

# Community Capacity Building and Local Government Leadership: Describing Transformational Leadership Practices in Naga City, the Philippines

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## Abstract

Naga City, the Philippines, is among the growing number of localities that have demonstrated the dynamism of community capacity building. In particular, the city has been recognized for having effectively implemented their development policies through the use of an inclusive, consultative, empowering and enabling leadership that focused not only on structural improvements but also on people development.

In adopting the case of Naga City, this study puts emphasis on the impact that local political leadership has on community capacity building. In furthering the Transformational and Transactional Leadership Model of Burns (1978), Bass and Avolio (1990), and the Community Capacity Development and Policy Structure Model of Miyoshi and Stenning (2008), this study illustrates how local political leaders influence the dynamics between the various stakeholders in the community and how these interactions, ultimately, affect the municipality's choice in policy structures as well as the overall direction of the city's development.

**Keywords:** community capacity building, leadership, local governance, Mayor Jesse Robredo, Naga City, transformational leadership

## Introduction

In 1999, Naga City was named by *Asia Week Magazine* as one of the Most Improved Cities in Asia and its “unusual brand of governance” was referred to (Espinosa-Robles 1999) as critical to the city’s dramatic turnaround from a third-class city in 1988 into a first-class urban center by 1990. The magazine also named Jesse Manalastas Robredo as “co-engineer of that feat” (Espinosa-Robles 1999) attributing Naga’s transformation to his election as the city’s mayor in 1989.

Like Naga City, there is a growing number of localities whose best practices in local governance highlight the vitality of their political leaders and community

leadership. These leaders have proven that, despite the generally negative perception of politics and political elites, there are those who have fostered conditions under which people could work together, “create new visions, productively deal with underlying issues, generate fresh insights and change cultures” (Dunoon 2002: 3).

This article describes the impact of local government leadership on community capacity building by describing how local political leaders influence (1) the dynamics between the various stakeholders in a community and (2) the policy structures and the overall direction of the community’s development agenda. In particular, the study adopts the case of Naga City, the Philippines, to exemplify the impact of leadership by describing the changes in the city’s governance and government institutions, community decision-making and participation, and economic performance indicators and outputs under the direction of Mayor Jesse Robredo. The study builds on Burns (1978), Bass and Avolio’s (1990) Transactional and Transformational Leadership Approach and, Miyoshi and Stenning’s (2008) Community Capacity Development and Policy Structure Model as it makes use of the relevant concepts from these theoretical frameworks to describe leadership style and to illustrate how leaders serve as catalysts for community development.

This article is divided into five parts. Following this introduction, the next section begins with a discussion of the theoretical models and relevant concepts that were used for the study. The third section provides an introduction to Naga City and Mayor Jesse Robredo. The fourth section highlights the significant points of Robredo’s leadership, enumerating the city’s milestones and challenges and setting it in the context of the transactional/transformational leadership approach. Finally, the fifth part explains how local political leadership impacts on governance and the policy structure through a framework based on the findings of the study.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership and Community Capacity Building**

In recent years, the adoption of *good governance paradigms* to address the issue of poverty reduction (Grindle 2007) has placed a revitalized emphasis on the need for a kind of leadership that could best respond to the “changing expectations of political and community stakeholders” (Mellors 1996 and Barrett 1997 cited in Dunoon, 2002: 3). Leadership’s vital role in community building (Felix 1998) has been recognized through its incorporation in the development strategies of various international aid agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program. For these organizations, the advocacy for leadership development “seeks to strengthen group capacity to stimulate activities and effect influence over leaders at all levels of society” (United Nations Development Program 2006a: 5). It aims to promote participation and

inclusion with the belief that the more active leaders a community has, the richer the body of activities the community would have to support or participate in (Chaskin et al. 2001).

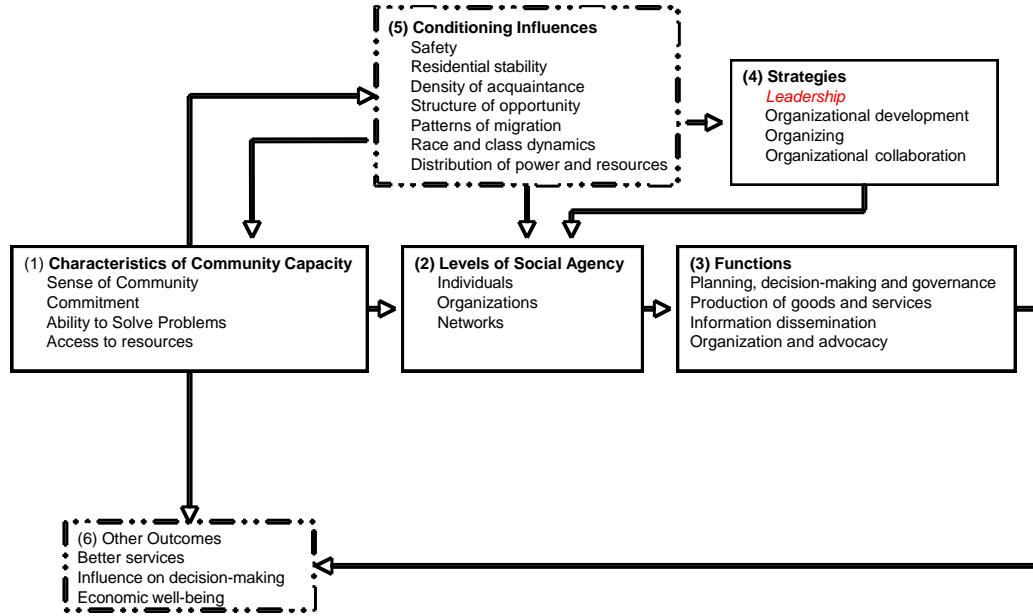
Consequently, community development frameworks have also incorporated leadership as a means by which capacity could be conditioned or built (Chaskin et al. 2001). For instance, the Community Capacity and Capacity Building: A Relational Framework of Chaskin et al. (Figure 1) suggests that leadership may be used as a strategy by which the participation and commitment of current and potential leaders could be engaged. Leadership when used as a *strategic intervention* could help condition the different *contextual influences*, *core characteristics* and levels of *social agencies* that exist within a community. These interactions may then lead to increased community capacity and create other, more tangible, *community outcomes* (Chaskin, et al. 2001). Specifically, when leaders are provided with the opportunity to build skills, access information and resources, expand their knowledge and create new relationships, human capital in the community is thus enhanced and more sources of information and ideas are generated.

Building on Chaskin, et al.'s framework, Miyoshi and Stenning's Community Capacity and Policy Structure Model (Figure 2) illustrates how communities may use their capacity to plan, implement and evaluate community policy structures (2008). Also incorporating concepts from Friedman (1992) and Miyoshi et al. (2003) as well as the research results from the implementation of a series of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) group training programs for rural promotion and development, the framework "emphasizes on the operational aspects of community capacity utilization, provides concrete and practical concepts for the implementation of rural promotion and development and may be used for both community development planning and evaluation" (Miyoshi and Stenning 2008: 42).

### *Defining leadership*

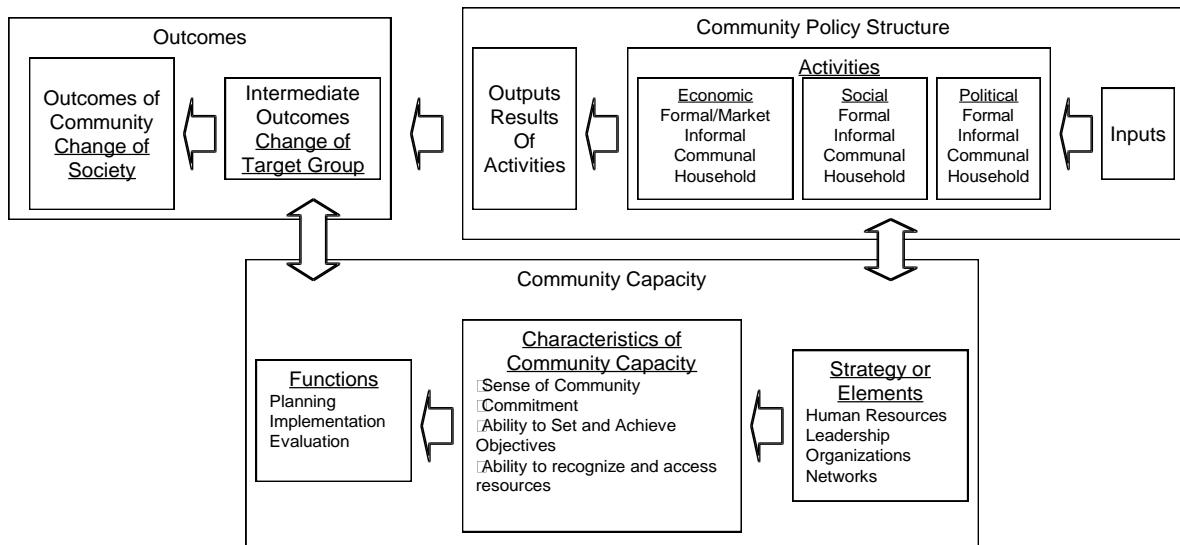
In describing the impact of local political leadership on community development, the Transformational and Transactional Leadership Model of Burns (1978), Bass and Avolio (1990) is of particular interest to the study because it describes how leaders can initiate, develop and carry out significant changes in organizations (Northouse 2001). First introduced by political sociologist James MacGregor Burns in 1978, the concept of transactional and transformational leadership sought to provide a more philosophical way to understand and describe leadership. Influenced by Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Needs, Burns begins by arguing that the extent to which individuals will perform satisfactorily in the workplace is "affected by the extent to which [their] needs are satisfied" (Transformational Leadership n.d). As such, the leader's main purpose is to

**Figure 1: Community Capacity and Capacity Building: A Relational Framework**



Source: Community Capacity and Capacity Building: A Relational Framework, Chaskin et al. (2001).

**Figure 2: Community Capacity Development and Policy Structure Model**



Source: Community Capacity Development and Policy Structure Model by Miyoshi and Stenning (2008: 41).

make people aware of their feelings, to make them feel strongly about their needs and to “meaningfully define their values so that they can be moved to purposeful action” (Burns 1978).

Burns’ framework distinguishes between two types of leadership. Transactional leaders focus on the exchange of *valued things* that takes place between leaders and their followers (Northouse 2001) such as that of the giving of rewards or punishments for performance (Fairholm 2001). On the other hand, transformational leadership focuses on the process by which leaders play a vital role in initiating change amongst their followers (Northouse 2001). Transformational leaders, apart from recognizing the existing need or demand of his/her followers, also look at their potential motives, aim to fulfill their greater needs and stimulate their entire person (Burns 1978). This results in “relationship stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (Burns 1978: 4).

In 1985, Bass enhanced Burns’ definition by describing transformational leadership from the viewpoint of the followers’ needs (Northouse 2001). He adds that transformational leaders inspire their followers to exceed expectations because they are able to (1) increase their level of consciousness about the significance and worth of specified and idealized goals, (2) get them to overpass their own self-interest and (3) move them to focus on higher level needs (Bass 1985).

**Figure 3: Leadership Factors**

Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Laissez-Faire Leadership
<b>Factor 1</b> Idealized influence	<b>Factor 5</b> Contingent Rewards	<b>Factor 7</b> Non-Transactional
<b>Factor 2</b> Inspirational Motivation	<b>Factor 6</b> Management-by-exception	
<b>Factor 3</b> Intellectual Stimulation		
<b>Factor 4</b> Individualized Consideration		

Source: ‘Model of Transformational and Transactional Leadership,’ by Bass 1985, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1993, 1994 as cited in Northouse (2001).

A few years later, Bass collaborated with Avolio and arrived at an elaboration of the concept illustrated through the Model of Transformational and Transactional Leadership. In this approach, transactional and transformational leadership is presented to occur as a single continuum (Northouse 2001) composed of seven factors ranging from proactive, inspiring and idealized at its highest point and reactive, avoidant and *laissez-faire* at the lowest (Avolio 2008). This means that a leader may be able to display

each of the seven behaviors or styles composite of this full range model (Lievens et al. 1997).

Among the seven factors of leadership's full range, four components characterize transformational leadership (Transformational Leadership n.d). These include:

- *Idealized Influence* (also known as charisma) describes leaders who are exemplary role models for their followers. They provide their followers with a vision and a sense of mission. They are deeply respected and people usually place a great deal of trust in them
- *Inspirational Motivation* characterizes leaders who are able to motivate others to commit to the vision of the organization. These leaders communicate their high expectations and often make use of symbols and emotional appeals to encourage their followers to achieve more than they would.
- *Intellectual Stimulation* includes leaders who encourage innovation and creativity amongst the members of his/her group. This type of leadership support followers not only by allowing them to try new approaches in dealing with the issues of the organization but they also promote critical thinking and careful problem solving amongst the members of their organization.
- *Individualized Consideration* represents leaders who provide a supportive climate in the organization by acting as coaches and advisors to their associates. This type of leadership often uses delegation as a means to help others grow in the face of personal challenges.

In the middle of the range, Bass and Avolio (1990) describe transactional leadership to be composite of the following types of behavior (Northouse 2001):

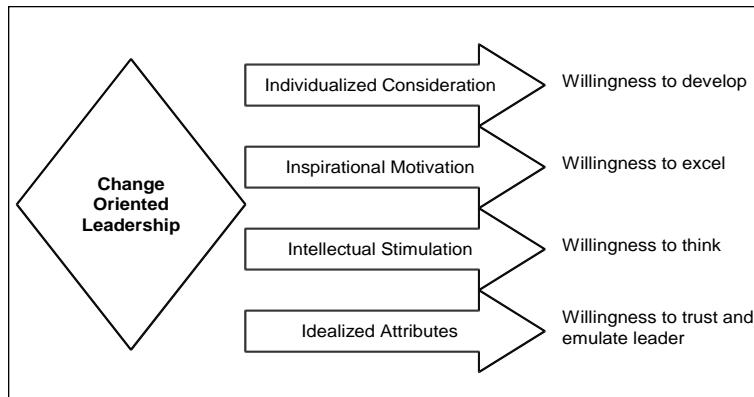
- *Contingent Reward* refers to the exchange process that occurs between leaders and followers. In this style of leadership, the leader tries to obtain an agreement from his/her followers on what needs to be done. In return, followers expect that their efforts will be exchanged for specific rewards.
- *Management-by-Exception* involves corrective criticism, negative feedback and negative reinforcement from the leadership. Management-by-exception can both be active or passive such that leaders can watch his followers closely for mistakes and then take corrective actions or they can only choose to intervene after standards have not been met or problems have arisen.

At the very bottom of the range and believed to be the least effective style is the *Laissez-Faire* or the *Passive-Avoidant leadership*, which represents the absence of leadership. This characterizes leaders who “abdicate their responsibility, delay decisions,

give no feedback and make little effort to help followers satisfy their needs" (Northouse 2001: 141).

Bass and Avolio (1990) also posit that when the factors of transactional leadership are complemented by the application of transformational leadership values, the additive effect is performance beyond expectation. Previous studies of high- and low-level leaders from both private and public settings revealed that individuals who demonstrated transformational leadership were recognized as effective leaders with better work outcomes in contrast to those who demonstrated only transformational leadership (Lowe, Kroek and Sivasubramanian, 1996 cited in Northouse 2001). Subsequent studies by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) revealed what they referred to as a *cascading* or *falling dominoes* effect that transformational leadership has in facilitating followers' growth not only to become better, more productive and successful individuals but also in developing them to become new community/organization leaders (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Follower Reactions to Transformational Behavior**



Source: "Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) as cited in Huse (2003).

### **Naga City, Ang Maogmang Lugar (The Happy Place)**

Naga is a riverine city located in the southernmost tip of the island of Luzon in the Philippines whose name was taken from the long line of *narra* trees that used to fill the area (Naga, n.d.). It stands as one of the oldest cities in the Philippines having been created by a royal decree in the 16th century when the Philippines was still under Spanish Colonial rule (Robredo 2007a).

For hundreds of years following its creation, Naga enjoyed the prestige not only of being the center of trade, education and culture but also the seat of government and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bicol Region (Naga, n.d.). However, the city struggled to maintain its stature following the end of World War II in 1945. Eventually, Naga became

just another typical rural Philippine city—“one of the faceless, ordinary urban centers dotting the country side” (Robredo 2000: 3).

Jesse Manalastas Robredo came back to Naga with a vision of reclaiming the city’s reputation as the premier city of Bicol and establishing its niche as one of the best managed local governments in the country. Armed with the professional experience of working for one of the Philippine’s biggest private corporations, Robredo joined the public service in response to President Corazon Aquino’s call for the *best and the brightest* (Tirol 2000). After working as the Program Director for the Bicol River Basin Development Program, Robredo was convinced by his uncle, who was then governor of the province, to run for the post of Naga City Mayor in 1988. Despite garnering only 24 percent of the people’s votes, Robredo won against the other five more experienced candidates (Isaac and Aceron 2007). He was only twenty-nine years old when he was elected, making him the youngest mayor in the Philippines at that time.

Coming into office, Robredo had to face formidable challenges. First, as a minority mayor, his election into office was met with a lot of skepticism from his constituents who thought that he was too young and inexperienced for the job. In addition, he was thought of as merely the governor’s nephew and therefore just another “dyed-in-the-wool politico” (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 28). Second, Naga’s struggles had taken its toll on its people and its economy. The city had a budget deficit of one million pesos, its local economy was sluggish, there were limited employment opportunities around town, the central business district was congested and disorderly and its urban poor population was rapidly increasing (Robredo 2004a). In addition, the city hall employees were underpaid and their morale was low (Tirol 2000).

Although Robredo admitted that in the beginning he “[did not] really know what politics was all about” (Tirol 2000) he was certain that he wanted his vision of Naga to be realized (Robredo 2000). As such, he needed to (1) secure the confidence in his leadership of the bureaucracy and the constituency, (2) strengthen the capacity of the bureaucracy to deliver the desired outcomes, and (3) mobilize the participation of the constituency.

Soon, Naga City managed to launch itself to international fame. To date, the city’s good governance model, its programs and projects have received more than 150 regional, national and international awards and recognitions that include the 1998 Dubai International Awards for Best Practice, the Global 107 Best Practice from the 2004 Dubai International Awards and the 2006 Special Citation on Local Capacity Innovation from the United Nations Development Program and the Galing Pook Foundation (Naga n.d). Naga’s recognition by *Asiaweek Magazine* as one of the Most Improved cities was a commendation the city because it allowed its citizens to participate in the community’s policy and decision-making (Espinosa-Robles 1999).

But more than the awards and recognitions, Robredo's leadership enabled the people of Naga to "reap the benefits of improved service delivery, a healthy and progressive community and a high degree of civic pride over what [they] have accomplished collectively" (Robredo 2006a: 16). Some examples of the city's more tangible accomplishments include (1) the significant reduction of the incidence of third-degree malnutrition, (2) increased garbage collection efficiency and (3) a 500 percent increase in the city's income generated through an efficient tax collection system. In addition, the local government reports that in 2007 the city stands as the frontrunner in achieving the MDGs in the Bicol Region. Apart from significantly reducing the proportion of families living below the poverty threshold, it has also achieved the targets for reducing the incidence of hunger, access to universal primary education, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and the provision of basic amenities (Table 1) (Naga City Government 2007).

**Table 1: Status of MDG Implementation in Naga City**

MDG INDICATORS	TARGET 2015	NAGA CITY		TARGET 2015	BICOL REGION		TARGET 2015	NATIONAL	
		Actual (Current)	Status		Actual (Current)	Status		Actual (Current)	Status
Poverty Incidence	27.5	18.9	Achieved	27.5	40.5	Off track	19.9	24.7	On track
Hunger Incidence	34.1	5.6	Achieved	34.1	22.6	Achieved	17.2	27.6	Off track
Primary Education Participation	100	100	Achieved	100	85.1	Off track	100	90	Off track
Primary Education Completion	100	66.6	Off track	100	67	Off track	100	62.1	Off track
Under five - mortality	5.79	3.68	Achieved	5.79	6.09	On track	26.7	40	On track
Infant mortality	6.63	8.96	On track	6.63	9.33	On track	19	29	On track
Fully Immunized Children	100	112	Achieved	100	87	Off track	No data		
Maternal mortality	0.31	0	Achieved	0.31	1.16	Off track	0.52	1.72	Off track
Access to safe water	67.52	100	Achieved	67.52	45.2	Off track	86.8	80	On track
Access to sanitary toilets	79.17	100	Achieved	79.17	69.85	On track	79.17	67.85	Off track

Source: Naga City Government, 2007 *State of the City Report*, from Pabico (2007).

### Robredo's Transformational Leadership

Alongside Naga City's Awards, its local chief executive has also been recognized for "giving credence to the promise of democracy by demonstrating that effective city management is compatible with yielding power to the people" (Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, 2000). In his almost two decades of public service, Robredo has received over a dozen awards and recognitions. These include the 1996 Ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World, the 1996 Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines, the 1998 Conrad Adenauer Medal of Excellence, the 1998 Dangal ng Bayan (Honor of

the Country) Award from the Philippine Civil Service Commission and the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service (Naga n.d). However, he maintains that more than himself, the core of Naga's success rests with its people. He attributes the effective formulation and implementation of the local government's policies to the high level of maturity, literacy, religiosity and resilience of the Nagueño (Robredo 2006a). He further describes the constituency of his city as being "critical while civic-minded, open to new ideas and respectful of other people's opinions" (Robredo 2006a: 3).

At the beginning of his political career Robredo was strongly influenced by his professional background. In fact, "[Robredo] was determined to be a mayor who was a manager rather than a politician" (Tirol 2000). Directly challenging the Naguenos to work for Naga's progress with the battlecry "*Kauswagan kan Naga – Kun Bakon Ngonian, Nuarin Pa?*" (Naga's Progress – if not now, when) (Robredo 2000: 7) during the elections, he also directly demanded commitment and efficiency from those working in city hall.

#### *Establishing efficiency*

During his first term as Naga City Mayor, it is noticeable that the provision of rewards seems to be underlying every policy and administrative change that Robredo introduced. Immediately after he assumed office, he called for a meeting with the employees of Naga City Hall to introduce a number of measures that would "build a culture of excellence in the local bureaucracy and to inspire public confidence in [the] administration" (Tirol 2000). Thus, he introduced the practice of corporate and human resource management techniques to Naga's city hall. For instance, he required all city hall employees to take the **aptitude and skills exams** and promised them that they would be rightfully rewarded with salary adjustments and proper career planning (Tirol 2000). Ultimately, the results of the employees exams allowed the government to reorganize city hall by matching the skills of each employee with the right job thereby improving the productivity and efficiency of the employees of city hall.

Similarly, Robredo used the promise of rewards to encourage the private sector to engage in partnerships with local government. Programs such as the **Naga Local Initiatives for Economic Activities and Partnerships (LEAPS)** and the **Public-Private Sector Partnerships** may have helped gather private funds to finance government projects but it also allowed the private sector partners to enjoy the profits from a revitalized business district (UNPAN 2004). In retrospect, Robredo utilized rewards to be able to successfully get people to do what needed to be done. But beyond the basic exchange, Robredo supplemented them by motivating the people to strive for excellence and engage in leadership (Table 2).

**Table 2: Robredo's Leadership: Contingent Reward**

Transactional Factor	Intermediate Outcome
Contingent Reward	Efficiency
<b>Robredo's Leadership</b>	<b>Intermediate Outcome</b>
Employee Merit and Aptitude System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Better compensations package</li><li>▪ Appropriate Job Matching</li></ul>
Naga Local Initiatives for Economic Activities and Partnerships Public Private Sector Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Opportunity and profit generation for private sector partners</li><li>▪ Improved investment climate</li></ul>

Source: Prepared by the author based on the 'Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership' by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author's assessment of Robredo's leadership.

#### *Encouraging to trust and moving to emulate*

When Robredo first came to office, he was viewed with suspicion by most of his constituents. While a lot of people thought that Robredo was too young for the job, even more believed that the only reason that Robredo had won the position was because of the influence of his uncle who happened to be Governor of the province. (Terol 2008). Prilles comments, "One of the things that Robredo stood for was that the government should be trustworthy. You can only show that if your [sic] willing to go against the representation of society...so he used his first term to show the people that he could be trusted" (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). Robredo may be running the city like a corporation but he earned his moral authority by spending enough time just being with the people. NGO leaders Llorin and Raquid-Arroyo share that Robredo's actions made the people feel that he was someone who could seriously address their needs (Tirol 2000).

Based on observation, these expressions of idealized influence dominate Robredo's leadership style (Table 3). As one Naga City Coordinator points out "Robredo's charisma is based on his principles, not on his personal charm" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 40) In fact, Robredo's resounding moral victory came after an incident severed the relationship between him and his mentor/uncle. Within a year after Robredo assumed his mayoralty seat, his uncle asked Robredo to appoint a former classmate as the city's new chief of police (RMAF 2000). However, Robredo refused his uncle's request because the person he was recommending "was perceived to be wishy-washy" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 29) on illegal gambling. Nonetheless, the man was appointed to the post after his uncle lobbied for Malacañang's support. Robredo refused to back down and approached the Archbishop of Nueva Caceres for help (Isaac and Aceron 2007). The archbishop then made a personal appeal to the President of the Philippines to retract the

appointment. Two weeks later, the earlier decision was overturned and the chief of police was unseated (RMAF 2000).

**Table 3: Robredo's Leadership: Idealized Influence**

Transactional Factor	Intermediate Outcome
Idealized Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Willingness to Trust and Emulate</li> </ul>
Robredo's Leadership	Intermediate Outcome
Charisma Based on Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support from constituency (Six-time Gabos, kung Gabos, Uboskung UbosVictory)</li> <li>▪ Moral Authority</li> </ul>
Solitary leader shoveling the muck of the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Robredo as role-model for other leaders and the Nague-os</li> </ul>
Performance and Approachability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sense of community and belongingness</li> <li>▪ Builds confidence of the common folk.</li> </ul>

Source: Prepared by the author based on the ‘Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership’ by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author’s assessment of Robredo’s leadership.

His uncle was indignant. He issued statements disowning Robredo and calling him an ingrate. “It was a very difficult decision,” (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 29) Robredo’s Vice Mayor shares. “But if we would just follow the Governor, what would happen to us? What would happen to our ideals? He would lose the chance to change Naga. He will be nothing” (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 29). During the subsequent elections, his uncle formed an alliance with the party of Robredo’s former opponent. With his aunt running against Robredo for the mayoral position, the 1992 elections turned out to be the “blackest propaganda in the history of Naga” (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 29). In the end, Robredo won the elections. He and his team also won all the posts that they ran for, awarding them their first electoral sweep. Tirol (2000) observes that the rift must have proved that “[Robredo] was his own man and that he meant to stay that way. But the same willfulness boosted his stock among his constituents who realized he really meant business” (RMAF 2000).

Similarly, a 1993 photo taken of Robredo sweeping the streets of Naga City in the aftermath of typhoon Monang served as a motivation for the other leaders and the Nagaeños to *help out* around the city. A newspaper columnist was so moved that he paralleled Robredo’s efforts to the image portraying him as the “solitary figure shoveling the muck of the city” (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 26). Bordado shares:

All the councilors and (the) top official were cleaning the darkest parts of the city. The people loved him because of that ...People had to be ashamed; the

mayor himself was cleaning the streets. So the people also worked. Even during fires, cleaning up of the river, he's always at the forefront. The people can see that (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 26).

Correspondingly, a series of interviews<sup>1</sup> conducted by Kawanaka (1999) reveal that the people's support for Robredo was derived not only from his good performance but also from his approachability. "Armed with his credentials and the results of his hard work, the outcomes of his programs are apparent to the Nagueños including the members of the opposition" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 41). But it was Robredo's approachability that won over the support of his constituents and the respect of those who were critical of him. Kawanaka (1999) explains that in contrast to Robredo the past mayors were not as open to contact. In fact, meeting with Robredo was as easy as stepping into his room and waiting for one's turn. No appointment was necessary. It is through this casual disposition that, Kawanaka (1999) observes, Robredo became indispensable to the community. Raquid-Arroyo adds "Robredo has the ability to make you feel that you are part of a family, and this somehow prevents their supporters from being resentful and discourages them from shifting their political loyalties to someone else" (Isaac and Aceron 2007; 37).

### *Administering City Hall*

In the exercise of Intellectual Stimulation, Robredo required ingenuity and resourcefulness from all city hall employees (Table 4). In addition to the implementation of a merit-based system for hiring and promotion he also encouraged the development of more efficient systems and procedures for project development, project management, project monitoring, procurement, and service delivery in city hall (Tirol 2000). For instance, the **Productivity Improvement Program (PIP)** instituted not only the city's merit and result-oriented assessment system but it also encouraged the government's employees "to come up with viable ideas and suggestions to further improve productivity" (Naga, n.d). As such, the PIP has been called "the mother of all award-winning programs" (Robredo 2006a: 39) since almost all of Naga's award-winning projects were conceived under the helm of the abovementioned program. Having established a reputation as the leading center of local governance innovations, the Vice Mayor jokes that the only award that the city has failed to receive are those coming from motion pictures and actor's guild associations (Isaac and Aceron 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Conducted with twenty-seven (27) barangays captains and twenty-eight (28) ward leaders.

**Table 4: Robredo's Leadership: Intellectual Stimulation**

Transactional Factor	Intermediate Outcome
Intellectual Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Willingness to Think</li></ul>
Robredo's Leadership	Intermediate Outcome
Productivity Improvement Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Development of innovative and award winning programs and innovations</li></ul>
Practice of Fiscal Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ingenuity with the use and management of resources</li></ul>
Urban Poor Affairs Office-COPE Partnership People Empowerment Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Coordinated and comprehensive resolutions to historical land dispute programs</li></ul>

Source: Prepared by the author based on the 'Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership' by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author's assessment of Robredo's leadership.

Resourcefulness and ingenuity also came in handy in city hall when it came to the practice of fiscal discipline. "Robredo is extremely careful with money" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 31). Several city hall workers commented on how thrifty he was when it came to spending the government's finances. The City Project Development Officer shares that Robredo once conducted an experiment reducing the gasoline allocation in City Hall. First, he tried to reduce it by 15 percent. When he saw that the vehicles were still running, he slashed the reduction further by 25 percent. "The vehicles were still running, but sometimes they would just suddenly stop. Now, the problem [for] [sic] the drivers is to find the proper timing [to buy] gasoline" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 34.) The mayor's thrift may have generated savings for the city but some city hall workers have also pointed out setbacks to Robredo's deliberate policy of fiscal discipline. For example, rather than spending money on beautifying city hall, Robredo found greater return in constructing a road. In defense of the Mayor, another councilor remarks, "Robredo may be thrifty, but rightfully so" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 35).

In terms of finding solutions for the community's problems, Robredo seems to consider more than just procedure and politics. For instance, in a land dispute issue between the private owner and the settlers of a property near the city's commercial district, the property owner wanted to make the settlers leave but Robredo proposed a land-sharing scheme wherein the landowner gets to keep the commercially viable part of the property. Prilles explains "the back part, the part that was relatively useless for him; [the area with] no economic value, we suggested to have the settlers relocate there. In exchange, the city will build a bridge so that the [landowner's] property will have access to the city center" (W. Prilles Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). Mediated through a partnership between the city government's **Urban Poor Affairs Office (UPAO)** and NGO, Community Organizers of the Philippine Enterprise (COPE),

the landowner and the settlers agreed to the compromise and the problem was solved without the necessity of bringing the issue to court. In the end, it was a win-win situation. “The landowner would still be able to benefit from the land and at the same time minimize the social disruption” (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). “[That] approach of tripartism,” Prilles continues, “of trying to find workable solutions to these [kinds] of problem actually bore fruit” (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008).

### *People-Centered Leadership*

In 2000, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) gave recognition to Robredo for his outstanding contributions in the field of government service (Isaac and Aceron 2007). Rene Gumba, of the Ateneo de Naga Institute of Politics, identifies in an interview the defining character of Robredo’s leadership style. “Robredo’s dominance in Naga is not the common notion of dominance where someone orders everybody around. There’s an element of pluralism in his leadership style, letting various players, take sides. It’s really a commitment to a more democratic framework of governance” (Pabico 2007).

Willy Prilles Jr. of the Naga City Planning and Development Office recalls that before the city’s planning process was formalized, Robredo was closely interfacing with the people from the various sectors. He did this as a means to identify the constituency’s needs and as a way to prioritize which of those needs the local government should first address. Prilles continues that Robredo was very passionate about delivering the promises he made during the election campaigns and that the new mayor immediately engaged in partnerships with the private sector in order to address the combination of socio-economic problems that besieged the city. It is through these partnerships, he adds, that Robredo was able to turn around the finances of the city as well as engage in high impact projects. Encouraged by the productive participation of the various government and non-government stakeholders in the community, Robredo slowly formalized the mechanisms through which they could participate (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). For instance, the **People Empowerment Program of Naga (PEP)**, attributed the local government’s openness to “a partnership with duly accredited Naga-based people’s organizations and non-government organizations in the conception, implementation and evaluation of all government activities and functions” (Tirol 2000). This provided for the establishment of the *Naga City People’s Council (NCPC)*, an autonomous council composed of “[Forty-four] accredited NGOs and POs from different sectors with the representative from each sector comprising the Board of Directors” (Jacob 2000: 188). In addition, the city also launched its **i-Governance Initiative** advocating transparent and meaningful participation amongst the current

residents of Naga, the Nagueños working or living in other countries or other parts of the Philippines, other Local Government Units and other people and institutions that may have an interest in the city through the use of mobile phones and the internet (Robredo 2006a).

Ultimately, people empowerment served as the main source of Robredo's Inspirational Motivation (Table 5). For instance, Kawanaka (1999) referred to organizations and city governance as the main pillars of Robredo's political mobilization. Those *highly institutionalized organizations* served as (1) a system to provide benefits to residents as part of public service, (2) an instrument to maintain ward leaders who are loyal to and active in the Robredo administration and (3) a mechanism to gather information (Kawanaka, 1999). Put simply, the establishment of these sectoral organizations in Naga City functioned not only as an effective instrument for public administration but also as a political machine. Kawanaka explained that these organizations work as routes to distribute patronage to the city's ward leaders and residents. However, it should be noted that patronage is not given out to these organizations as private favors but rather as formal public services that the whole constituency can enjoy (Kawanaka 1999).

**Table 5: Robredo's Leadership: Inspirational Motivation**

Transactional Factor	Intermediate Outcome
Inspirational Motivation	▪ Willingness to excel
Robredo's Leadership	Intermediate Outcome
People Empowered Program (PEP)	▪ Political empowerment of NGO's and POS
i-Governance	▪ Meaningful participation amongst Naga's current residents

Source: Prepared by the author based on the 'Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership' by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author's assessment of Robredo's leadership.

As Raquid-Arroyo shares, "In Naga, the relationship between [the government, civil society and the private sector] are special...in the sense that the government is open for people participation and the people also have the disposition to actively and meaningfully engage government" (M. Raquid-Arroyo, personal communication, September 3, 2008). For Raquid-Arroyo, Robredo practically introduced the concept of people participation into the psyche of the Filipino. "[Although] its notion started after the Edsa Revolution in 1986 and is established and supported by the 1991 Local Government Code...up to now, there is still a lot of resistance from other sectors, particularly from the government. [Elected officials believe] that since they are the ones who are accountable – they should then have the last say" (M. Raquid-Arroyo,

personal communication, September 3, 2008). She adds that Robredo's leadership was critical for the implementation of participatory forms of governance in their city because he not only facilitated the engagement between the local government and the people but he also fueled its subsistence and allowed its progression.

Naga City Councilor John Bongat reveals that, based on his observation of committee meetings and assemblies, he sees that the constituency appreciates this participative system because they actively participate in the discussions. "Someone may have said that the decision-making is faster when only one decides. However, we observed that the implementation is smoother when before decisions are made – consultations are done with the constituency. This is because there is prior knowledge and this gives stability in the official policies in the city" (J. Bongat, personal communication, September 2, 2008). Bongat adds that because Robredo wanted transparency in his administration, he supported the development of a system that enabled people to remind the government what it needed to do. It was this support, the *imprimeur of the executive* that allowed this system of governance to be realized (J. Bongat, personal communication, September 2, 2008).

#### *After 2010*

Robredo has declared that his Mayoralty from 2007–2010 will most probably be the last elected post he would hold in government. With this in mind, the issue of how Naga will survive after Robredo has arisen. First, Isaac and Aceron (2007) enumerate, Robredo has performed so well that it will definitely be very difficult to find someone who can match and surpass his achievements. To which Prilles responds that through the years, the administration has invested in its people with the foresight that after Robredo steps down, the city will have in place "a pretty decent bureaucracy, competent middle management [and the needed institutional mechanism] that will be ready to do its work" (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). This, Prilles believes, addresses both the issues of succession and sustainability. In fact, apart from Robredo, a number of city hall's employees have also been conferred with awards and recognitions from various national and international organizations and agencies. The successes of the employees of city hall and the pride of the constituency to be Naguenos are evidence of how Robredo's individualized consideration has effectively motivated individuals to improve and develop (Table 6).

"So Robredo is not Naga. There are a lot of people like him who just needs the opportunity" (W. Prilles, Jr., personal communication, September 2, 2008). Robredo adds, "I think given the opportunity I had, I'm sure somebody will come along who'll not only equal but even surpass what we have done" (PCIJ 2007a). Raquid-Arroyo interjects, "the critical choice is not to let the other side win. They have a lot of

influence and a lot of money. The real challenge is not so much of who will be the next but more of the opposing group not to become the next" (M. Raquid-Arroyo, personal communication, September 3, 2008).

**Table 6: Robredo's Leadership: Individualized Consideration**

Transactional Factor	Intermediate Outcome
Individualized Consideration	▪ Willingness to Develop
Robredo's Leadership	Intermediate Outcome
Productivity Improvement Plan	▪ Competent Middle Management

Source: Prepared by the author based on the 'Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership' by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author's assessment of Robredo's leadership.

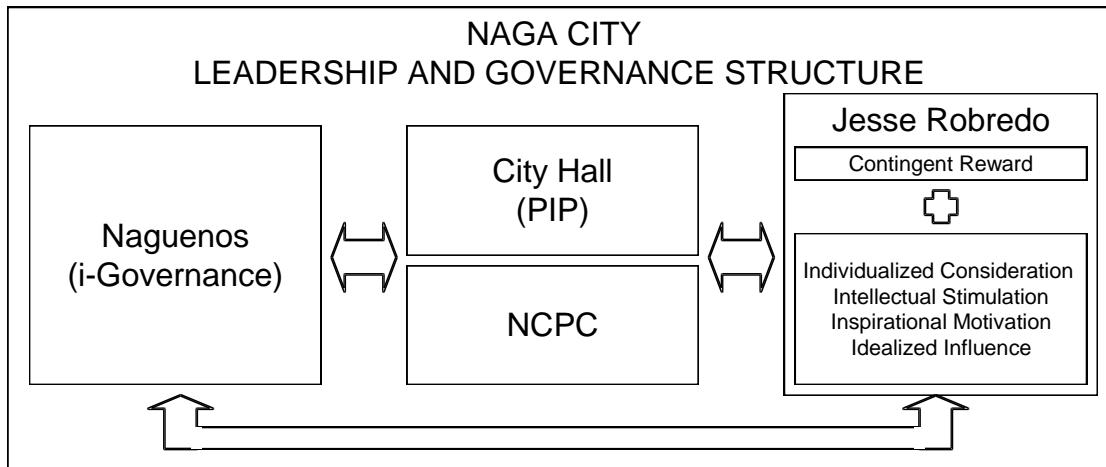
Isaac and Aceron (2007) deliberate on the possibility of Robredo running for a higher or even a national office. Robredo has admitted that he sometimes entertains the idea of *going national* but his eldest daughter hopes that her dad does not pursue that direction: "Although he did very well in Naga, but I'd rather that he does not [go national]" (Barawid et al. 2008). Robredo's cousin also expresses some hesitation about the idea adding, "If he wants a national post he should be ready for accommodation with those in power" (Isaac and Aceron 2007: 43).

## Conclusion

The case of Naga City demonstrated how leadership was critical in developing the city's capacity. Robredo, as the city's political leader, facilitated the transformation of leadership from simply pertaining to one individual to the process by which an individual in authority engages with his followers in pursuit of a common goal. His style of leadership involved not only discussions with the people. He also interacted with them by sharing his values and ideas and allowing them to respond and share their ideas with him as well.

From a public sector perspective, Robredo effectively assumed the role of manager and leader when he introduced a concept of governance wherein the people are part of the system of decision-making (personal communication, January 12, 2009). On the one hand, Robredo set goals and standards for the performance of particular tasks. On the other hand, he invoked a participatory element into his authority that enabled the people to have a conviction about the issues at hand. The Naguenos changed because Robredo encouraged them to have a personal understanding of the merits and faults of specific situations (E. Co, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

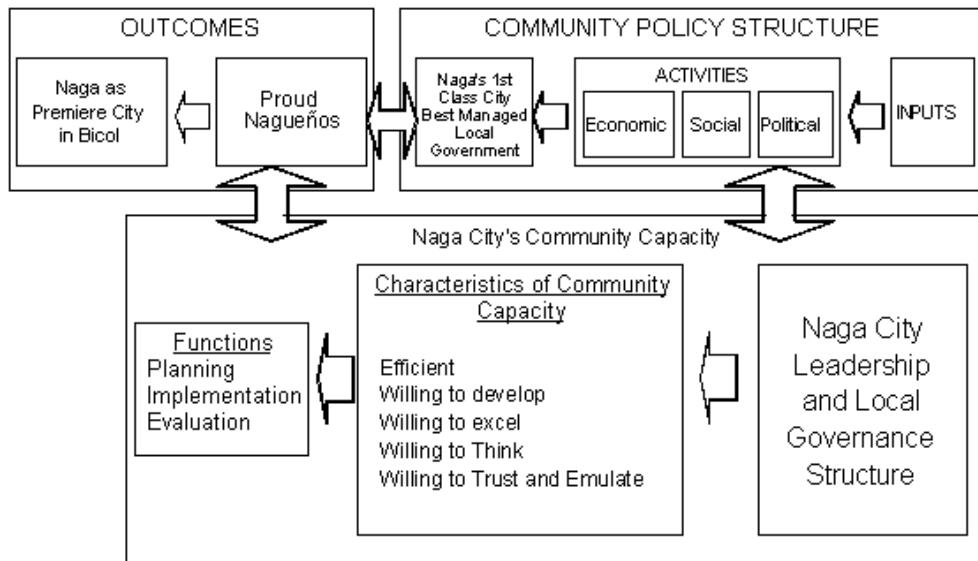
**Figure 5: Naga City's Leadership and Governance Structure**



Source: Prepared by the author based on the 'Model of Transformational and Transactional Leadership' by Bass (1985, 1990); Bass and Avolio (1990) and the author's personal assessment of the governance structure of Naga City

Realizing the potential of such engagement, the city eventually institutionalized people's participation into the city leadership and governance structures (Figure 5). Naga City now boasts institutions that guarantee people participation in all levels of governance. The Productivity Improvement Program (PIP) has empowered the bureaucracy with the skills and confidence to run city hall. The Naga City People's Council has given voice to the often-marginalized non-government organizations, private organizations and public sector groups. And the i-Governance utilizes the convenience of the Internet to provide private individuals with the venue to give feedback and suggestions on how the government can do its job better. With these mechanisms in place, the development of Naga is neither limited nor dependent on the personal capacities of its leader. In fact, the conceptualization and implementation of community policies, as well as the operation and management of the entire city, are under the care of an efficient leadership willing to develop, excel, think, trust and emulate (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Naga City's Community Capacity and Policy Structure**



Source: Prepared by the author based on 'Community Capacity and Policy Structure Model' by Miyoshi and Stenning (2008), 'Falling Dominoes Effect of Transformational Leadership' by Bass, Waldman, Avolio and Bebb (1987) and the author's assessment of community capacity in Naga City.

Meanwhile, Robredo's impact on the city and on the people is very hard to deny. Robredo did facilitate Naga's transformation from being a third-class city in 1988 to a first-class city in 1990 (Espinosa-Robles 1999). He did encourage the workforce of the city to evolve from being passive and lethargic to confident and competent (Tirol 2000). Robredo did build the foundation of trust between the leadership and the people (Robredo 2006a). Throughout the past eighteen years, Robredo has demonstrated that good management and excellent leadership can be combined. Robredo complemented his performance-based and result-oriented management style not only with his diligence, assiduousness and commitment to work but also with much sensitivity to the needs, feelings and potential of the other people who have a stake in the way Naga City is governed.

This study concludes with some valuable lessons from the research:

1. That political leadership is relevant to community building. Political leaders are in a position to use their authority to make changes in their communities. They only need the political will and the personal desire to initiate programs and policies that will help their communities move forward.
2. Political leadership style is also relevant to community building. Political leaders are all individuals with their own histories, and so to talk about leadership style in the context of personality would be impractical. But the concept of transformational leadership provides leaders with benchmarks which they can use in their own way.

Individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealized influence (Bass 1998) are values not confined to a particular personality type or behavior. In fact, as we have observed in the case of Naga – these values are somewhat functional. For instance, because Robredo wanted to create an atmosphere of excellence, he drove others to aspire to it by letting them share in his vision (communication); letting them do what they could, the best way they knew how in order to achieve it (delegation); and providing them with the necessary materials and resources to help them actualize their goals (facilitation).

3. Political leaders have the capacity to build communities, not only through their political will to implement activities relevant to the economic growth of their communities, but more importantly by developing other individuals to become leaders in their own right.

If they are willing to share the responsibility of decision-making, political leaders can use their authority to groom and mentor other individuals, groups, and even the community itself, to become leaders. If a political leader is agreeable to fostering the environment for the participation of the constituency, building confidence among these individuals by encouraging them to participate, and establishing the institutions through which they can rightfully do so then, ultimately, these individuals will be able to lead.

4. Political leadership is not necessarily confined to one individual but could also be attributed to the system of governance that includes the participation of other stakeholders facilitated by one or a group of political leaders.

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