines. Founded in 1946, it made up one side of the two-party regime together with the Nacionalista Party after independence and has produced many presidents, such as Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, and Diosdado Macapagal. While it has been led by wealthy elites, not a few members of the party are liberal and pro-development. Akbayan (Akbayan Citizens Action Party) is a social democratic party founded in 1998. Unlike the Communist Party of the Philippines, Akbayan has held an unfavorable opinion on armed struggle and focused on activities within formal democracy that revived after the EDSA Revolution. The party has had a few congressmen in each national assembly, mainly through party-list elections. Its main agenda is the pursuit of participatory democracy and participatory socialism.

Akbayan was a primary working force in Aquino's election campaign and sought progressive reforms within the formal democracy. In its General Program of Action, the party stated that it would intensify its "engagement in the mainstream political arena and towards continued mainstreaming of Akbayan as an alternative national political party" (Akbayan 2009, 1); by doing so, "Akbayan can gain more influence and have better chances of having its policy proposals implemented on the ground" (Akbayan 2010, 5).

This case study will clarify how the New People Power initiated by this coalition during the Aquino administration worked—with progressive forces confronting political dynasties and the dynamics of Philippine politics. Specifically, three aspects of the local politics of Siquijor will be discussed. First, People Power Volunteers for Reform (PPVR), which was established primarily as a support group for Aquino's presidential election campaign, organized local people for local elections in the province. This contributed to the defeat of the political clan in the 2013 elections and prepared the stage for the effective operation of new policies created by the Aquino administration. Second, the bottom-up budgeting (BUB) project, which was designed to improve transparency of government projects and meet local demands more effectively by promoting local associations to join the decision-making process, consolidated LP-Akbayan's support base and secured their second victory in the 2016 elections. Third, those grassroots efforts became successful with support from the national government through personal ties. Joel Rocamora, the local campaign manager of the LP-Akbayan camp in Siquijor as well as the chief of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, played a crucial role in this.

Political dynasties have been a major topic in the literature on Philippine politics. Alfred McCoy's *An Anarchy of Families* (1994), a prominent and classic work in this field based on intensive historical research, clarifies how political clans emerge, succeed, and entrench themselves. While arguing how clans mobilize various means such as guns, goons, and gold—the so-called 3Gs—in order to maintain their power, the book focuses on the key role of family and kinship in organizing political forces in this country. It made a significant contribution to revealing the central characteristics of Philippine politics, which compose a framework of the elite democracy discourse. However, it hardly mentions the cases where political families lost their power. When it refers to those cases, the loss of power is always attributed to inter- or intra-family conflicts. During the era the book discusses, reformist forces that challenged political dynasties were still underdeveloped.

While McCoy describes political dynasties mainly as social forces, Sheila Coronel and her co-authors in *The Rulemakers* (2004), edited by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, treat them more as legislators. As is well known, both houses and local governments in the Philippines have been dominated by a wealthy few since

colonial times. Holding seats in Congress from generation to generation, political families have made full use of their legislative power to sustain their dominant positions. By examining the many roles legislators play, such as making laws, vetting presidential appointments, examining the budget, and spending pork barrel funds, the authors of this book give us a comprehensive picture of how Philippine politics works between politicians and their constituency. Moreover, they pay attention to the emergence of progressive forces through party-list elections. In spite of its institutional limitations, they conclude that the party-list system paved the way to change a political landscape dominated by a few elites.⁵⁾ However, they were not able to find clear changes or outcomes as of 2004. Therefore, they rather emphasize the reality that reform-minded legislators elected from party lists are absorbed into traditional politics.

More recently, Raymund Rosuelo (2017) argues how long-standing political dynasties can erode, using the case of the municipality of Cainta in Rizal Province. I agree with his following observation:

While there have been a large number of scholarly contributions to the study of political families in the Philippines, a vast majority of past and recent scholarship has tended to focus on the dynamics that lead to the perpetuation of political families in power. Academic discussions have tended to privilege the durability aspect of entrenched political clans. (Rosuelo 2017, 192)

Emphasizing the impact of socioeconomic changes such as urban migration, he points out that the influx of new settlers into middle-class communities made room for new political actors to challenge dominant clans. This social factor is undoubtedly important to explain recent changes in the political geography of the country. However, in Rosuelo's study the actor that defeats the entrenched clan is another political clan. The erosion of a political dynasty is attributed only to inter-clan competition, like McCoy's argument. Although Rosuelo is well aware of social factors that displace old rulers, he dismisses new political factors such as the emergence of progressive forces.

Despite the aforementioned dominant tendency in Philippine political studies, there have been some studies on progressive change in local politics. Focusing on changes in socioeconomic situations such as urbanization, Kawanaka Takeshi (1998) takes the case of Naga City and elaborates Mayor Jesse Robredo's progressive style of organizing constituents. This is a pioneer work in this field. However, although Kawanaka discusses the progressive characteristics of Robredo's governance, he makes the assumption that

5) Party-list election is a system that aims to ensure that marginalized sectors are represented in Congress. Twenty percent of seats in the House of Representatives are allotted to candidates from registered parties organized by various social groups such as indigenous people, urban poor, and peasants. Each party can get a maximum of three seats based on the rate of votes obtained.

political power is monopolized by elites. In this sense, his argument is a sophisticated version of the political machine discourse, which is still within the elite democracy discourse. Contrary to that, this paper will focus on the dimension where the monopoly of political resources is dismantled by democratization from the bottom up.

Quimpo (2008) also provides rich case studies on progressive practices in local politics. In a broad context, this paper might just add a new case to his argument. Yet there has been an important change in the institution of local politics after Quimpo conducted his research: BUB.⁶⁾ While he mentions several local institutions by which Akbayan organized people, those institutions were still insufficient to confront oligarchy at that time. As discussed below, after the Aquino administration began, Akbayan gained a strong institutional weapon that could be made use of for its local practices. This paper will treat the new stage of local politics after Quimpo's study and clarify the evolution of the institutionalization of New People Power.

In a broader context, this study will shed light on a new dimension of Southeast Asian politics. In considering political contestation in the region, two common factors have been recognized. First, historical legacy—defined mainly by the Cold War—has hindered the development of large-scale, independent civil society organizations linked to political parties. Second, powerful elites have tried to block political opposition by various methods (Rodan 2015, 117). Relatedly, many political scientists studying Southeast Asia have emphasized the persistence of clientelism despite the progress of modernization (Tomsa and Ufen 2013). However, recently each country in the region seems to be transforming its traditional political structures on various levels and in various directions. This paper makes a remarkable case for how a political force can break those shackles. It will help to understand the reform emerging in Southeast Asia.

The first section gives an overview of Siquijor Province and the Fua clan, a political dynasty in the province. The second section focuses on the activities of PPVR and examines why the Fua clan lost in the 2013 elections. The third section discusses how BUB projects were conducted on the island and how they contributed to the Fua family's second defeat in the 2016 elections. The fourth section looks at Rocamora's role in

6) Making the budgeting process transparent and participatory was a very important and long-awaited reform. However:

Despite the Local Government Code passed in 1991, experience has shown that engaging civil society in the budgetary process has yet been fully operationalized. Unlike civil society participation in subnational planning, civil society participation in subnational budgeting is still lagging behind. The Institute for Popular Democracy points out that "the budget process in many local governments across the Philippines remains prone to patronage, corruption and abuse of power, being highly dependent on informal processes and power relations within and outside the municipal building halls." (Brillantes 2007, 56)

mobilizing the power of the national government. In conclusion, I argue some implications of the case of Siquijor and the emerging dynamics of Philippine politics.

Overview of Siquijor Province and the Fua Clan

Siquijor is a small island in Central Visayas, south of Cebu Island. It is ranked 79th of 81 provinces in terms of population and land area. It had 95,984 residents and 68,988 registered voters in the 2016 elections (Commission on Elections 2016). Agriculture is the biggest source of employment on the island, which produces coconuts, corn, root crops, bananas, and mangoes. Though small in scale, fishery is also an important source of income, with Siquijor having around 6,000 fishermen. There used to be some mining sites in Lazi and Maria, but all operations have been closed down because of poor reserves. Siquijor has only some small-scale enterprises engaged in trading, metalworking, food processing, etc. (National Economic and Development Authority 2008, 29–30). Although the island is becoming a major tourist spot, it still receives far fewer tourists than neighboring islands such as Cebu and Negros. Currently, Siquijor is classified as the fifth income class, which means that it is an economically small-scale province along with many other provinces.⁷⁾ In the early 1990s Rocamora, a political scientist born in Siquijor, described its social class composition:

Siquijor has a small “upper class” of politicians, senior bureaucrats, a few professionals and Chinese traders who would be “middle class” in the larger islands. The majority of the people barely survives on rocky, hilly land and depleted fishing grounds. In between are government clerks and teachers and petty traders moldering in frustration and boredom. It would be difficult to organize class struggle on the island because income differences are not large. But there is a large pool of educated young people waiting to be tapped for socio-economic projects. (Rocamora 1992, 10)

These characteristics were fairly consistent until recently. The province’s economy remained underdeveloped over the decades, and people suffered from poverty and a lack of economic opportunities.

The clan that governed this stagnating island for 27 years until 2013 was the Fua family. The Fua clan started to gain dominant political power in the province immediately after the People Power Revolution. Orlando Boncawel Fua Sr. was appointed as the officer-in-charge governor of Siquijor in 1986 by the Corazon Aquino administration

7) A fifth income class (out of six) is a province whose average annual income ranges from 90 million to 180 million pesos. The number of members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (municipal council) is determined by this classification.

because he had belonged to the anti-Marcos camp until Marcos was ousted.⁸⁾ He ran for the 1987 congressional elections, defeated his rivals with an overwhelming majority, and was reelected in 1992 and 1995. His background was not that of a traditional landed elite but that of an emerging professional and businessperson. He first became a lawyer and later began to manage a transport company in the province.⁹⁾ Because means of transportation between Siquijor and the other islands were limited, shipping services were very profitable during that time (Teehankee 2001, 61).

Fua Sr.'s son, Orlando "Shane" Anoos Fua Jr., also started his career as a lawyer and then held a post in local office in 1995. Because his father finished three consecutive terms in 1998, he ran for congressman and won. In the typical way that political dynasties reproduce themselves, the Fua family continued to take the congressional seat over generations. In addition, Fua Sr.'s siblings and relatives consistently occupied important local posts in the province until 2013.

Although the clan had been in power for 27 years, and even though its members had a background in business, they did not succeed in establishing a strong economic base on the island. This can be symbolically understood by the fact that the municipality of Lazi, where the Fua clan is based, has been the poorest area among the municipalities in the province (Table 2). In addition, Lazi has the lowest number of households with electricity (Table 3). Rocamora points out the following:

The Clan mainly engaged in petty corruption focused on "SOP" [standard operating procedure] from public works, and illegal economic activity, gambling, drugs and smuggling. Its attempts to develop businesses, shipping and gasoline and diesel distribution, have failed. Because the Clan blocked investments that it could not make money from, the Siquijor economy has stagnated for most of the last two decades. . . . As a result there is a palpable sense of frustration and a hunger for change among the people, especially the middle class. (Rocamora 2013, 1)

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- 8) "Officer-in-charge" refers to a temporary post in local government appointed by President Corazon Aquino to replace Marcos loyalists. This practice continued from the ouster of Marcos until the local elections in January 1988.
- 9) Julio Teehankee categorized political clans into three groups: traditional, new, and emerging. He placed the Fua family as an emerging political clan. He defined the categories as follows:

Traditional political clans are those who have had more than two generations that served in the legislature; and/or have been politically active since the American colonial, Commonwealth, and Post-War Republic periods (1907–1972); and mostly belong to the rural elite whose principal sources of wealth have been land ownership and export plantation agriculture. New political clans have had at least two generations serving in the legislature; and/or they rose to prominence during the period of Marcos' constitutional authoritarianism (1972–1986). Most of them benefited economically from their close ties with the dictatorship. Emerging political clans also have had two generations in the legislature; and/or they emerged in the political arena during the post-EDSA period (1986–present). Most of them are middle-class professionals and entrepreneurs who entered politics during the Aquino and Ramos administrations. (Teehankee 1999, 17)

Table 2 Annual Income by Municipality (December 2013–January 2014)

| Municipality | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------------|---|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Enrique Villanueva | No reply or zero income | 139 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 12.3 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 121 | 10.7 | 10.7 | 23.1 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 175 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 38.6 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 691 | 61.4 | 61.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1,126 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| Larena | No reply or zero income | 242 | 9.2 | 9.2 | 9.2 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 207 | 7.9 | 7.9 | 17.1 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 339 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 30.0 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 1,843 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 2,631 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| Lazi | No reply or zero income | 1,100 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 898 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 54.5 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 620 | 16.9 | 16.9 | 71.4 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 1,048 | 28.6 | 28.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 3,666 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| Maria | No reply or zero income | 783 | 33.0 | 33.0 | 33.0 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 407 | 17.1 | 17.1 | 50.1 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 418 | 17.6 | 17.6 | 67.7 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 767 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 2,375 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| San Juan | No reply or zero income | 566 | 19.2 | 19.2 | 19.2 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 437 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 34.1 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 415 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 48.2 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 1,525 | 51.8 | 51.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 2,943 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |
| Siquijor (capital) | No reply or zero income | 547 | 10.7 | 10.7 | 10.7 |
| | Greater than 0 and ≤ P8,928 (P2012 poverty threshold) | 578 | 11.3 | 11.3 | 22.0 |
| | Greater than P8,928 and ≤ P21,675 (P2015 poverty threshold) | 690 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 35.4 |
| | Above 2015 poverty threshold of P21,675 | 3,309 | 64.6 | 64.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 5,124 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: The Philippines, Department of the Interior and Local Government (2014).

Table 3 Households with and without Electricity (December 2013–January 2014)

| Municipality | Without Electricity | With Electricity | Ratio of without to with Electricity |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Enrique Villanueva | 171 | 950 | <i>0.18</i> |
| Larena | 308 | 2,318 | <i>0.13</i> |
| Lazi | 1,622 | 1,971 | <i>0.82</i> |
| Maria | 741 | 1,592 | <i>0.47</i> |
| San Juan | 879 | 2,061 | <i>0.43</i> |
| Siquijor (capital) | 947 | 4,129 | <i>0.23</i> |

Source: The Philippines, Department of the Interior and Local Government (2014).

Table 4 Election Results in 2010
Congressman (Lone District)

| Candidate | Party | Votes |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Orlando Fua Sr. | Lakas-Kampi | 33,509 (66.52%) |
| Fernando Avanzado | PDSP | 10,094 (20.04%) |
| Grace Sumalpong | LP | 6,565 (13.03%) |
| Jesus Flor | Independent | 206 (0.41%) |
| Governor | | |
| Candidate | Party | Votes |
| Orlando Fua Jr. | Lakas-Kampi | 40,491 (83.34%) |
| Ben Aquino | LP | 8,092 (16.66%) |

Source: COMELEC (2010).

During my interviews, a man who was a captain of a barangay (the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines) in Larena told me, “The 2010 elections were really quiet. There was no actual opposition, no choice. Everybody knew who would win.” As Table 4 shows, the Fua family obtained an overwhelming number of votes in 2010.¹⁰ Fua Sr. and Fua Jr. gained 67 percent and 83 percent of the votes, respectively. However, there was a drastic change in the next elections, in 2013. The Fua family lost most of the important local posts as well as the congressional post, and LP candidates replaced all of them. What led to this? The next section will examine the question by focusing on an emerging grassroots movement, People Power Volunteers for Reform.

Penetration of PPVR and LP Machinery

When Noytoy Aquino was elected as the president by a huge margin in 2010, there was a sense of anxiety and suspicion toward the new administration among Marxist forces. Responding to an interview, Frank Pascual, a member of the Laban ng Masa (struggle of the masses) party list, pointed out:

For the ruling class, Noytoy is the best choice, especially after GMA (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the former president). Reducing corruption can be good for big business, but whether it translates into benefits for the people is another matter. . . . The Cory Aquino presidency was installed by a different phenomenon, a mass upsurge against the dictatorship. Noytoy does not have that kind of flexibility to pursue the people’s agenda. (Mohideen 2011, 71)

10) The Fua family had close ties with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in the 2010 elections. They ran under Lakas Kampi CMD, which is the party Arroyo belonged to.

On the other hand, his victory was substantially sustained by people's high aspiration for a clean and reliable government. A member of the Partido Lakas ng Masa (power of the masses), Sonny Melencio, said:

Noynoy's victory is a confirmation that the main issue in the election was the high-handed corruption of the Arroyo regime. People voted for Noynoy because they were sick and tired of the never-ending cases of graft and corruption involving the Arroyo family and their sycophants. Noynoy's campaign slogan "*Kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap*" (If no one is corrupt, no one will be poor) may not be true, as poverty emanates not mainly from corruption but from class exploitation and class rule—but it rings a bell and has attracted a broad number of people to support Noynoy in the election. (Mohideen 2011, 69)

From the beginning, the Aquino administration was ambivalent. Even when Aquino stepped down from the presidency, while he was severely criticized for his ineffectiveness in alleviating poverty and his incomplete fight against corruption, he maintained relatively high approval ratings until the end of his term—this was an unprecedented phenomenon in the post-EDSA period.¹¹⁾ Whichever aspect is emphasized, these national-scale discussions overlook a remarkable reality the Aquino administration created, which is that there emerged many people who sensitively responded to people's voice calling for change and spontaneously worked to actualize Aquino's agenda at the local level. They were organized as People Power Volunteers for Reform (PPVR). When assessing the Aquino administration, PPVR's local achievements should be taken into account.

PPVR was originally organized in order to support Aquino's presidential election campaign in 2010. It established chapters all around the country and worked as machinery for the candidates of LP and its allies. PPVR's activities, however, continued even after the election. One of the origins of PPVR's ideas can be found in a suggestion for the Aquino administration proposed by Karina Constantino-David, who had been exercising leadership in organizing a network of development NGOs in the fields of urban poor, women, childcare, housing, and so on since the late 1980s. Because of her rich experience working in civil society, she was appointed as the chairperson of the Civil Service Commission during the Arroyo period. But Constantino-David took a critical stance against Arroyo toward the end and later became a national convener of PPVR. Constantino-David claimed that while Philippine civil society was characterized by

11) In spite of this, it should be noted that Rodrigo Duterte won the 2016 presidential elections by negating Aquino's appeal of a "straight path," and Mar Roxas, who was endorsed by Aquino as his successor, was no match for Duterte. This indicates that Aquino's legacy is not necessarily positive for many Filipinos.

“poverty and disparities in wealth, power and opportunity” and “cynicism and suspicion formed due to years of failed expectations,” there was a “proven capacity of volunteerism” and “the need to convert the volunteers mobilized for electoral victory into a force that can be a partner for sustained reform.”¹²⁾ Adopting this idea, PPVR officially set out its charter after Aquino’s victory. The preamble of the charter declares:

While we have an interest in how these critical institutional and political developments unfold in relation to moving forward with the “*walang corrupt, walang mahirap*” reform agenda, we must also recognize that we—the groups mobilized by the issues and inspiration of the Noy-Mar campaign—are also interested in building what we now assert as “the people power component of P-Noy’s governance.” We are interested in how the people power movement of which we are a part can become an organized and active partner of P-Noy’s governance in realizing the “*walang corrupt, walang mahirap*” promise. While we are obviously interested in how well our government agencies function and how well our elected political leaders perform in realizing reforms, we are also interested in how we ourselves can become part of the realization of these reforms. We do not have to be appointed or elected to positions in government in order to help realize the promise of change; we can help in our groups and networks that got Noynoy elected president.¹³⁾

For PPVR members, “*walang corrupt, walang mahirap*” was not political rhetoric but a practical purpose to pursue in their actual lives. They seriously made up their minds to realize it as foot soldiers. PPVR started to reach out to various groups such as women’s organizations and fisherfolks associations as well as individuals at the local level. They encouraged local people to organize themselves as an association and tried to pave the way so that anti-corruption and anti-poverty policies rightly benefited the people. In other words, PPVR empowered people and built mass bases to make Aquino’s reforms work effectively from the bottom up.¹⁴⁾

In Siquijor, PPVR started to operate in 2011 with around 30 leading members. Most of them were not from LP but from Akbayan. They set up chapters in all six municipalities with a variety of positions. For example, in the San Juan municipal chapter, the municipal leaders council consisted of positions such as lead convener, co-convener, secretary, treasurer, auditor, public information officer, youth sector representative,

12) Quoted from Karina Constantino-David’s for-internal-use presentation material “Opportunities and Constraints for Reform under the Aquino Administration.” While Constantino-David had an influence on the formation of PPVR, she established and managed independent civil society organizations during the Aquino administration. Therefore, she had no direct relation to politics in Siquijor.

13) Quoted from “Charter of People Power Volunteers for Reform,” an internal document of the organization.

14) Although there are only a few provinces where PPVR played a critical role in building effective electoral bases, it was more active in Negros Oriental than in Siquijor. With the LP camp splitting in the province, PPVR worked as an active organizer of election campaigns.

project development and livelihood committee, senior citizens representative, women's representative, and fisherfolks representative.¹⁵⁾ In terms of activities, the chapter facilitated, for example, the San Juan Fisherfolks Forum with Senator T.J. Guingona of the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee and also helped form the San Juan Fisherfolks Alliance. For the women, the chapter provided technical assistance through the formation of the San Juan Pantawid (Bridging) Leaders and Kapamilya (Family) Alliance and organized them to participate in a motorcade and rally to mark the International Women's Day celebration held at the San Juan Social Center. The chapter also supported out-of-school youths and encouraged them to get organized to engage in government projects.¹⁶⁾ PPVR also sought to work at the municipality level. For instance, Maria had suffered from a poor water supply system for a long time. In 2016 the Maria municipal chapter helped to get funds from Kalahi-CIDSS to build tanks, wells, and water pipes.¹⁷⁾

In general, what PPVR did at the field level was listen to people's needs and empower people to organize associations so they could collectively improve their lives. In the beginning it was not easy to contact people. In a private conversation, a PPVR member recalled:

At first, people avoided talking with us because of fear of political harassment from the Fua clan. But as a result of our patient efforts, they gradually started to listen to us covertly. Usually one PPVR member had a conversation with two or three people under a mango tree on the outskirts of a barangay.

It took PPVR a long time to awaken people's initiative. However, because the Fua clan had done almost nothing for the development of the province and because the people had given up hope for a better life, once change happened, it immediately bore fruit. Many associations sprouted like mushrooms after a rain. PPVR tried to turn these associations into support bases for the coming elections. PPVR members began to tell people that they could make an alternative choice in the next elections to end corruption and authoritarian rule by the clan and gain access to more economic opportunities. PPVR continued its efforts for two years before the 2013 elections.

During the election campaign of 2013, the sectoral groups worked effectively. A women's association gathered some 2,500 women for the International Women's Day

15) These are based on PPVR's internal document "Officers Directory and Municipal Leaders Council (San Juan Municipal Chapter)."

16) These are based on PPVR's internal document "Project Track Record and Activities (San Juan Municipal Chapter)."

17) Kalahi-CIDSS (Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services) is one of the poverty reduction programs led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. It started in 2003 and was expanded under the Aquino administration.

Table 5 Election Results in 2013
Congressman (Lone District)

| Candidate | Party | Votes |
|----------------------|-------|----------------|
| Jay Pernes | LP | 28,395 (54.5%) |
| Orlando Fua Jr. | Lakas | 23,671 (45.4%) |
| Governor | | |
| Candidate | Party | Votes |
| Zaldy Villa | LP | 29,023 (56.1%) |
| Orville Fua | Lakas | 22,721 (43.9%) |
| Vice-Governor | | |
| Candidate | Party | Votes |
| Fernando Avanzado | LP | 26,814 (55.8%) |
| Art Pacatang | Lakas | 21,239 (44.2%) |

Source: Rappler (2013).

activity in March 2013, just two months before the elections. Due to anger over illegal fishing financed by the clan, fisherfolks associations were active in the campaign against the clan. Youth organizations were set up in all six municipalities, based on the P-Noy scholarship program. The LP Angels, composed of female college students, accompanied candidates and gave dance performances in rallies. A young boys team, the LP Devils, worked as stagehands during the campaign. They produced homemade propaganda materials such as banners made out of sacks with various slogans calling for support for LP. They put those banners and posters on walls and poles all around the island at midnight. Some members of the LP Devils were recruited from a boxing club in case of an attack from the clan's goons. In addition to these practices, PPVR and the LP machinery succeeded in penetrating the barangay level and employed unique propaganda campaigns.¹⁸⁾ All of these efforts encouraged people to make an alternative choice in the elections.

PPVR dismantled the Fua clan's domination slowly and broadly from the bottom up over two years. The outcome manifested in the election results. As Table 5 shows, the Fua clan's candidates for important posts were resoundingly defeated by LP candidates. In each race, the margins were approximately 5,000 votes. This number shows the

18) Akbayan and PPVR did not establish any organizations formally affiliated with Akbayan from 2010 to 2016. All organizations that worked as the LP machinery were nonpartisan or explicitly showed the name of the LP. However, Akbayan members mainly ran those organizations. In this sense, the boundary between the LP and Akbayan was ambiguous. This seems to have been because Akbayan's activists tried to make full use of the potential of their coalition partner as a pragmatic strategy.

substantial influence that PPVR established from 2011. It is apparent that PPVR's penetration played a crucial role in the election results.

Implementation of BUB Projects

LP's electoral victory in 2013 was impressive. However, constituents' support for LP-Akbayan was still not solid enough. PPVR members felt that the triumph might have been only a temporary expression of dissatisfaction and that the Fua clan would try to recover power in the next elections. To prevent the Fua family from reviving and to ensure LP-Akbayan's reelection, they needed to consolidate local organizations and show people more specific reliability. Backed by the national government, they received a timely and useful weapon: the BUB program. They started a new challenge to meet the aforementioned goals by making full use of this program. In this section, we will explore how the BUB program contributed to strengthening the mass base that PPVR had established in Siquijor.

BUB was set up in 2012 with the preparation of the 2013 National Expenditure Program and started to operate in 2013. Its basic framework is that the national government provides funds for local development projects planned through participatory processes at the local level. It was originally proposed and driven by Robredo, who implemented governance reforms as Naga City mayor and then worked as the secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government under Aquino from 2010 to 2012. After his death in an airplane accident, his ideas were carried forward by Rocamora, who was appointed as the chief of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) by Aquino. The general features of BUB are as follows:

First, it is seen as a component of its budget reform thrusts that are aimed at making the national government budgeting process more responsive to local needs. Prior to the introduction of the BUB, the national government budgeting process was primarily driven by the national government agencies that implement the budget although the Regional Development Councils provide LGUs a limited venue to input into the process. Second, the BUB is also viewed as part of the democracy/empowerment reform as it opens another avenue for people's participation in local planning and budgeting and for generating demand for good governance at the local level. Third, it is also perceived as part of local governance reform in the sense that it provides incentives for good local governance. (Manasan 2015, 2)

Because corruption and poverty were the key issues that the Aquino administration promised to tackle, they had to take concrete action to promote reforms. Aquino was also seeking to change the budgeting system for local development projects because

budget allocation systems such as the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) had been thought of as a hotbed of corruption for a long time.¹⁹⁾ Through encouraging people's participation and making the budgeting system more sensitive to people's needs, it was expected that BUB could prevent corruption and alleviate poverty. Hence, it can be seen as one of the central policies to realize President Aquino's slogan "*walang corrupt, walang mahirap*."

There are several steps that need to be taken before implementing BUB projects. The first is social preparation: "Capacity building activities" need to be organized by civil society organizations (CSOs) and the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster.²⁰⁾ Through these activities, facilitators ensure that people can understand what BUB is, how it can contribute to their lives, and how they can participate in the process. The second step is collection of relevant economic and social data: local government unit (LGU) staff collect relevant information to ensure that projects work effectively. Third, a Local Poverty Reduction Action Plan (LPRAP) workshop needs to be conducted: LGUs organize workshops to put the LPRAP into concrete shape based on the collected data, with active participation from CSOs (Fig. 1).²¹⁾ The fourth step is identification of priority poverty reduction projects: The expanded LPRAP identifies priority projects to be funded by LGUs based on the discussions in the workshops. Fifth is the endorsement of CSOs: the list of priority projects must be attached with an endorsement of CSOs from the community to prove their participation in the process. Sixth is approval by the

19) While Aquino made an effort to reform the PDAF system, ironically, the biggest scandal that he faced during his term was a PDAF-related one. Aquino's approval ratings began to decline after the misappropriation of huge amounts of PDAF money through fake NGOs was revealed in 2013. Although Aquino himself was not directly responsible for it, some Filipinos regarded him as incompetent in dealing with PDAF matters.

20) In the BUB process, civil society organizations are defined as including

non-government organizations (NGOs), People's Organizations (POs), cooperatives, trade unions, professional associations, faith-based organizations, media groups, indigenous people's movements, foundations, and other citizens groups formed primarily for social and economic development to plan and monitor government programs and projects, engage in policy discussions, and actively participate in collaborative activities with the government. (DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 2012, 4)

The Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster is an agency of the national government charged with implementing BUB together with the Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Cluster.

21) The LPRAP is

the LGU plan which contains programs and projects collectively drawn through a participatory process by the LGU with CSOs and other stakeholders, and which will directly address the needs of the poor constituencies and the marginalized sectors in the city or municipality. (DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 2012, 4)



Fig. 1 Discussion under Way in a LPRAP Workshop

Sangguniang Panlalawigan (municipal council): the Sangguniang Panlalawigan must approve the list of priority projects. The seventh step is submission of the list of local priority poverty reduction projects: the endorsed list must be submitted to relevant institutions such as the National Anti-Poverty Commission and scrutinized (DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 2012, 4–7).

It is evident that the BUB process sufficiently ensures CSOs' participation in various stages. This plays an important role in inspiring people to participate. In Siquijor, many CSOs have been newly organized since 2013 and are actively engaged in the BUB process. Based on my research, as of May 2016 there were 215 organizations in the province. Although not all organizations were formed for BUB, it is clear that BUB encouraged more and more people to establish new ones. Some of the CSOs are the Siquijor Coconut Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Goat Raiser Association, Barangay Olave Neighborhood Electric Association, Handicapable Association of Maria, Lazi Habal-habal (motorcycle taxi) Drivers Association, and San Juan Souvenir Item Makers Association.

Some assessment reports on BUB say that the process does not work well in certain areas because of inactive CSOs and incompetent facilitators. In my interview with a facilitator who worked around Visayas, he said, "If governors or mayors are not cooperative with BUB, it's very difficult to make it work. Especially in cases where they are [in] opposition to LP, projects are sometimes disturbed by political reasons." Contrary to such cases, the BUB process in Siquijor has been relatively smooth and well organized. One reason seems to be that the governor and several municipal mayors have been members of LP since 2013. Another reason might be PPVR's active facilitation of people's participation. They kept propagating the utility value of BUB and urged people

to propose projects. A member of PPVR said, “PPVR itself is not important. We are trying to become middlemen or mediators for people. Our mission is just making roads so that government projects can benefit people.”

As a result of this sort of effort, unique ideas were sometimes raised in LPRAP workshops. For instance, there was a project proposal for building a “People’s Center.” The rationale was written as follows:

As observed in the result of the NAPC BUB Workshop in the town of Siquijor, different sector representatives proposed programs that will solve identified issues. As such, there is a common necessity to have facilities to conduct these programs. However, it will not be that effective if these facilities are geographically dispersed. Therefore, we propose the *People’s Center*—a centralized facility that promotes coordination to the Youth, Women, Senior Citizen, PWD, Informal Sector, Fishermen/Farmer and CSO/Cooperative while at the same time, providing them spaces for their own programs and services. (Document obtained from a PPVR member)

The proposal included a handmade design (Fig. 2). This indicated that people were aggressively trying to utilize BUB projects for their community.

Siquijor Province had 35 approved projects in 2013, 141 in 2014, 99 in 2015, and 58 in 2016. The projects were aimed at, for example, alternative livelihood high-value crop production, livestock and poultry production enhancement, organic fertilizer production, infrastructure support to agriculture and fishery production, computer literacy program for out of school youth, improvement of existing barangay health stations, and so on. Funds for the projects varied—from less than 20,000 pesos for small projects to one million to more than four million pesos for big ones. Because poverty reduction is a key purpose of BUB and many projects were livelihood related, the projects largely succeeded in diversifying sources of income and contributed to increasing income levels of the people.²²⁾

This tangible change seems to have increasingly strengthened support for anti-dynasty forces. While BUB is a nonpartisan policy and has benefited pro-Fua residents as well, everyone knows that BUB was initiated by the Aquino administration and materialized by pro-LP parties such as PPVR. In this sense, as discussed below, the BUB program was also a new type of patronage. Therefore, it is easy to imagine that BUB consolidated the political base PPVR had established since 2011. The results of the 2016 elections were predictable in this context (Table 6). Although there was a split within LP, all candidates supported by the local anti-dynasty machinery again won the important

22) Responding to my interview, a woman who was a leader of several associations in San Juan said that the daily income of the beneficiaries of BUB projects increased 20 percent on average due to diversified livelihoods.

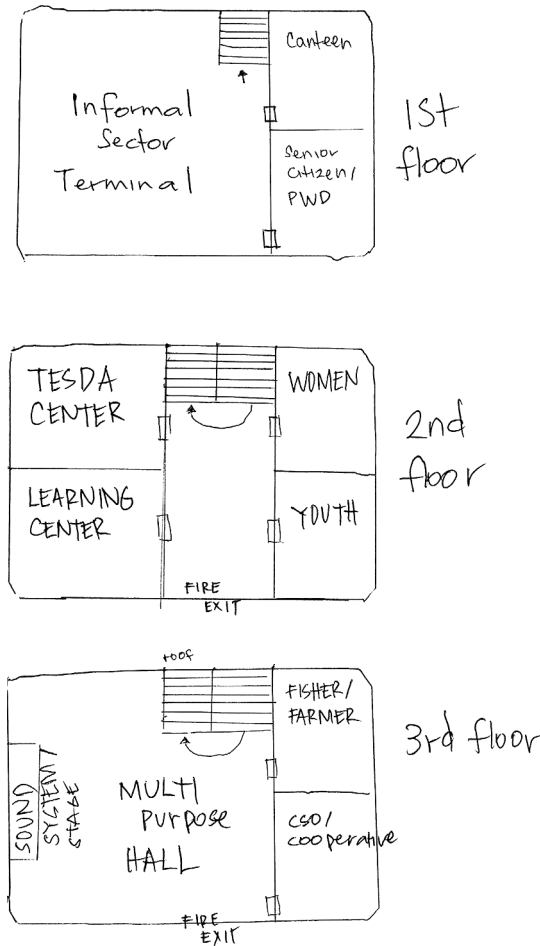


Fig. 2 A Hand-drawn Map of the People's Center

positions.²³⁾ The Fua dynasty was decisively undermined by the accumulation of small efforts to improve people's lives.

23) Jay Pernes was a candidate who ran for congressman from LP in 2013. He was originally a doctor and later turned into a businessman. Because he had been working for a long time outside Siquijor island, he did not have any economic or corrupted bonds with the Fua family. He had a very good personality and strong sympathy with the Aquino administration's anti-corruption, anti-poverty policy. Therefore, he was a promising candidate for the LP camp. However, just one day before the election in May 2013, he died of a heart attack. His wife, Marie Pernes, was hastily made a substitute candidate and won. However, the problem was that she was not as good a candidate as her husband had been. After she became a congresswoman, she and her local supporters became embroiled in an issue involving money. She insisted that the local machinery stole her husband's

Table 6 Election Results in 2016
Congressman (Lone District)

| Candidate | Party | Votes |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Ramon Rocamora | Independent | 22,125 (40.61%) |
| Marie Pernes | LP | 18,216 (33.43%) |
| Orlando Fua Jr. | UNA | 9,695 (17.79%) |
| Governor | | |
| Candidate | Party | Votes |
| Jecoy Villa | LP | 31,708 (60.0%) |
| Orlando Fua Sr. | UNA | 15,481 (29.3%) |
| Clare Lucero | NUP | 3,888 (7.4%) |
| Vice-Governor | | |
| Candidate | Party | Votes |
| Mei Ling Minor-Quezon | LP | 26,135 (51.35%) |
| Bryan Pernes | Independent | 14,809 (29.09%) |
| Arturo Pacatang | Independent | 8,026 (15.76%) |

Source: COMELEC (2016).

Joel Rocamora's Role

So far the discussion has focused on how the LP machinery and BUB projects built their political base from the bottom up to confront the Fua clan. The democratic aspect or the “progressiveness” of the LP-Akbayan camp might have been overemphasized. Many readers may know that any major change in the Philippines’ political landscape could not take place in this way alone. Although participatory democracy operated well in Siquijor, this became possible only because national political power influenced local politics through personal relations. This section clarifies the role Rocamora played in defeating the Fua clan during the Aquino administration.²⁴⁾

Rocamora was born in Siquijor. He worked as a political analyst in several institutions and was one of the founders of Akbayan. He had already begun to organize a small

↘ money during the election campaign. In addition, she did not have any motivation to promote reforms or improve the lives of the people. Consequently, the local LP camp was not able to support her in the next elections. Nevertheless, the national LP headquarters gave her official recognition as a congressional candidate in the 2016 elections, only because she was an incumbent congresswoman. The local LP camp in Siquijor did not obey this and decided to support an independent candidate, Ramon Rocamora. Even though Marie Pernes ran from LP, the local LP machinery supported another candidate. That is why the winner of the congressman position in 2016 was an independent candidate, but the same machinery and the same local movement contributed to his victory.

24) This section is based on an interview of Joel Rocamora by the author.

opposition group against the Fua family on the island before Aquino became president, but this first attempt did not succeed. The situation was changed drastically by Aquino's victory in 2010. Because Rocamora and Akbayan worked hard for Aquino's election campaign and then Akbayan became a coalition partner of the LP, some Akbayan cadres were invited to the cabinet. Risa Hontiveros, who was defeated in the senatorial election of 2010 by a narrow margin, was initially the candidate for secretary of NAPC, but she could not take the office because of the law prohibiting the appointment of a losing candidate to any office in government within one year after the elections in which s/he lost. Thus, instead of her, Rocamora was appointed as secretary of NAPC in September 2010.

According to Garry Rodan, NAPC was

established in 1998 with a legal mandate for selecting official representatives of the fourteen "basic sectors." This gave NAPC representatives and its council official status in negotiating with government agencies and provided a venue for organized encounters between sectors and government. NAPC has remained one of the smallest state agencies, with a limited budget. Its opportunities thus rest principally on its relationship with other actors inside and outside the state. (Rodan 2018, 150)

Making use of this unique position, Rocamora first negotiated with the secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways and asked him to check the flow of money to the Fua clan through public works. Because the Fuas' main source of funds was embezzlement of money for public works, this move made it difficult for the clan to gain funds for the next elections. In addition, one day the secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Governance consulted Rocamora on whether a candidate for the local head of the department in Siquijor was adequate or not. The secretary asked, "Do you know him? Is he OK?"

Rocamora answered, "Yes, I know him. I recommend him to be appointed."

While the man had seemed to be neither pro-Fua nor pro-LP, later he came to know he had been appointed partly thanks to Rocamora. This appointment also helped to block projects benefiting the Fua camp. Furthermore, when Rocamora talked with the regional police director in Siquijor, he said, "The instruction from on high is to help the LP win." Then, during the election campaign, Rocamora told local police and military, "Money of the Fuas will go through this house and that house. So you deploy guards in front of the houses so that they cannot distribute money."

As the secretary of NAPC, Rocamora facilitated several projects in Siquijor to build and vitalize CSOs. For example, he facilitated a project to set up community vegetable gardens. NAPC got mayors to approve a half-hectare for the project, then provided seeds and organic fertilizer, and had professionals teach farmers how to plant vegetables. After the first planting, the seeds went to the farmers. Now they can have vegetable gardens in their backyard. Instead of buying vegetables from Negros or Cebu, people are able to

save money and expand their livelihoods by planting their own vegetables. Six hundred to 700 families were involved in this project. Rocamora said, “If you want to organize people, you have to be able to provide concrete things like fishing nets or vegetable gardens. That was the first time this kind of organizing took place in Siquijor.” Through these projects, NAPC set the stage for PPVR to work. Obviously, this direction was taken over and strengthened by the introduction of BUB.

Regarding Rocamora’s role in Siquijor politics, there are three points to note. First, the connection with the national government was crucial. As many other local clans do, the Fua clan switched its party affiliation to gain support from the national government. In the 2010 elections, the Fua family were in the Arroyo camp. After the Arroyos were defeated in the elections, they lost backing from the national government and the president. This allowed the new ruling parties, LP and Akbayan, to penetrate into the Fua clan’s bailiwick. As the Fua family had probably enjoyed until 2010, at this time LP and Akbayan were able to access material and immaterial resources provided by the national government. This was obvious in the roles played by Rocamora and NAPC in Siquijor. In this sense, John Sidel’s argument of “bossism” is valid here. His contribution to Philippine political studies was to clarify that the strength of local bosses relied on the state apparatus (Sidel 1999). Although the case of Siquijor is not predatory like Sidel’s case studies, it would have been more difficult for LP and Akbayan to win the local elections without an effective connection with the national government.

Second, Rocamora and the LP-Akbayan camp engaged in a kind of patronage politics. As mentioned in the previous section, formally BUB was designed as a nonpartisan policy. However, every voter regarded it as patronage from LP. When briefings on BUB were held in barangays, there were always big banners with pictures of Aquino’s face and his political slogan. Before the elections of 2016, Benjamin Diokno, the secretary of budget and management in the Duterte administration, said, “The Bottom-up Budgeting (BUB) program is being heralded by the Aquino administration as real reform; in reality, it is a tool for political patronage, a way of capturing political support at the grassroots level” (Editorial 2017). As noted in the comment by a BUB facilitator above, non-LP local leaders did not cooperate in materializing BUB projects. This was because they had no reason to assist LP in delivering patronage.²⁵⁾

25) However, a column in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* called it “hypocrisy.” After he was appointed to his position, Diokno himself justified reallocating project funds in favor of allies of President Duterte and financially punishing opponents. Patronage politics persist in every administration. Although it is common to condemn patronage as “dirty politics,” there is no country where patronage does not exist between politicians and their constituency. A more realistic perspective for political studies is not to question whether something is patronage or not but to explore how patronage is used.

Third, personal connections exerted a big influence on the transformation of the political landscape. As mentioned above, LP-Akbayan's local campaign became possible because Rocamora succeeded in dismantling the Fuas' power base by using connections with secretaries of various departments. If he had not been a member of the cabinet and from Siquijor, things would have been very different.

All these aspects were characteristics of traditional Philippine politics. However, Rocamora and Akbayan were deeply aware of that. Responding to my interview, Rocamora said, "If you want reform, you have to operate in the old political terrain. No choice." This pragmatic view was unique to Akbayan's strategy, which was in sharp contrast with other leftist groups such as the Communist Party of the Philippines. Rocamora's role in Siquijor politics was a clear example of this strategy.

However, there was some conflict over this strategy in the party. Although some reforms became possible under the coalition between Akbayan and the Aquino administration, this relationship led to a clash of opinions on how to deal with the administration. Akbayan members such as Ricardo Reyes and Walden Bello claimed that President Aquino was betraying his promise of "good governance" and pursuing neoliberal economic policies that were damaging to the poor. They asked the party to break up with Aquino in order to protect the party's fundamental values and interests. However, the party leadership refused. Finally, Reyes and Bello left Akbayan. From a certain point of view, engaging in a pragmatic strategy means compromising one's own principles. Making a coalition might change into cooptation. In this sense, operating "in the old political terrain" was risky.

Yet Rocamora was well aware of what Akbayan could do with political power. In my interview, he continued, "But once you win, then you can start to make changes." After Akbayan won in the 2013 elections, he tried to transform the decision-making system:

In public works, all over the Philippines with few exceptions, decisions on what projects are funded are made by congressmen and a few government officials. Once we won in 2013, we began participatory broad infrastructure planning. We organized and invited the chamber of commerce, municipal mayors, church people and people from universities to come. And we discussed what projects we would build.

The culture of traditional politics cannot change overnight. Akbayan needed to accept that reality to win the elections. However, Rocamora and local activists in Siquijor believed that if they continued to make efforts to materialize participatory democracy, it would lead to genuine reform in the long term. This was the style of progressive politics in Siquijor that defeated a political dynasty.

Conclusion

After the collapse of the Fua clan's domination, the economic situation in Siquijor changed a lot. Business investments from outside the province started to come to the island. Because investors had been disgusted over the bribes necessary to have their investment approved, the appearance of new local leaders was seen as the beginning of a fair business environment. The first supermarket in the province opened in Larena. While young people used to leave the island to find jobs, they could now work in their home province. Because the scholarship program was expanded under the Aquino administration, the rate of college enrollment on the island also increased. While a carpenter's daily wage used to be 200 pesos, today it is 300 pesos due to the increased demand for labor.

In this paper, focusing on PPVR's activities, utilization of BUB projects, and Rocamora's role in Siquijor Province, I argued how a political dynasty's power base was dismantled. It is now clear that if a political dynasty is not actively engaged in improving the lives of the people in its bailiwick and if it loses support from the national government, it is very vulnerable to a counterforce that tries to organize people with specific economic benefits and has connections with the national government. In a social situation where political and economic power is disproportionally distributed, democracy cannot be ensured by the representative system alone. It is indispensable to foster active CSOs and to encourage people to participate in the decision-making process in order to alleviate the tremendous inequality. In this sense, what the LP-Akbayan camp did in Siquijor can be called progressive.

The decentralization policy by the Local Government Code in 1991 has also been seen as one of the legacies of People Power because it includes the provision that promotes the participation of NGOs and people's organizations in the local development process. From a different point of view, however, decentralization was a measure to win over local elites to the national government during the Cory Aquino administration and to help strengthen their domination in each locality (Abinales 2010, 398–399). Progressive forces were not able to deal with this situation because their vision to change the political structure focused only on the national level (Abinales 2010, 394–395). They did not understand the local dynamics of Philippine politics. However, looking into the case of Siquijor, Akbayan seems to have found a way to work effectively at the local level.

Certainly the structure of elite democracy was not broken up during Aquino's administration. Overall, the administration's anti-poverty and anti-corruption policies had incomplete results. It is well known that LP has many members from political dynasties (in this sense, we cannot regard LP itself as a progressive force). Nevertheless, it is also a fact that progressive forces such as local members of the LP-Akbayan camp in Siquijor

have confronted the authoritarian system at the local level in a pragmatic way. This can be seen as People Power being part of a long democratization process. Philippine politics is not a changeless world. To grasp its dynamics, we need to pay more attention to local practices and the small changes they bring about.

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