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Editors’ Notes

This double issue of the *Philippine Journal of Public Administration (PJPA)* for 2017 tackles various developments and debates in local governance, citizen participation, and the impact of information technology on Public Administration scholarship. Most of the articles pay tribute to the study and practice of local governance in the Philippine context, in celebration of the golden anniversary of the Center for Local and Regional Governance (CLRG) and the 25th year of the 1991 Local Government Code (LGC).

Simeon Ilago's article tackles business process re-engineering (BPR) strategies at the local level, particularly in the business permitting and licensing systems of two city governments in Metro Manila, Philippines. His study reveals uneven implementation of BPR strategies between the two cities, which he argues is contingent on prevailing political context, as well as the local officials’ understanding of BPR and the policy problem it is trying to address.

The article by Patricia Braganza investigates the ordinance of Quezon City in 2012 to reduce plastic waste. Her study looks at the ordinance and the role of various stakeholders in implementing the policy. Braganza's research shows that, by giving the LGUs greater autonomy, the LGC enables them to pursue innovations.

Czarina Medina-Guce and Ana Martha Galindes' article focuses on citizen participation, a central element in the Local Government Code and in the 1987 Constitution. Looking specifically into the context of local development councils (LDCs), the authors argue that the Code and subsequent local government unit (LGU) performance measures it influenced do not clearly indicate the roles and capacities needed for more meaningful citizen participation in the LDCs. The article argues that citizen participation should be a core agenda of proposed amendments to the LGC. The authors also suggest prospects for deepening citizen participation in the LDCs.

Meanwhile, in further extending the discussion on citizen participation, Erwin Alampay's article looks at how the Volunteer Service Organization (VSO)-Bahaginan has shaped the concept and practice of active citizenship (AC) among its volunteers and the communities they serve. Gleaning from the VSO-Bahaginan volunteers' experiences, the article argues that AC as promoted by the organization is a process of interaction between volunteers, with their preexisting knowledge and
consciousness of active citizenship shaped by social institutions, and the beneficiary communities. These communities, in turn, further hone active citizenship among volunteers. Through this approach, VSO-Bahaginan is able to deepen active citizenship and promote sustainable development.

The next three articles are scholarly reflections that touch on the issue of further decentralization, which is one of the most important goals the LGC wanted to achieve. Amina Rasul-Bernardo’s article was based on her presentation during the CLRG’s 50th anniversary celebration. Rasul narrates the historical basis and context of the struggles of Muslims in Mindanao and provides compelling evidence of marginalization, repression, and underdevelopment in the Bangsamoro region. In the end, she calls for the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which, in her view, will lead to genuine autonomy and lasting peace in the region.

Given how local government reform was initially focused on amendments to the LGC, Romeo B. Ocampo’s essay is a timely interpellation in the federalism debate. Ocampo’s essay presents arguments on why the proposed shift to a federal form of government under the leadership of President Rodrigo Duterte is unlikely to succeed and will lead instead to secession and fragmentation of the state. Ocampo discusses how the federalism model being promoted in the Philippines might promote interstate competition that would lead to inequality among regions. He argues that, for all its faults, the existing unitary system is better because it can do at least one thing a federal government can no longer do: redress imbalances in favor of lagging regions and retrieve devolved power if it is misused.

The final article touches on the development of the Public Administration as a scholarly discipline. This reflection piece by Wolfgang Drechsler interrogates the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on PA. He presents the case of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and algorithm-based text typing to argue that, sooner or later, development of the discipline will soon become the work of machines rather than humans. In view of this context, Drechsler hopes for academics to engage in more meaningful scholarly inquiry in the field.

Ultimately, this double issue not only celebrates the progress that has been made in local governance and public administration scholarship, but it also recognizes that much work is still to be done. Enhancing citizen participation, designing innovations amid a rapidly changing environment, and sustaining the calls for more autonomy and structural change help keep public administration, as a field of study and practice, dynamic and very much alive.
NPM, Business Process Re-engineering and Local Governments: The Case of Local Business Permitting and Licensing System Regulatory Reform

SIMEON AGUSTIN ILAGO*

The article explores the process of re-engineering in the business permitting and licensing systems (BPLS) of local governments over a five-year period (2010-2015). Review of secondary data and official documents on the BPLS reform program and process analysis of the streamlining approaches used by two local government units (LGUs) for their BPLS procedures both reveal differences, limitations, and constraints in implementation at the local level. The article argues that, despite the attempt to converge BPLS streamlining efforts by issuing uniform standards and guidelines, implementation varies due to the decentralized and political context, the local government officials' understanding of the process and its elements, and their perception of the policy problem. The article then suggests areas for future research along this line.

Keywords: new public management, business process re-engineering, business permitting and licensing system, local government units

Introduction

Recent administrative and regulatory reforms in many countries are often attributed to the influence of new perspectives on governance, particularly new public management (NPM) (Howlett, 2004; Gruening, 2001). These reforms emphasize a diminished and steering role for government and are marked by institutional changes to rules, processes and structures at the level where the public and private sectors interact (Minogue, 2006; Andrews, 2013). Regulatory reforms associated with NPM have traveled by way of policy transfer to developing countries in Asia and other parts of the developing world (Minogue, 2006), and most countries in Southeast Asia have embraced NPM-based reforms in various degrees (Haque, 2007).

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Studies of regulatory reform in the Philippines tend to focus on the national government level, and little has been written about it at the level of local government. This article thus seeks to contribute to the literature on regulatory reform in the Philippines at the local government level by focusing on the business permitting and licensing system (BPLS), which is an important regulatory system in local governments. It looks at the experience of applying a new public management (NPM) approach—business process re-engineering (BPR)—to reform and streamline the BPLS and to support the overall national government goal of improving the country’s competitiveness and creating a more conducive business environment. The article is exploratory in nature and scope. It does not provide generalized findings but identifies possible areas for further analysis in terms of policy and evaluation research.

Studying regulatory reform in local governments through the case of BPLS streamlining is significant in fostering a broader understanding of how reform works in the government. There is always an underlying expectation of universality in reforms prescribed by NPM—that best practices that worked in other settings can be applied elsewhere. By examining a particular reform program applied in local governments, both policy makers and students of policy reform and implementation can develop a more prudent and reasonable assessment of how reform works and its limitations and constraints.

From the lens of NPM, local governments also experience the stress and dilemma of most national government agencies in providing frontline services and in dealing directly with stakeholders and clients. The nature of local governments as political institutions, however, provides for a more nuanced understanding of how regulatory reform works and how it shapes and is shaped in turn by inter-governmental relations.

The article argues that the process of BPLS re-engineering at the level of local governments has been influenced by the decentralized and political context of its implementation, the nature of local government officials’ understanding of the process and its different elements, and their perception of the policy problem.

This article is structured in several parts. The next section provides a conceptual review and understanding of new public management and one of its more popular approaches—process reengineering. The BPLS streamlining program, its legal framework and administrative history, and how it tried to operationalize process reengineering at the local government level are then explained. The experience and implications of the results of the streamlining program are identified in the next section, while the concluding part identifies some points for research and policy.

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Much of the article is based on review of secondary materials, technical reports and official documents on the BPLS streamlining program. The article also includes a process analysis of at least two cases of local government units (LGUs) that have attempted to streamline their business permitting procedures.

**New Public Management, Business Process Re-engineering and Regulatory Reform**

NPM has been characterized as a loose term (Hood, 1991) or a descriptive label for a set of administrative doctrines that rose to prominence as prescriptions for bureaucratic reform. It was described as “a marriage of two different streams of ideas”—of new institutional economics combining with modern managerialist practices in the mold of scientific management (Hood, 1991, pp. 5-6). Pollitt (2007) and Drechsler and Randma-Liiv (2014), on the other hand, described NPM as a two-level phenomenon. At one level, it presents a theory or doctrine on public administration reform, and at the second level, it presents a toolbox of market-based approaches and practices that could be adapted for use by the public sector. The toolbox of approaches and practices include performance measurement, lean and flat organization, contracts, competition in the supply of services or goods, performance-based pay, quality improvement techniques, and the general treatment of citizens as customers (Pollitt, 2007).

NPM espouses the transformation of public sector activity to a businesslike, professional management. A common theme of this set of administrative reforms is that private sector managerial techniques and market mechanisms can improve public sector efficiency, given the oft-cited issues of bureaucratic red tape and inefficiencies of the public sector, the cost and burden of regulatory policies of government, and a general dissatisfaction with government (Ventriss, 2000).

**Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)**

One of the popular tools in the NPM toolbox is business process re-engineering (BPR). Hammer and Champy (1993) described BPR as "the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance such as cost, quality, service, and speed" (p. 32). As the definition suggests, BPR involves radical rather than incremental change, fundamental redesign instead of cosmetic changes in systems and procedures, a focus on the business process rather than on the
organization, expectations of dramatic rather than gradual improvement, substantive use of information technology and a customer orientation. (Hammer & Champy, 1993; Reyes, 2003).

BPR’s main attributes are its emphasis on the review of processes and their outcomes and the elimination of unnecessary procedures and requirements, use of information technology to speed up processes and decision making, reduction of paper and document, and focus on the customer (Reyes, 2003). However, recent studies have argued that the perspective on BPR has evolved, learning from the successes and failures of implementation. Current definition of BPR now includes both radical and incremental improvements, rather than a strict definition focused on radical changes in business processes (Ozcelik, 2010). Newer terms were also used. For example, business process improvement (BPI) was also used to refer to BPR, although it is considered as less radical than the latter (Adesola & Baines, 2005). A broader concept, business process management (BPM), was also suggested, to take into account not only BPR but other management processes and the activities that are important to manage after the introduction of the reform (Kohlbacher, 2010).

BPR has thus evolved in terms of how it is seen and the extent that it covers, but the key processes and principles involved appear to be consistent. These include understanding the business needs and processes; modeling and analyzing the processes; benchmarking business processes and their outcomes; using the information to redesign and implement the new processes; and reviewing and assessing the performance of the new processes as input to further refinements (Adesola & Baines, 2005).

Recent studies show an increasing role of NPM, through BPR, in the reform of the public sector. These studies indicate also that the institutional context of the public sector, the legal and cultural setting, executive leadership, customer orientation, and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have an impact on the BPR process. BPR projects in the public sector were characterized by higher investments and commitment to stakeholder management, building consensus for change, and managing political risks (Jurisch, Palka, Wolf, & Krcmar, 2014; Haque, 2007; Ongaro, 2004).

Reyes (2003) identified several constraints that are faced by the public sector in adopting process re-engineering. He noted that the incremental nature of government policymaking reduces the likelihood of radical redesign and restructuring of public organizations. Current arrangements and the bureaucratic culture could be so ingrained as to foster resistance to changes. LGUs may need to invest further on
information technology to realize its benefits. Most importantly, Reyes (2003) said there is a challenge in harmonizing re-engineering efforts with the legal and institutional frameworks.

**BPLS Streamlining in the Philippines: A Case of BPR and NPM**

Ogus and Zhang (2006) described licensing systems in many developing countries as "over-elaborate and dysfunctional," and are maintained in such a state to support rent-seeking activities of officials. Streamlining and reduction of processes and procedures are thus ideal, but these reforms always go against political and bureaucratic self-interest and "political values that favor governmental control of a wide range of economic activities" (Ogus & Zhang, 2006, p. 9).

This article looks at the experience of applying NPM through BPR in the case of BPLS of local governments in the Philippines. Studies on business permitting and licensing systems at the local government level are few (Legaspi, 2006; Ilago, 2014). Nevertheless, these studies show the probable constraints, such as cases of over-regulation and instances of corruption. Legaspi's (2006) study pointed to multiple but conflicting lines of authority and responsibility, and the issue of a lack of adequate resources and capacity for effective regulation at the local government level.

**Institutional and Legal Framework for BPLS**

In the Philippines, while regulatory authority for issuing a business license and permit is assigned to the local government, it is not necessarily true that the authority is completely concentrated with it. The institutional framework can be more aptly described as shared at three different levels that involve various stakeholders. While the municipal/city level is most visible, the authority for business registration, permitting and licensing is made up of three levels.

The highest is the national level, where national legislation and regulations affecting the issuance of the business permit at the local government level are crafted and implemented. Examples of national government requirements are those of business name and corporate name registration, environmental compliance certification, registration of the employer with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) for taxation purposes, and with the Social Security System (SSS), Pag-IBIG, and PhilHealth for social security, housing and health insurance purposes. The second level is the city/municipal level, where the application for and issuance of permit
is formally situated. The third level is the barangay/community level, where the barangay clearance is issued as required by the 1991 Local Government Code.

The legal framework for BPLS streamlining is derived from the Constitution and made operational by way of the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 and the joint memorandum circular between the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) issued in 2010.

**The Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007.** Republic Act 9485 (Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 or ARTA) mandates all government agencies to provide efficient services to the public by reducing bureaucratic red tape and preventing graft and corruption. In at least two ways, ARTA draws from the administrative reform ideas of NPM by emphasizing a citizen-as-customer orientation in the provision of services, and by mandating agencies to simplify their procedures and thus reduce bureaucratic red tape and processing time.

The citizen-as-customer orientation was to be operationalized through the publication of service standards, known as Citizen’s Charters, that would provide clients of government services with information on maximum processing time, responsible persons, procedures to avail of the service, cost of the service, forms and documents to be presented, and procedures for filing complaints. Reducing bureaucratic red tape was envisioned to be achieved by agencies doing the following: “regularly undertake time and motion studies, undergo evaluation and improvement of their transaction systems and procedures and re-engineer the same if deemed necessary” (Sec. 5). It can be said that Section 5 seems to prescribe NPM—of scientific management, continuous improvement, and reengineering.

BPLS streamlining did not actually begin in 2010, but started way earlier courtesy of separate donor-initiated governance programs focusing on targeted local government units, independent actions by several local governments to improve their performances using standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and national government efforts to develop knowledge products such as manuals and guidebooks (Philippine Development Forum [PDF], 2008).

Under the umbrella of the Philippine Development Forum (PDF), a national-level program was initially considered in 2009 to streamline as many local governments as possible. However, it was recognized that, for the program to work effectively, the government agencies and other stakeholders involved would need to set service standards for

*January-December*
streamlining, develop a capacity-building program to help LGUs in the process, harmonize development partners’ initiatives, and organize the responsible agencies—Department of Trade and Industry [DTI] and Department of the Interior and Local Government [DILG]—at the level of the region to work with LGUs and other stakeholders in the streamlining process.

These efforts gained traction in 2010. In his first state of the nation address, President Benigno Aquino III indicated the overall policy direction towards regulatory reform affecting business. President Aquino declared that the business name registration process at the national level (administered by DTI) will be drastically improved. The president also called out on local government units to review their own procedures:

> While we look for more ways to streamline our processes to make business start-ups easier, I hope the LGUs can also find ways to implement reforms that will be consistent with the ones we have already started. (Aquino, 2010, para. 79)

**Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, series of 2010.** On 6 August 2010, the DILG and the DTI jointly issued Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 01, series of 2010 (hereafter referred to as the JMC) and an accompanying Joint Administrative Order to set the standards for processing applications for new businesses and business renewals.

Under the JMC, four standards were set in processing business permits. These were:

1. The use of a unified application form;
2. Maximum of two signatories;
3. Maximum of five steps; and
4. Processing time compliant with or below the requirements set forth under the ARTA for both simple and complex transactions.

Further, the JMC also contained guidance that could help the cities and municipalities to comply with the standards, such as removing redundancies related to inspections and grants of clearances in connection with the business permitting process.

The four standards under JMC No. 01 aim to reduce the compliance burden on the part of the business applicant as a customer of the LGU. For example, the use of a unified application form will spare the business
applicant the time-consuming task of filling out separate application forms required by various local government departments and the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP). Limiting the number of signatories to two means that the LGU will have to examine which other signature will be retained aside from the signature of the city/municipal mayor. The traditional process requires the business applicant to personally appear and secure the signature in various offices. However, this meant reducing as well the processing time and the procedures which the business applicant has to comply with personally. Limiting the number of steps means the LGU has to either combine similar procedures into one or remove unnecessary steps in the process. Observing the ARTA provisions on processing time implies that LGUs have to be creative, and they may have to review not just their procedures, but their physical arrangements as well.

The JMC provided that implementation should proceed based on a prioritized phasing, where targeted LGUs that together make up the critical mass of business establishments in the country and those with investment potential made up the priority list. The JMC also provided that training workshops and coaching sessions were to be extended to the LGUs under the priority list. A total of 480 LGUs included in the list were expected to receive training and coaching from trainers and coaches that made up the pool of implementers for the JMC (Local Government Academy [LGA], 2013).

For the LGUs that were not part of the priority list, they were envisioned to undertake streamlining on their own, but they are expected to enroll in training programs provided by the Local Government Academy (LGA) and other private sector providers.

To prepare for the rollout, the government, through LGA-DILG, organized a series of training and coaching workshops for BPLS facilitators in the regions. A pool of consultants was tapped to shape the design and content of the training and coaching sessions. Development partners, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank-International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the German Agency for International Development (GIZ), supported the work of the consultants, but this support did not extend to the actual rollout of the BPLS streamlining project in the rest of the LGUs.

**Initial Results of BPLS Streamlining**

**Coverage and compliance.** In terms of coverage, the annual report of the LGA in 2012 indicated that 94% (451) of the priority LGUs have already streamlined their processes. Outside of the priority LGUs, an additional 574 LGUs also began training with DILG and DTI coaches, and
65% were reported to have completed the process. The figures were based on monitoring results received by the LGA from both DTI and DILG regional offices, which gathered reports submitted by the LGUs to the DILG field offices (LGA, 2013).

As of July 2015, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) reported in its proposed National Expenditure Program (NEP) that 1,447 out of 1,516 LGUs or 95% have completed their business process re-engineering. The remaining 69 LGUs are expected to become compliant with the BPLS standards by yearend (DBM, 2015). The reported coverage is based on data capture forms and monitoring reports by both DTI and DILG.

A recent BPLS Customer Experience Survey (National Competitiveness Council [NCC], 2015) showed improvements. In terms of processing time, 89% of the customers surveyed said it took them five days or less. In terms of the number of steps or procedures, 77% reported it took them five steps or less. Most (86%) reported at most two signatories signed their forms, and 73% reported using only one form. Almost all (99%) said they did not pay any facilitation fees.

The same 2015 BPLS Customer Experience Survey also showed the compliance rate of LGUs in meeting the BPLS standards. As shown in Table 1, the compliance rate in terms of the four standards can still be improved, particularly among LGUs in Visayas, where the compliance rates appear to be lowest in terms of processing time and use of unified application form, and LGUs in Mindanao in terms of number of signatories and number or steps.

<table>
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<th>BPLS Standard</th>
<th>Luzon</th>
<th>Visayas</th>
<th>Mindanao</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of forms</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of signatories</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of steps</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing time</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87</td>
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Source: NCC (2015)

In the next section, the discussion focuses on one of the JMC standards, that of the five standard steps. Among the standards, this is where the idea of business process re-engineering is best seen and is most applicable.
Five-step requirements under the JMC No. 01. JMC No. 01 provides that all cities and municipalities shall ensure that applicants for business registration (either for new business application or renewal of permit) shall follow five steps in applying for new business permits or for business renewals. The steps identified are:

1. Securing an application form from the city or municipality;

2. Filing or submission of the accomplished application form with attached documentary requirements;

3. One-time assessment of taxes, fees and charges;

4. One-time payment of taxes, fees and charges; and

5. Securing the mayor’s permit upon submission of official receipt as proof of payment of taxes, fees, and charges imposed by the LGU.

The aforementioned steps were apparently prescribed from the point of view of the business applicant based on the action words used. For example, the steps call for securing an application form, filing or submission of the form and securing the permit. This citizen-as-client perspective is indicated in the steps except perhaps for step three (one-time assessment of taxes, fees and charges), which can either be interpreted as an action received by the applicant or an action done by the LGU staff or officers.

To be able to reduce their procedures to the suggested five standard steps, LGUs were encouraged to review, assess, take out or combine steps and procedures. They were also encouraged to follow a process re-engineering approach, either using the procedure applied by GIZ in its technical assistance for LGUs in Visayas, or the WB-IFC approach piloted in two cities in Metro Manila. Table 2 compares the process as indicated in the seminal work by Hammer and Champy (1993) with a much later methodology (Adesola & Baines, 2006) and with the approaches used in BPLS streamlining.

While the number of steps vary, the main ideas of process re-engineering appears to be followed in both GIZ and IFC, namely: the diagnosis of the existing process and identification of procedural gaps, redundancies and unnecessary steps or requirements; process redesign; implementation of the new process; and monitoring and review of the new design.
Table 2. Process Re-engineering Steps

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<td>1. Defining a vision for the organization</td>
<td>1. Understand business needs</td>
<td>1. Obtaining commitment to reform</td>
<td>1. Diagnosis</td>
<td>1. Diagnosis</td>
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<td>2. Articulating and recording important assumptions</td>
<td>2. Understand the process</td>
<td>2. Diagnosis</td>
<td>2. Design</td>
<td>2. Design</td>
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Sources: Adesola and Baines (2005); U.S. Agency for International Development (2011); International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2011)

**BPLS Streamlining as an experiment in process re-engineering.** While the DBM hopes all remaining LGUs will complete their process re-engineering by the end of 2015, the eventual coverage and compliance to the standards set forth in JMC No. 01 remains to be seen. As the NCC survey in 2015 has shown, compliance rates insofar as the number of steps is concerned remain under 100%. The reported compliance by LGUs with the mandated standards need to be validated and assessed inasmuch as the reports are based on self-reporting by the LGUs to the regional offices of DTI and DILG.

Various reports to the LGA and World Bank-IFC under the Regulatory Simplification for LGUs (RS4LGUs) Project indicate that several LGUs that reported having complied with the standard five-step process were not compliant at all when their processes were reviewed and validated as part of the diagnosis of their existing BPLS (IFC, 2014). An earlier validation assessment conducted by the LGA in 2013 using a small sample noted the confusion among LGUs on how to follow the five-step standards. This finding was echoed in a recent review of the
implementation of the JMC standards that noted variations among LGUs (Ilago, 2014). For the purposes of this article, two examples of BPLS procedures published in the websites of two Metro Manila LGUs are presented in Table 3 to show the variations in application of or compliance with the five-step standards. The steps are provided as numbered, and the writer’s notes and comments on the steps as published are indicated in italics within the parentheses.

Table 3. Steps in the BPLS of Mandaluyong and Pasay Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps in the BPLS</th>
<th>Mandaluyong City</th>
<th>Pasay City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The applicant/taxpayer submits a duly accomplished and notarized business permit application form together with the required documents to the designated officer-of-the-day after which the application form undergoes verification at the EDP Section and Records Section of this Department. <em>(This first step is actually the second based on the JMC standards, where the first step is getting the application form. It is not clear if the form is downloadable to make it possible that the applicant has carried the application form already complete and notarized. Moreover, in the protocol of regulatory simplification, notarization is considered one separate step inasmuch as the applicant has to look for a notary public to perform the act.)</em></td>
<td>1. Go to the Business Permits Office, located at the 2nd floor of the City Hall, and have the receiving or processing clerks furnish you an application form and inform you of the requirements. <em>(One step.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. After verification, the applicant/taxpayer is advised to secure a zoning clearance from the City Planning and Development Office. Exempted from obtaining the said clearance are businesses located in selected shopping malls. <em>(One step.)</em></td>
<td>2. Proceed to the Engineering Department at the 3rd floor and have them (prepare an) order of payment for annual inspection fees for building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and other requirements. Then proceed to the City Planning and Development Office at the second floor and have them also (prepare an) order of payment for locational clearance fee. <em>(Two steps, one each for Engineering and CPDO. The offices are located on different floors.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. After a zoning clearance has been obtained, the taxpayer/applicant is instructed to endorse the application form to the Engineering Department for assessment of the prescribed regulatory fees <em>(One step.)</em></td>
<td>3. Proceed to BPLO 2nd floor Rm. ___ for your Business Account Number (BAN). <em>(One step.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Businesses requiring environmental clearance certificate (ECC) such as manufacturers, gasoline stations, warehouses, etc., as well as eateries and restaurants, night clubs, beer gardens, cocktail lounges etc., are advised to have their application forms registered and stamped at the City Health Office. <em>(One step.)</em></td>
<td>4. Proceed to Ground floor Treasury Office for your Assessment of taxes and fees, pay the necessary amount at the Teller Division and secure an official receipt. <em>(One step.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                   | 5. After payment, proceed to the following offices for counter-signing of the Business Permit application: Sanitation Office *(one step)*  
City Planning and Development Office *(one step)*  
Tourism Office *(one step)*  
Engineering Office *(one step)*  
City General Hospital, City Veterinary Office (if applicable) *(one or two steps if both are needed)*  
City Fire Marshall *(one step)* | 5. After payment, proceed to the following offices for counter-signing of the Business Permit application: Sanitation Office *(one step)*  
City Planning and Development Office *(one step)*  
Tourism Office *(one step)*  
Engineering Office *(one step)*  
City General Hospital, City Veterinary Office (if applicable) *(one or two steps if both are needed)*  
City Fire Marshall *(one step)* |
|                   | 6. Go back to the Business Permit for the Mayor’s permit and approved business permit/license. *(One step.)* | 6. Go back to the Business Permit for the Mayor’s permit and approved business permit/license. *(One step.)* |

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Table 3. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandaluyong City</th>
<th>Pasay City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Businesses classified as strictly regulated, such as entertainment, amusement and/or gaming establishments (nightclubs, beerhouses, bars and videoke, off-track betting [OTB], computer rentals, internet café, billiards and similar establishments) are required to submit a duly notarized memorandum of agreement (MOA) approved by both the license chief and the Task Force Anti-Vice. Businesses requiring permit and/or clearance from other government offices and agencies should attach a clear copy of the same to the application form. (This could anywhere be between three to four steps for the applicant, considering that he/she would require (1) approval of the license chief, (2) approval of the Task Force Anti-Vice head; (3) notarization of the MOA; and (4) clearances obtained from other government offices and agencies.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. After assessment by the Engineering Department, the taxpayer applicant bring back the application form to this Department for assessment of the corresponding taxes and fees by the designated licensing officer who thereafter affixes his signature as the assessor. (One step.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The application form is forwarded to the assigned examiner who reviews the assessment and checks the accompanying documents therein and then affixes his signature if found to be in order. (One step.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The form is brought to the Assistant Chief of BPLD Chief for final review and approval. (One step, but it can be done by the BPLO as a backroom procedure and not necessarily by the applicant.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. After approval, the application form is transmitted to the EDP Section for billing of the tax order of payment (TOP). (Backroom procedure for the BPLO but one step for the applicant. He/she gets the TOP to be able to pay at the City Treasurer's Office.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. After TOP encoding, the taxpayer/applicant is instructed to obtain a separate order of payment (for the fire fee assessment) from the Fire Department, and to pay it separately with the remaining net payable (as indicated in the TOP) at the City Treasurer's Office. (Two steps: (1) getting the fire assessment, and (2) paying the fire code fees at the Treasurer's Office.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The taxpayer/applicant goes back to the BPLO and presents the paid TOP together with the corresponding official receipts (original copies) of both the fire fee and business permit payments to the Records Section to claim the computerized mayor's permit for approval by the BPLD Chief. (One step.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Thereafter, the taxpayer/applicant is advised to claim the license plate and sticker. (One step.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Mandaluyong City Government (2015); Pasay City (2015)
All in all, the applicant actually needs to go through 11 steps instead of the published six steps to get a new business permit in Pasay City; 12 if he/she has to go to City General Hospital or City Veterinary Office, or 13 if he/she has to go to both. In the case of Mandaluyong City, the number of steps would range from 15 to 16 steps and not 12 steps as published.

The two examples above illustrate some of the issues related to the LGUs’ attempt at process re-engineering to comply with the five-step standards. For example, the two LGUs differ in their interpretation of the first step. Is it the securing of the application form or the submission of the completed application form with the attached documentary requirements? For a successful BPR application, the steps from the start to the end must be clearly mapped. The JMC standard is clear but a number of LGUs (such as Mandaluyong City) consider step two (submission of the application form) as the first step because it is also starts the counting of the processing time. Other LGUs argue that some business applicants get the application form but defer the time in submitting it, or do not proceed to apply at all (Ilago, 2014).

Another issue shown in the above example is how local governments could interpret a series of steps on the part of the applicant as only one step. This is seen in the case of Pasay City, where one step represents a series of actions on the part of the applicant to get the desired countersigns and initials on the form. Its counterpart issue is also the tendency of some LGUs to split a process into two or more separate actions, when these could be combined into a single interface or step. For example, in the case of Mandaluyong City, the applicant returns to the BPLO in step 11 to present the official receipts as proofs of payment to claim the computerized mayor’s permit. But the applicant needs to return in step 12 to claim the business sticker and plate. In the more streamlined LGUs, the applicant could get at the same time the permit, business sticker and plate upon submission of proofs of payment.

BPR’s one characteristic is the radical nature of process change. Such radical transformation is hinged on the application of information technology. By applying emergent information technologies, redundant, overlapping and inconsequential aspect of the whole process can be redesigned. In the case of BPLS streamlining, this assumption underpins the standard steps that mandate one-time assessment of fees and charges (step three in the JMC), and one-time payment (step four in the JMC). The traditional process of each department making separate assessments and the applicant making separate trips to the Treasurer’s Office for payment would now be combined to only a single step or a single point of transaction for assessment and payment. The use of information technology is expected to achieve this. However, the two examples above

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show that the assessments and payments are still made as separate steps in separate transactions.

Echoing NPM, the BPLS reform approach is premised on the whole-of-organization. This means that decisions of various departments related to business permitting and licensing must be made coherent and logical. Decisions need to be taken based on what makes the process most efficient, overriding particularistic considerations of functional units. But again, as can be seen in the two examples, some of the decisions remain with various departments because the information that could be used in decision making is not shared.

The foregoing discussion and analysis of the experience of LGUs in BPLS streamlining point to variations in how the standards are operationalized, particularly in how the current procedures are simplified into the mandated five-step process. The focus on the standard steps shows that process re-engineering at the local government level faces certain difficulties and constraints. The experience of the two LGUs shows that the challenge of simplifying rules and procedures would differ from one LGU to another.

For one, unlike in the private sector, steps are not just a sequence of interactions producing a result, but are representations of power and interests as distributed within the local government organization. A step may produce a required clearance, a required certificate, or a required signature—each represents an indication if not an affirmation of the importance and relevance of the office or the individual. This is a political nuance that BPR will not be able to take into account. As Buchanan (1997) noted, BPR, unlike other organization development interventions, is not a "context sensitive" approach. As an approach, BPR is technically rational and logical, which may not be effective when removed from organizational practices, behavior and attitudes that are rooted in historical and cultural institutions (Arellano-Gault, 2000).

The observations made by Reyes (2003) in his review of BPR appear appropriate in discussing the BPLS streamlining experience thus far. In the BPLS streamlining experience, this means convincing local governments to review their procedural systems and ask the right questions—on the legal basis for the procedural requirements, on whether the requirements are still relevant given this day and age, and whether the legal basis for some of the procedural requirements had been superseded by succeeding legislation.
Local government officials and staff may benefit from the cumbersome character and opacity of their BPLS process, and given that, they will likely be reluctant to reform the process. Departments may guard their part in the process. This explains why it is difficult to persuade various departments and offices to take out a particular step or activity, or to consider combining it with another. For example, the following cases were observed in the diagnostic reports made as part of the RS4LGUs implemented by LGA with funding support from the WB-IFC (IFC, 2014):

1. A mayor insists that he meets personally with the business applicant before signing the business permit to get to know the business locators in his/her area.

2. A treasurer refuses to take out a step where the business applicant has to bring his/her taxpayer order of payment (the equivalent of an invoice or billing statement) to his/her office so s/he could scrutinize the entries and see if the business applicant's declaration of capitalization is realistic or not, and to review if the business tax imposed is either high or low.

3. An environmental office requires a business permit applicant to go the office so the applicant could be personally briefed about the proper way of waste disposal.

4. An administrator insists that the mayor's permit must have his/her initials before the mayor signs it.

All the four steps stated above are considered as critical steps by the LGU officials concerned.

One can argue that the reform package to streamline business permits and licensing systems in local government represents a one-size-fits-all approach. Uniform standards were issued and were expected to be followed by local governments, regardless of the size of diversity of the business community, the administrative and regulatory capabilities of the local offices performing the regulatory functions, and economic and political context of local governments. Future research could explore how decentralization affected the adoption and adaptation of the JMC standards by the LGUs, and whether such expectation of uniform adoption and implementation must be cultivated in a decentralized context. It should be noted that because of the decentralized system of local government, both the DTI and DILG came out with a joint memorandum circular, which is comparatively weaker in terms of enforcement powers.

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Implications for Future Research

Future research could also validate if the reform process and outcomes have led to a condition described by Pritchett, Woolcock and Andrews (2010) as “isomorphic mimickry,” a condition in which organizations adopt modern or best practices, or advocate notions of good governance, although functional performance, given their actual capability for implementation, may be weak or non-existent. In the case of BPLS streamlining, this may mean having LGUs report that they have complied with the standards, and thus seem to look alike in terms of their BPLS process, but they may not necessarily be compliant in actual administration of the system. Again, research along this line could further clarify the extent to which factors such as institutional relations through decentralization, and institutional characteristics such as decisionmaking within local governments, bureaucratic policymaking, and local governments’ understanding of their conditions and problems related to attracting business and investments, play a role in the outcome of the reform process.

References


2017


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Assessment of the Implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance in Quezon City (2012-2016)

PATRICIA ANDRHEA T. BRAGANZA*

The Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance has been implemented in Quezon City since 2012 to regulate the use of plastic bags in an attempt to address plastic pollution. This study assessed the implementation of the ordinance. Customers’ use of recyclable bags was directly observed in four retail stores in the District 4 of Quezon City. A survey was also conducted among 120 residents from six barangays comprising Area 24, District 4 of the city to gather data on awareness of and compliance to the ordinance. Focus group discussions and interviews with city government officials and store managers, among other stakeholders, were also conducted to enrich quantitative data. Survey results showed high level of awareness of the ordinance, but lower level of awareness of the green fund. Results of the chi-square test of independence revealed that awareness significantly differed across barangays. It is also revealed that the ordinance affects stakeholders in different ways, and that it may have somewhat reduced the percentage of plastic waste collected from households in the city. Lastly, retail stores face administrative challenges in translating green fund into meaningful environmental programs.

Keywords: Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, green fund, policy implementation, Quezon City

Introduction

Plastic pollution is among the most pressing environmental problems in the world today. This is partly due to population growth, which contributes to the increasing amount of plastic debris being trapped in the world’s oceans.

Plastic pollution is the accumulation of plastic products on land and in oceans and waterways, affecting animals and humans. It destroys habitats and wildlife. Sea creatures and other animals are at risk of ingesting or being entangled in plastic waste. Plastic also clogs sewerages/waterways, which leads to flashfloods and outbreak of communicable diseases.

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According to Ocean Conservancy & McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, (2015), five countries contribute around 60% of plastic waste in bodies of water. All of them are in Asia: China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Philippines ranked third, having generated 2.7 million metric tons of plastic garbage each year, with 20% ending up in the ocean (Ocean Conservancy & McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, 2015).

Efforts to solve this problem have been initiated in different parts of the world. These include the promotion of 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle), innovative control or reduction measures, and even total ban of plastic use. Likewise, cities in the Philippines have started implementing initiatives to manage the plastic consumption of their respective constituents. Some have crafted policies for totally banning plastics in their city, whereas others, like Quezon City, chose reduction measures. At present, Quezon City has three ordinances addressing the plastic problem: Ordinance No. SP 2103, s.2011, Ordinance No. SP 2127, s.2012, and Ordinance No. 2140, s.2012. This article shall focus only on the implementation of the third ordinance, also known as the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance.

Solving the Global Problem

Mitigating plastic pollution requires addressing attitudinal, behavioral, social, and technical factors. It also entails providing sound policies, firm leadership, effective enforcement of laws, greater awareness and understanding, and disciplined citizens.

The technical aspect of solid waste management includes policies, resources, and manpower. It also entails finding alternative ways to reduce waste, such as expanding collection services and adoption of modern technologies (Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, 2015). Meanwhile, equally important is the social aspect, which includes people, leaders, commitment, and dedication (Rebullida, 2002).

Recuenco (2010) claimed that positive attitudes towards nature are deeply rooted in one’s childhood experiences. Building the values of an individual starts at home, where parents play an important role in honing one’s personality, discipline, and attitude. However, exposure to the natural environment, people, education, negative experiences, and membership in different organizations, media, and other factors may also influence an individual’s inclination towards issues and concerns related to the environment. For instance, in the report by the Organization for
Security and Co-operation in Europe (2009), gender equity is deemed essential in opening up opportunities for both men and women to help address sustainable development challenges, particularly in the use of natural resources and in environmental protection.

Plastic pollution is also a problem of management and governance. Gold, Mika, Horowitz, Herzog, and Leitner (2013) identified global mismanagement as one of the causes of plastic pollution. Conversely, the Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment (2015) identified six points in creating a program for global action: political leadership and commitment; development of local approaches to integrated waste management; expansion of these approaches to high-priority cities and regions; creation of an enabling environment for funding; support for technology implementation; and prioritization of plastic pollution in the policy agenda.

Global Initiatives

Plastic pollution has affected different countries in different ways. Rayne (2008) mentioned that plastic pollution has led to malaria outbreaks in countries in Africa, particularly in Kenya. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Cameroon, plastic pollution has contributed to heavy flooding by clogging waterways and drainage systems.

Governments put up measures to address this problem by totally banning the use of plastic bags, regulating its use, or even charging taxes. For instance, in Australia, the government implemented plastic bag ban in 2003 to protect the migrating whales in Tasmania. Likewise, the state government of Texas, as well as India, Mauritania and the United Arab Emirates, banned the use of plastic bags, which were considered as choking and ingestion hazards for livestock animals (Larsen & Venkova, 2014). Another example is the principle of extended producer responsibility, a model developed by European nations, wherein governments put the responsibility on the producers of plastic (Tibbetts, 2015).

Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum (2016) has proposed a paradigm shift on the use of plastics, the “New Plastics Economy,” which involves creating a circular economic model that bridges the gap between production and after-use of plastics. It aims to maximize value, strengthen the plastic economy, and more importantly, to make plastic production more environmentally sustainable.

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In addition, alternatives such as producing biodegradable plastic bags have surfaced in the international scene. Avani Eco, a company based in Bali, Indonesia, has helped address this problem by producing biodegradable plastics or "bioplastics" as alternatives to traditional plastic bags. Examples of these bioplastics are plastic bags made from cassava, takeaway food containers made from sugar canes, and straws made from cornstarch. Bioplastics biodegrade and do not contain toxic residue (Sutherland, 2017).

However, according to the 2015 report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), plastics made from biodegradable polymers are more expensive than those derived from fossil fuels and will hardly make a dent in reducing plastic pollution, since the degree to which these biodegrade is still debatable. For instance, oxo-degradable polymers do not fragmentize rapidly (UNEP, 2015). The process of biodegradation depends on environmental factors and on the properties of the polymer (Sekiguchi et al., 2011 and Pemba et al., 2014, as cited in UNEP, 2015). UNEP senior official Habib El-Habr recognized that these biodegradable plastics could be part of the long-term solution but also said, "We don’t know enough about this (biodegradable plastics) technology" (as cited in Sutherland, 2017).

Philippines and the Plastic Pollution

Southeast Asia, where Philippines is situated, was listed by Greenpeace as the “most vulnerable [to] and least prepared” for climate change impacts. Citing a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2009, Greenpeace also highlighted the economic costs of climate inaction, and encouraged states in the region to adopt environmentally sound solutions (Greenpeace, 2010). Aside from technology, government and policies play an important role in ushering these solutions.

A number of localized solid waste management programs aimed to address plastic pollution through the 3Rs approach. For instance, at the local level, an assessment of the solid waste management in Cavite City Public Market in 2004 revealed that the market generates 18.6 cubic meters of plastic waste per day, which constitute 10% of the total solid waste of the city. The study also found that no waste segregation and recycling practices were done in the market. The results became the basis for developing a solid waste management plan, which included waste reduction, segregation and processing of materials (Apostol, 2004).

Another case study, conducted in Bayawan City, Negros Oriental, aimed to analyze the characteristics and effects of various economic instruments applied in the area. It noted, among the success factors of the
local government unit (LGU) in implementing its community programs, the strong political will and interest of leaders (Paul, 2012). Mendoza (2001) wrote about the community-based solid waste management project in Lipa City, Batangas, where a task force was formed to develop and implement their solid waste management plan and to monitor and evaluate the program. Moreover, a project in Cebu City sought to develop a plan to convert plastic wastes into recycled products (UNEP, 2007).

On the other hand, the national government, as well as a number of city and municipal governments, sought to ban the use of plastic bags. Senator Loren Legarda drafted Senate Bill 2759, which proposed the total ban of the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags in groceries, restaurants, public markets, fast food chains, department stores, and other establishments. However, this bill has not yet been approved.

In Metro Manila, Muntinlupa City was the first city to regulate the use of plastic bags as primary packaging by way of Ordinance No. 10-109, s.2010 (EarthJustice, n.d.). Other cities in Metro Manila then followed suit: Caloocan (Ordinance No. 0503, s.2013), Las Piñas (Ordinance No. 1036-11, s.2012), Makati (Ordinance No. 03-095), Mandaluyong (Ordinance No. 523, s.2013), Manila (Ordinance No. 8282, s.2013), Marikina (Ordinance No. 18, s.2012), Pasay (Ordinance No. 4647, s.2011), Pasig (Ordinance No. 09-2010, s.2011), Quezon City (Ordinance No. SP 2103, s.2011; Ordinance No. SP 2127, s.2012; and Ordinance No. SP 2140, s.2012), Taguig (Ordinance No. 59-11) and the municipality of Pateros (Municipal Ordinance No. 2011-10). These ordinances are focused on regulating and not on totally banning the use of plastic bags. This is because the city governments did not want to kill the plastic industries.

Presently, out of 17 cities, five have not regulated or banned the use of plastic bags: Malabon, Navotas, San Juan, Parañaque and Valenzuela. According to the Valenzuela City Planning and Development Office, around 224 plastic and rubber manufacturing companies employing thousands of workers were operating in Valenzuela City as of 2012. As such, only ordinances on regulating the use of plastic bags will be feasible in the future (Arcangel, 2013).

Quezon City Initiatives

Quezon City has three ordinances that regulate use of plastic bags: Ordinance No. SP 2103, s.2011, Ordinance No. SP 2127, s.2012, and Ordinance No. SP 2140, s.2012. Ordinance No. SP 2103, s.2011 aimed to address plastic pollution by promoting the use of recyclable or reusable bags. The ordinance requires establishments in the city that use plastic bags as packaging to display the signage, "Save the Environment, Bring
your Own Recyclable/Reusable Bags.” Meanwhile, to encourage employees and concessionaires of city government offices to take part in the solution, Ordinance No. SP 2127, s.2012 banned the use of non-biodegradable packaging, such as plastic and styrofoam, in the City Hall and other government buildings in Quezon City.

Lastly, Ordinance No. SP 2140, s.2012, or the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, enjoins the business sector in stemming the “throw-away attitude” of consumers towards plastic bags. The policy prohibits duly registered retail business establishments that have been regularly operating in Quezon City from using plastic bags with thickness below 15 microns. Meanwhile, the translucent plastic bag, also known as plastic labo, is only allowed for wrapping fresh foods and vegetables. Retail stores are also mandated to implement a green fund scheme, where they charge two pesos for every plastic bag issued to consumers, the proceeds of which go to environmental programs.

The policy also encourages retail stores to provide reusable bags/recyclable bags/eco bags for a minimal fee, and to incentivize the use of these bags. It also taps some malls as waste markets where residents of the city can bring their collected plastic bags at a particular schedule. Barangay officials and the Environmental Police of the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD) of the Quezon City Government were tasked to monitor its implementation.

A study by Razon, Diola, Bundoc, Huelva and Gamboa (2015) looked into the implementation of the said ordinance in Barangay UP Campus, Quezon City. Findings of the waste analysis and characterization study (WACS) in selected areas in the barangay found that the volume of plastic wastes was significantly reduced a year after the implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance. However, at certain collection schedules, some communities also saw a rather significant rise in the volume of plastic wastes. This suggests the lack of effective waste recycling and segregation.

This study aims to assess the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance implementation in Quezon City in a wider scope, looking at key stakeholders, impacts, and implementation mechanisms of the policy. It also looks into how the green fund is being used by the city government.
Statement of the Problem

This study investigates the implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance in Quezon City from 2012-2016. In line with this, it asked the following questions:

1) How aware are the Quezon City residents of the implementation of this ordinance?

2) What is the Impact of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance to: (a) grocery shoppers; (b) stall/store owners; (c) Quezon City residents; and (d) junk shops?

3) What are the factors that influence its implementation?

4) How is the green fund (fees collected for plastic bag users) being utilized by the Quezon City Government?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the framework used in this study. It specifically looks into the Quezon City residents' awareness of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, its implementation, and the collection and utilization of the green fund.

Methodology

The implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance from 2012-2016 was assessed through the mixed methods approach. The study involved collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide an in-depth understanding of the policy implementation from the perspective of various stakeholders.

Direct observation of check-out/packaging counters was conducted in four selected stores in District IV, Quezon City. Meanwhile, a survey questionnaire designed to collect insights on awareness of the policy and the utilization of the green fund, as well as on the use of alternatives to plastic bags, was developed and pilot-tested on ten individuals. It was then administered to 120 residents of Area 24 of District IV, which is composed of six barangays: Sikatuna, Pinyahan, Krus na Ligas, Botocan Central and Malaya. In each of the barangays, 20 individuals were randomly selected as survey respondents.
Chi-square test for independence was used to analyze if there is a relationship between the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, their level of awareness of the ordinance, and use of the green fund.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

Interviews were also conducted with store supervisors, concerned offices at the Quezon City Hall (EPWMD and the Planning Division), and junk shop owners/mangangalakal. Public documents and pamphlets related to the implementation of the three ordinances provided by the EPWMD and Planning Division were also gathered and analyzed. These included data from the WACS conducted in Quezon City in 2003 and 2013. News clips, videos, photographs, website pages were also collected.

In addition, a focus group discussion (FGD) composed of nine Quezon City residents was conducted to assess the impact of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance on Quezon City residents, particularly those living in Area 24 of District 4. The conduct of the FGD also aimed to countercheck or validate the survey results and to solicit inputs, comments and suggestions from the group. Outputs from the FGD may help the city evaluate the ordinance for it to better address plastic pollution. Nine
participants represented each of the following groups: mothers (two attendees); fathers (three attendees); youth (two attendees); and barangay captains (two attendees). Due to time constraint, the survey was only administered to residents of the six barangays under Area 24, District 4 of the city.

Results and Discussion

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey results revealed that, out of 120 respondents, almost 60% (71 respondents) are female. In terms of age distribution, most respondents are middle-aged; 40% of the respondents are aged 40-59, while around 24% are 26-39 years old. Almost 68% are married.

Awareness of the Ordinance and Green Fund Utilization

Findings showed that, while respondents were aware of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, only some of them were aware of one of its provisions, the green fund utilization. A wide majority (82.5%) of the respondents claimed that they were aware of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance. However, only 59 respondents (49.2%) were aware of the green fund. In contrast, 103 respondents (85.8%) were aware of the amount of the plastic recovery system fee, which essentially forms part of the green fund. Moreover, 68 respondents (56.7%) related that the two-peso fee was enough. Other respondents suggested that the fee be increased from Php5 to as high as Php100.

Use of Plastic Bags among Store Customers

Direct observations were done in Grocery Store A and Convenience Store B, with the researcher being a passive, third-party observer. It mainly aimed to determine which type of shopping bag or packaging the customers commonly preferred in the check-out counters.

In Grocery Store A, observation took place in three counters coded as 3A, 3B and 2A. Out of 94 customers, 39 availed of plastic bags being sold at two pesos each. Eighteen were given plastic labo, while eight preferred using boxes. Nine customers hand-carried their goods. It should be noted that only two customers brought recycled paper bags while 18 of the 94 customers brought their own eco bags. No one availed of the ten-peso eco bags sold at Grocery Store A (Table 1).
Table 1. Number of Customers in Grocery Store A, per Type of Bag Used for Purchased Goods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Bag</th>
<th>3A</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>2A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plastic Bag</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic Labo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-carry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled Paper Bag</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled Eco Bag</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Eco Bag</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eco bags worth Php10 each were displayed in stands at the entrance of the store. Each counter also had a promotional sample. However, the researcher noted that, in the three counters, neither the bagger nor the cashier promoted the eco bags in lieu of the plastic bags. The cashier and bagger were also observed to have the following script:

Cashier: “Sir/Ma’am, total amount is _____.”
Bagger: “Sir/Ma’am, plastic charge?”

Through this script, shoppers are reminded of the fee for the use of plastic bags. Nevertheless, during the observed transactions, some still preferred to use plastic bags despite being advised of the additional charge. Other customers even bought two to three plastic bags per transaction.

It was also observed that the type of bag used depended on the quantity of goods bought, as well as the size and the kind of the goods. Customers who bought several items, and those who bought wet goods, preferred using plastic bags. Meanwhile, those who purchased lightweight dry goods tend to hand-carry the goods instead or place these in their bags. The store also offered free plastic labo even for dry goods, despite the provision in the ordinance limiting the use of plastic labo only for wet goods.

Meanwhile, Convenience Store B store only opened one counter every morning, making all the transactions centralized. At the time of the observation, 22 customers entered the store, 13 of whom bought medicines. The remaining nine bought groceries. None of them bought or asked for a plastic bag. The staff of the store did not ask, “Plastic, paper bag or hand-carry?” Instead, they automatically put the goods inside a white/brown paper bag. It was not clear whether the customers of the store were aware that plastic bags were available. Mimicking behavior was
also noted, wherein the customer unconsciously copies the behavior of the one checking out before him/her.

For the next two stores, Grocery Store C and Convenience Store D, the researcher participated as a direct participant/mystery shopper, directly interacting with the cashier or bagger. As the researcher checked out her bought goods in Grocery Store C, the bagger automatically packed the goods inside plastic bags without asking if she had eco bags or if she would want to hand-carry the items. This behavior tends to encourage the customers to use plastic bags. Nonetheless, most of the customers of this store bought goods by bulk, and as such, customers usually preferred having the goods packed in boxes.

In Convenience Store D, the cashier automatically put the goods bought inside a brown paper bag, similar to what has been done at Convenience Store B. As a mystery shopper, the researcher asked the cashier if the store has plastic bags. The cashier told the researcher that the use of plastic bags is strictly prohibited in the city, an indication that the cashier may have been not only aware of the ordinance, but actively informing customers about it.

Meanwhile, survey results revealed various reasons why respondents resort to using plastic bags for packing their purchased goods. Most of the respondents admitted that they use plastic bags because they forget to bring eco bags with them. In particular, some respondents said:

"Dahil minsan tinatamad magdala ng eco bag." (Sometimes, I am lazy to bring eco bag with me.)

"Nakakalimutan kong magdala ng eco bag." (I tend to forget to bring an eco bag.)

"Nasanay na gamitin." (I got used to using plastic bag.)

Meanwhile, other respondents also cited affordability and availability:

"Madaling makabili ng plastic bags dahil abot-kaya. Mas mura kaysa eco bag." (It is easier to buy plastic bags because it is affordable [and] cheaper than the eco bag.)

"Wala kasing eco bag minsan sa store." (Eco bags are sometimes not available at the store.)
“Dahil mayroon parating plastic sa counter.” (Plastic bags are always available at the counter.)

Some of the respondents also said that plastic bags are convenient to use and reuse:

“Pwede kasing lagayan ng basura.” (It can be used as a garbage container.)

“Mas madaling bitbitin, magaan din.” (It is easier to bring and is light.)

Meanwhile, some who preferred to hand-carry their goods or have them packed in eco bags or boxes reasoned that the practice is a long-time investment, is convenient, saves more money, and helps save the environment:

“We can use it all over again.”

“Tipid at hindi na laging bibili at hindi na darami ang basura dahil sa plastic.” (It saves us more money [because] we no longer need to buy [plastic] often, and there will be no more plastic wastes.)

“Walang hassle na masira o mabutas ito.” (It will not be destroyed or torn.)

“Makakatulong din upang mapanatili ang kalinisan ng ating kapaligiran dahil wala ng plastic na itatapon na basura sa kanal.” (This will help the city maintain cleanliness since no one will be throwing plastic in the canal.)

“Para hindi na magbabara ang kanal. Mas eco-friendly ito.” (Canals will no longer be clogged [and] it is more eco-friendly.)

“Expensive. But I can help conserve our environment and we can use it again.”

“Pwede siyang malabhan at hindi mabilis mapunit.” (It can be washed and [it is] not easily torn.)

Trend is also a factor:

“Ito ang usong gamitin.” (This is the latest trend.)
During the FGD, the participants agreed that cost made a difference in the use of eco bags over plastic bags. The focus group pointed out that eco bags were much more expensive (priced at Php10) than plastic bags (priced at Php2). Hence, more customers preferred buying plastic bags than eco bags.

Influence of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Awareness and Type of Bag Used

Survey data was analyzed using chi-square test of independence to determine whether the type of bag used (plastic bag, eco bag and others), awareness of the ordinance, and awareness of the green fund, relate to their gender, age, civil status, and barangay of residence. Contingency tables plotting sociodemographic data against awareness and usage variables, as well as the chi-square statistics, were generated in SPSS. A p-value equal to or lower than 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between the two variables being compared.

Table 2 shows the cross-tabulation between gender and the type of bag used by the respondent, as well as their level of awareness of the ordinance and of the green fund. Based on the table, an equal number of males and females (12 respondents each) used plastic bags, while more females (59 respondents) used eco bags/boxes than males (37 respondents). More females were aware of the ordinance (60 respondents) and the green fund (36 respondents) than males. However, more females were likewise unaware of the green fund than males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Bag Type</th>
<th>Awareness to the Ordinance</th>
<th>Green Fund Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plastic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all barangays, more respondents used eco bags/boxes than plastic bags, albeit in varying margins of difference. In Barangays Krus na Ligas and Malaya, 18 respondents used eco bags/boxes, while only two respondents used plastic bags. In Barangay Pinyahan, eight respondents used plastic bags, while 12 respondents used eco bags/boxes.
Meanwhile, more respondents were generally aware of the ordinance, again in varying degrees of difference. All of 20 respondents from Krus na Ligas were aware of the ordinance. In contrast, only 11 from Barangay Botocan knew about the policy. Even fewer respondents were aware of the green fund; two respondents from Pinyahan, and only half (ten respondents) from Barangay Sikatuna, were aware of such fund. Most (13) respondents from Malaya, on the other hand, were aware of the Green Fund (Table 3).

As shown in Table 4, most respondents who used eco bags/boxes and who were likewise aware of the ordinance were married. However, more married respondents were relatively unaware of the green fund. It should be noted that a few respondents did not indicate their civil status.

On the other hand, most respondents across different age ranges used eco bags/boxes for their purchased goods, and were aware of the ordinance. Most of them were aged 40-59. In addition, all respondents aged 18-25 were aware of the ordinance. Again, fewer were aware of the green fund among different age groups; five respondents below 18 years old and five respondents aged 18-25 were unaware of the fund. Meanwhile, almost half of the respondents aged 40-59 years were unaware of it (Table 5).
Table 5. Age vs. Awareness and Type of Bag Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Bag Type</th>
<th>Awareness to the Ordinance</th>
<th>Green Fund Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plastic</td>
<td>Eco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chi-square test of independence determined whether the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents made any difference on their awareness of the ordinance and green fund and the type of bag they used for their purchased goods. The analysis revealed that the respondents’ awareness of the ordinance and the green fund is significantly related to their barangay of residence. It may imply that the barangay has a role to play in raising awareness of the city ordinance among its constituents. Table 6 summarizes the test results.

Table 6. Chi-square Test Results: Sociodemographic Characteristics vs. Awareness and Type of Bag Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociodemographic Variables</th>
<th>Bag Type</th>
<th>Awareness to the Ordinance</th>
<th>Green Fund Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>χ²</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>χ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay</td>
<td>9.375</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>23.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Status</td>
<td>4.655</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>6.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>4.641</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>6.467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p ≤ 0.05.

Some of the points raised in the FGD supported this relationship. The focus group generally asserted the role of the barangay in information dissemination and monitoring the implementation of the ordinances. Likewise, the participants stressed the role of the government in policy implementation.

Impact of Ordinance on Stakeholders and Waste Collection

Interviews were also conducted with store supervisors, concerned offices at the Quezon City Hall (i.e., EPWMD and the Planning Division), and junk shop owners/mangangalakal. The interviews aimed to gather firsthand and secondary information about the impact of the Plastic Bag...
Reduction Ordinance on stakeholders in Quezon City. One junk shop owner feels that the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance does not affect his business since they do not collect plastic bags. On the other hand, the mangangalakal mentioned that he collects plastic bags but these constitute only a little amount. Thus, the ordinance does not have a major impact for the mangangulakal.

A series of interviews were held with officers and staff in offices tasked to implement and monitor the ordinance—the EPWMD and the Planning and Development Office of the Quezon City Government. During the interviews, the EPWMD chief garbage collector and a staff of the Planning and Development Office referred to results of the WACS in 2003 and 2013. WACS sought to evaluate and monitor the performance of the city and effectiveness of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance. It involved measuring the volume of wastes that arrived at the sanitary landfills.

The study classified wastes into three types: biodegradable (e.g., food/kitchen waste, garden waste, human waste, and animal remains), non-biodegradable/recyclable (e.g., paper, plastic, glass/bottles, and metals) and non-biodegradable/residual wastes (e.g., inorganic, hazardous, special and other wastes).

Figure 2 summarizes the composition of wastes covered in the 2003 WACS, which served as the baseline data for implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, and those covered in the 2013 WACS. The marked increase in the percentage of biodegradable waste after ten years suggests the lack of other means for disposal at the household or barangay level.

The said increase was accompanied by a decrease in proportion of recyclable waste. For instance, the percentage of plastic went down by more than ten percentage points. Meanwhile, the proportion of residual wastes reached up to more than 25%, which may also indicate there were no other means for disposing the waste in households or barangays.

**Collection and Use of Green Fund**

Data on the collection and use of green fund were gathered from interviews with the officials and staff from EPWMD and the Planning and Development Office of the Quezon City Government, as well as other stakeholders involved in the collection of green fund, such as storeowners and managers. The chief garbage collector from EPWMD pointed out that Quezon City is the pioneering LGU of the green fund.
Representatives from EPWMD and the Planning and Development Office discussed how the city government monitors the green fund. The staff from the Planning Division remarked, "Lumalabas ito sa official receipt kaya madaling i-track ang collected green fund. Lalo pa na may quarterly reporting ang mga stores. Meron kaming ibinigay sa kanila na form na sasagutan nila para transparent ang green fund ([The Plastic Recovery System Fee] is indicated in the official receipt, so the green fund collection is easy to track, especially because stores report [their collections] quarterly. We ask them to fill up a form to make the green fund collection more transparent)."

One of the store managers interviewed mentioned that their current task is to think of an environmental project they would want to do for the community using the green fund. The manager added that cooperation of the stores is important to the success of the program; being able to interact directly with the customers, store managers and staff are in the best position to promote the use of eco bags instead of plastic bags. However, it must be noted that eco bags are sold for profit by the store.

From 2012 to 2016, the accumulated green fund is around Php207 million. The Green Fund collection has been steadily increasing,
experiencing only a slight decline in 2014. District 1 has the highest collection in four years, while District 2 has the lowest collection in the same period (Figure 3). The accumulation of green fund over the four-year period may imply that imposing a two-peso fee to regulate plastic bag may not likely stop the residents from buying plastic bags. The staff from the Planning and Development Office added that the ordinance does not keep customers outside Quezon City from buying them as well.

Figure 3. Green Fund Collection per District in Quezon City, in Philippine Pesos (Php), 2012-2016

It is interesting to note that the green fund does not go to the city government; instead, the stores keep the fund for use in planning for and implementing environmental programs. According to the chief garbage collector of the EPWMD, his office strictly monitors retail businesses in this aspect. He remarked that “we just oversee what their plans are for the fund and approve [the project] if we see that the project is feasible and [will] contribute to the welfare of the community.” However, translating green fund into environmental programs may be difficult, as proposals need to undergo review by the city government before approval. Table 7 shows the status of various environmental projects proposed and implemented by businesses in Quezon City, and those approved by the city government.
Table 7. Status of the Proposed Environmental Projects of Different Business Establishments in Quezon City as of August 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Establishment</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Project Cost (Php)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robinsons Supermarket</td>
<td>Ecosavers: Mixed Soft Plastic Conversion into School Chairs</td>
<td>2,000,000.00</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puregold Price Club Inc.</td>
<td>Shoot that Kalat</td>
<td>1,571,572.80</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinsons Handyman</td>
<td>Clean Drive: One Trash Bin, One Cleaner Future</td>
<td>880,000.00</td>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldilocks</td>
<td>Kapit Bisig Para sa Ilog Pasig (KBPIP) Program for the Environment in partnership with ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Inc. (ALKFI)</td>
<td>900,000.00</td>
<td>Proposed Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury Drug</td>
<td>E-bike for QCPD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM Supermarket</td>
<td>Street Art, Public School Donations, Library Donations, Monobloc classroom chairs and trash bin</td>
<td>2,599,660.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daiso Japan</td>
<td>Clean and Green: Reuse, Reduce and Recycle</td>
<td>103,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Quezon City Government (2017)

Suggested Measures

Various stakeholders offered recommendations on how plastic pollution can be better addressed in Quezon City. Survey respondents suggested that Quezon City residents must strictly follow the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance, bring eco bags with them, and segregate and dispose of garbage properly in the designated places. They also suggested that residents must avoid using plastic bags only once, and reuse, reduce, and recycle them. On the other hand, respondents clamored for stricter implementation of the ordinance and better coordination among stakeholders. They also mentioned increasing the plastic recovery system fee charged for the use of plastic bags. As suggested by one of the respondents, “Dapat itaas ng 200% ang halaga ng plastic para hindi na ito bilhin (The cost of the plastic [bag] should be increased by 200% so that no one will ever buy it).

The respondents also suggested totally banning the use of other plastic containers and utensils, and imposing higher amount of penalties. Some of the respondents added that plastic bags should no longer be available in the groceries. They also recommended that the government consider closing factories that make plastics. Other respondents suggested education through the media, information dissemination campaigns, lectures, seminars, and school discussions.

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Meanwhile, some FGD participants suggested that a common, systematic waste disposal scheme be implemented in the city, similar to that in Sydney, Australia. Others mentioned the importance of the Filipino slogans, “tapat ko, linis ko” (my frontage, my responsibility) and “bayanihan” (communal unity or cooperation).

Recommendations

Now in its fifth year, the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance needs to be revisited based on the policy outcomes in the past four years. Low level of awareness of the green fund suggests the need for more intensive awareness campaigns and information dissemination drives among customers. Frontline staff in retail stores may be tapped for these campaigns. It is also imperative to make the collection of plastic waste more systematic. Centralized areas for disposing plastic wastes may be installed, particularly in strategic areas in villages or shopping centers where households or customers usually converge. Designation of waste markets and green lanes in retail stores, e.g. supermarkets, may be made mandatory.

The city government may also consider consulting barangays with regard to adjusting the plastic recovery system fee to make it at par with the minimum price of eco bags sold in retail stores. The government may also consider adjusting the price of eco bags to make them more affordable. Lastly, the use of local products, such as the traditional bayong, baskets, and fish net, in carrying goods needs to be encouraged.

Conclusion

This study looked into the implementation of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance in Quezon City from 2012-2016, a policy that mainly aimed to regulate the use of plastic bags as packaging. It specifically measured the level of awareness of the ordinance and one of its provisions, the green fund. It also attempted to determine the perceived and actual impact of the ordinance on different stakeholders, and the factors that influence its implementation. The study also investigated the collection and use of the green fund.

Survey findings showed that most of the respondents were aware of the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance. However, only around half of them were aware of the green fund, which is provided by the ordinance. This indicates that respondents may only be partially aware of the specifics of the ordinance. The level of awareness of the ordinance and the green fund
significantly differed across barangays, suggesting that the barangay, to a certain extent, may influence one's awareness of the ordinance.

The ordinance affects grocery shoppers, storeowners, residents, and junk shops in different ways. Despite the increasing use of eco bags/boxes, most shoppers still preferred using plastic bags mainly because they are readily available, reusable, affordable, and convenient to use relative to alternatives such as eco bags. Meanwhile, the ordinance has given retail establishments a renewed responsibility to discourage the use of plastic bags among their customers.

Decline in the volume of plastic collected from households, as shown in the WACS of 2003 and 2013, may reflect, at least partially, the effectiveness of the ordinance in addressing plastic pollution. The following factors may have influenced its effectiveness: support from the different stakeholders, especially the stores and their shoppers, which is largely determined by market preferences; and coordination, supervision and monitoring by the city government.

The green fund, collected from the plastic recovery system fees charged to customers for using plastic bags offered by retail stores, has gradually increased from 2012 to 2016. Retail stores are mandated to collect the plastic recovery system fee to be set aside as the green fund and encouraged to use the fund in planning for and implementing environmental programs. In return, they are accountable to the city government for collection and use of the fund, mainly through submission of collection reports and project proposals, among other documents. The greater challenge is in translating the collected fund into meaningful environmental programs in the city.

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Quezon City Ordinance No. SP 2103, s. 2011. *An ordinance mandating all business establishments using plastic bags in their business transactions to display conspicuously in their stores the environment friendly notice “Save the Environment, Bring Your Own Recyclable/Reusable Bags.”* (2011).

2017
Quezon City Ordinance No. SP 2127, s. 2012. An ordinance prohibiting the use of plastic and Styrofoam in Quezon City Hall Complex, Novaliches District Center, Quezon City General Hospital and Novaliches District Hospital for efficient garbage disposal and to reduce risk to health and well-being. (2012).

Quezon City Ordinance No. SP 2140, s. 2012. An ordinance regulating the use of plastic bags and establishing an environmental fee for its use, providing mechanism for its recovery and recycling and providing penalties for violation thereof. (2012).


*January-December*
A Review of Citizen Participation
Issues, Responses, and Prospects for Reform in Local Development Councils

CZARINA MEDINA-GUCE AND ANA MARTHA GALINDES*

This article conducts a review of citizen participation in local governance within the context of the local development councils (LDCs). It argues that the Local Government Code has prescribed citizen participation with a limited set of standards, namely, the 25% civil society membership in the LDC and the administrative indicators of activities that the LDC must perform. The Code and subsequent LGU performance measures it influenced have insufficiently addressed the roles to play and capacities needed by civil society to realize higher levels of citizen participation in the LDCs. Moving forward, the study takes stock of citizen participation initiatives that make explicit the roles and capacities of civil society organizations in local decision making and draws lessons to suggest prospects for deepening and increasing citizen participation in LDCs. The article ends with a note that citizen participation should be in the core agenda of proposed amendments in the Code.

Keywords: local development council, local government units, citizen participation

Introduction

Former Senator Aquilino “Nene” Pimentel, Jr., principal author of Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991 (LGC, or the Code), said in an interview with one of the authors:

The heart of the Local Government Code was already beating when the 1987 Constitution was written. The Code is a manifestation of how we envisioned our democracy when we reclaimed it from the dictatorship... The people must always be on top of the situation to monitor what is being done and to express their views regarding the

*Executive Director, Institute for Leadership, Empowerment and Democracy (ILEAD); and Communication and Partnerships Associate, ILEAD, respectively. The authors would like to thank the following persons who have been instrumental in the data gathering and insight mining process for this research: Mr. Genixon David, Mr. Robert Sanders and the DILG Project Management Office team (Mr. Glenn Miranda, Mr. DP Santos, and Mr. Ivan Sumilang), headed by Mr. Richard Villacorte. We also deeply acknowledge DILG Undersecretary Austere Panadero for the years of guidance and inspiration towards achieving genuine local autonomy in the Philippines.
way the government is being run in the localities... Local governance
does not depend on the governors alone. The people must do their
share. [emphasis added] (Personal communication, October 18, 2017)

It is a hopeful note, as the Code builds on the idea that democracy
rests on genuine involvement of citizens in the work of governance. Local
government units (LGUs) are created to decentralize and devolve service
delivery functions for efficiency and, in principle, effective response to
local needs. In the process of exercising local autonomy, LGUs should
account for citizen inputs in local planning and budgeting, directly
involving citizen groups in both executive (planning) and legislative
(budget allocation) decisions.

The theory of change embedded in the LGC resonates agency-
structure frameworks, particularly the Giddens perspective of the duality
of structures (Mouzelis, 1995; Sewell, 1992). The notion is particularly
empowering when applied to governance frameworks: that while the
structure (systems and institutions) provide for the context of
understanding, meaning, and action for the agents (entities capable of
action, like persons or groups), the agents have the capacity to shape and
affect the structures in return.

In this sense, LGUs provide for the context for citizen participation—
particularly through the platforms of the local development councils
(LDCs, or the Council) and local special bodies (LSBs). Meanwhile, citizens
that engage in these platforms are able to shape the LDC and, ultimately,
the LGU systems and processes themselves.

Within the scope of the LGC, perhaps the most essential of all these
citizen participation platforms are the LDCs because they exist in every
level of the LGUs. The LGC (1991) stipulates:

Section 106. Local Development Councils. -
(a) Each local government unit shall have a comprehensive multi-
sectoral development plan to be initiated by its development council
and approved by its sanggunian. For this purpose, the development
council at the provincial, city, municipal, or barangay level, shall
assist the corresponding sanggunian in setting the direction of
economic and social development and coordinating development
efforts within its territorial jurisdiction.

Section 109. Functions of Local Development Councils. -
(a) The provincial, city, and municipal development councils shall
exercise the following functions:
(1) Formulate long-term, medium-term, and annual socioeconomic
development plans and policies;
(2) Formulate the medium-term and annual public investment
programs;

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(3) Appraise and prioritize socioeconomic development programs and projects;
(4) Formulate local investment incentives to promote the inflow and direction of private investment capital;
(5) Coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of development programs and projects; and
(6) Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or component authority.

(b) The barangay development council shall exercise the following functions:
(1) Mobilize people's participation in local development efforts;
(2) Prepare barangay development plans based on local requirements;
(3) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of national or local programs and projects; and
(4) Perform such other functions as may be provided by law or competent authority.

The journey of citizen participation over the past 26 years of the LGC is a sprint towards the end. For the longest time, the statutory local planning and budgeting under the LDC has not been effectively implemented (World Bank, 2017). But in the last decade, significant programs and innovations have emerged that compel the rethinking of citizen participatory platforms—specifically the LDCs—and their significance in the LGUs' performance.

This article is divided into three parts. First, it will problematize how the spirit of citizen participation espoused in the Code is limited by the insufficiency of standards for LDC functionality, the vagueness of roles and insufficient capacities to guide the conceptualization and actions of both government and citizens. Second, the article will take stock of citizen participation initiatives from government and non-government organizations (NGOs) and their implications on pushing for higher levels of citizen participation. Lastly, it will discuss prospects for deepening citizen participation in local governments through policy and programs.

This article can be a relevant reference in academic literature on how citizen participation in local governance is conceptualized, operationalized, and measured in policy. It may also offer practitioners some insights on how the various efforts from government and civil society are coming together to find ways for genuine citizen influence in governance to uphold the spirit of the Local Government Code.
Local Development Councils: In the Code versus in Practice

Citizen participation is broadly defined as a process that provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions (Michels, 2011; University of Oregon, 2003). There are three key concepts in such understanding: individuals or citizens, opportunity (such as platforms and activities), and influence in public decisions. These terms can be thought of as matching a standard logical framework and the broad translations from the LDC provisions, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Logical Framework Representation of the Gap in Citizen Participation in the LDC (Authors' representation)

AGENTS
Citizens

INPUTS
Participation platforms (LDC)

ACTIVITIES
Process (regular meetings); formation of committees

OUTPUTS
Plans, proposals, agenda given to government

OUTCOMES
Increased influence in government decision making

The article argues that the LDC, and all the LGU performance metrics it influenced through the years, have been limited to the administrative area, i.e., activities and outputs, of problematizing citizen participation in local governance. Administrative platforms and activities, no matter how public or regular, are not very good at giving citizens direct influence, even if they can be used as forums for preliminary information sharing (Ebdon & Franklin, 2006, p. 440). This suggests a disjoint between the spirit of the Code versus how the LDC's implementation has been conceptualized and overseen through the years.

Two critical points also arise. First, the Code and the subsequent translations of its provisions into administrative performance assessments of the LGUs have provided little to no evidence to correlate the functionality of the LDCs into meaningful participation of citizens, given the lack of appropriate indicators. Second, the roles of citizen representatives in the LDC remain vague, on top of the insufficiencies in capacities of these representatives that are addressed on a per-program approach.

January-December
LDC Functionality as Administrative Compliance

In all local government levels—province, city, municipality, and barangays—the LDCs must be comprised by NGOs at no less than 25% of the LDC composition (LGC, Section 107). This was promising, especially because there are elements of self-governance as per the prescribed process of the NGO representative selection:

Section 108. Representation of Non-governmental Organizations. - Within a period of sixty (60) days from the start of organization of local development councils, the non-government organizations shall choose from among themselves their representatives to said councils. The local sanggunian concerned shall accredit non-government organizations subject to such criteria as may be provided by law. [emphasis added]

Upon constitution, the Code also provides for the administrative expectations on the LDCs:

- The LDCs must meet at least once every six months or as often as necessary (Section 110).
- The LDCs must have an executive committee, and may have sectoral or functional committees for representation and support in the conduct of its functions (Section 111, 112).
- The LDCs must be assisted by a secretariat for technical support, documentation, and preparation of other reports necessary (Section 113).
- The LDCs must submit their proposed plans to the local sanggunian (legislative council) and/or regional development councils (Section 114).
- The LDCs must receive information on financial resources and budgetary allocations relevant to their localities from the Department of Budget and Management (Section 115).

Because of the sheer number of LGUs in the country (81 provinces, 145 cities, 1,489 municipalities, and 42,029 barangays; each having its own LDC), it has been a challenge for national government agencies, particularly the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), to monitor LDCs. However, oversight on LDC implementation was first accounted for in the earlier iteration of the Local Government Performance Management System (LGPMS), which started in the 2000s. In the earlier version of LGPMS, indicators on participation were put together to reflect the administrative conduct of the LDCs. For instance, among the indicators shared by DILG in 2012 were the following:

2017
• "Are the NGOs, people's organizations (POs), and/or private sector represented in the local development council?" (Answer options: yes, no, partial)

• "Was your LGU able to set up a feedback mechanism to generate citizens' views on the reach and quality of your LGU's services?" (Answer options: yes, no)

• "Are NGOs, POs, or the private sector involved in the implementation of the LGU development projects (especially those that are funded out of the 20% component of the internal revenue allotment [IRA])?" (Answer options: yes, no; with follow through questions on the extent of involvement of the sectors)

When the LGPMS was complimented by, then later updated into, the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH), which was then expanded into the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) in 2014, the performance measurements of the LGUs included "LDC functionality" under the "financing development" category. However, LDC functionality was still measured based on administrative conduct of activities and does not seem to underscore quality and roles of civil society in the local government planning and budgeting.

Another interesting note is that LDC functionality has not been a consistent core component in the performance indicators of the LGUs under the iterations of SGH/GFH to SGLG as per the progression of guidelines issued by the DILG from SGH's enactment in 2010 to present. In 2010, the SGH was initially launched to focus on sound financial management, measured solely through the absence of an adverse or a disclaimer Commission on Audit (COA) opinion on local financial transactions, and transparency and accountability, measured through the observance of the full disclosure policy (FDP). The SGH was formalized in 2012 to introduce three categories, namely, bronze, silver, and gold, with gold including "functionality of LDC" as one of its criteria. However, the inclusion of LDC functionality was later removed in the revised assessment framework upon the launch of the expanded SGLG in 2014 to 2016. It was only in 2017 when it was included again as an indicator under the "financing development" category.

These changes in the inclusion of LDC functionality in the performance measures of the LGUs show that it had not been a core criterion in determining what makes an LGU well-performing. This is not to say that DILG and its partners have turned a blind eye on citizen participation, because the assessment program has been progressive in
terms of aligning its parameters with national agenda and needs. The frequent revision of its guidelines from 2010 to 2017 can be seen as an effort to improve on assessment areas consistent to the needs of local stakeholders. In addition, the iterations in the SGLG-LDC functionality inclusion occurred against the backdrop of the Bottom-up Budgeting program (BuB, which ran from 2013-2016 under the Aquino administration). The BuB was the cornerstone program for citizen participation in planning and budgeting processes, wherein local government and local civil society organizations co-chaired a decision-making platform, called the local poverty reduction action teams (LPRATs). As a priority program, attention of national government agencies and LGUs were focused on BuB. Nevertheless, the assessment program is a platform that could have emphasized LDC functionality as a fundamental indicator in gauging citizen participation in local governance and development.

In terms of the limitedness of LDC functionality indicators, it can be said that, even if the 2017 SGLG results showed that 80% of LGUs (provinces, cities, municipalities) passed the LDC functionality component, the results do not say whether citizens were influencing government decisions through the participatory platform. What the number simply means is that 80% of provinces, cities, and municipalities are compliant in convening their respective LDCs, which have their committees and secretariats, at least 25% CSO representation, and which meet at least once every six months.

Furthermore, Section 109 of the Code provides for function of the LDC to “formulate long-term, medium-term, and annual socioeconomic development plans and policies [emphasis added],” and the citizen representatives should be a part of this process. As per DILG’s 2017 assessment of the existence of comprehensive development plans (CDPs), the performance of municipal LGUs was less than satisfactory: only 864 municipalities (52.88%) had a CDP, while 770 municipalities (47.12%) did not. These meant that just around half of municipal LDCs—even if we assume that they comply with the LDC citizen participation requirements—were able to deliver the development plan that was expected of them. The breakdown of CDP existence per region is shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Is the LDC working as a platform for citizen participation? There is no way to know because the LDCs have never been sufficiently conceptualized, problematized, and measured in terms of citizen participation outcomes. However, this is not to say that this limitation is not problematized by government and NGOs alike. The succeeding section delves into this more concretely.
Figure 2. Percentage of Municipalities with Comprehensive Development Plans per Region, as of 2nd Quarter 2017

Source: DILG (n.d.)

Figure 3. Percentage of Municipalities without Comprehensive Development Plans per Region, as of 2nd Quarter 2017

Source: DILG (n.d.)
Problematising Gaps in Citizen Participation in the LDCs: Roles and Capacities

In this subsection, it is argued that, because the standard of LDC functionality in the Code and in subsequent performance measurements are based on administrative implementation, the roles of citizens (and their representatives) in the LDC remain vague. This is on top of the insufficiencies in capacities in community-based civil society representatives that are, to date, being addressed on a per-program approach. In the sections of the Code quoted earlier, the provisions make huge assumptions when it argues that the presence of citizen representatives in the LDC necessarily translates to influence in local government decisions. This section argues that, while presence is a vital step in encouraging citizen influence, the implementation and oversight of the LDCs over the past years have not sufficiently addressed the variables of role clarity and citizen capacity to make the LDC-as-platform reach the outcomes desired.

How are higher levels of citizen participation conceptualized? Contemporary sources cite a certain framework, the ladder of citizen participation, by Sherry Arnstein (1969, as cited in Dobson, n.d.), which is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: Dobson (n.d.)
In this representation, Arnstein (1969, as cited in Dobson, n.d.) argues that:

- For Levels 1-2, there is no participation of citizens, and the only aim is to cure or educate.
- Levels 3 to 5 are tokenistic participation. Level 3 (Informing) is the first step to legitimate participation, but there is only one way in the flow of information (from government to citizens). Level 4 (Consultation) is also legitimate, but usually is a window dressing ritual. Level 5 (Placation) is the scenario wherein there is “co-option of hand-picked ‘worthies’ onto committees. It allows citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice” (Dobson, n.d., para. 6).
- The highest levels, Levels 6 to 8, are when Arnstein argues that there are degrees of citizen control. Level 6 (Partnership) is when power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders, usually through shared decision-making platforms (e.g., joint committees). Level 7 (Delegation) is when citizens hold clear majority of seats in committees with delegated powers to make decisions. Level 8 (Citizen Control), the highest level, is when the entire set of functions of planning, policymaking, and managing programs are done by citizens, with no intermediary between them and the source of funds.

From these definitions alone, it can be argued that the existing indicators of LDC functionality have set the implementation guidelines at the mid-ladder tokenistic levels with Level 6 (Partnership) at most, if negotiation truly happens within the platform. What may be closest to a prescriptive policy on citizens’ LDC participation is DILG Memorandum Circular 2009-109, which guides the functionality of LDCs at the barangay level only. The administrative requirements for convening them are still the primary set of indicators, but are supplemented by guidelines such as:

- Policies and plans
  - Policies and plans on mobilization of people’s participation
  - Preparation of barangay development plan
  - Monitoring and evaluation of national and local programs/projects
- Accomplishments
  - Mobilization of people’s participation (presence of bayanihan; attendance in barangay assemblies and compliance with other issuances calling for direct participation)
• Preparation of barangay development plan (BDP) (public consultation; presence of barangay socioeconomic profile; prioritization of plans and projects of other barangay-based institutions (BBIs) to the BDP; approved BDP integrated into city/municipal development plan)

• Monitoring and evaluation
  • Accomplished monitoring and evaluation forms and contractors' or implementers' progress report
  • Assigned committee/personnel to monitor and evaluate national and local programs/projects, and ocular inspection conducted
  • Projects carried out as planned
  • Funds utilized in accordance with approved budget with supporting documents
  • Interview application in evaluation for feedback
  • Results of evaluation are deliberated

Here, there is a sense of what roles the barangay LDCs (i.e., barangay development councils) can perform to bring in greater presence of citizens in the production of plans and reporting of performance of the barangay governments. However, as far as the authors’ sources from DILG are concerned, there is no existing data to show that the barangay development councils are functioning according to these provisions in the memorandum circular.

What can be improved then? What would it take for citizen participation in the LDCs to be more meaningful? We can refer back to Arnstein’s framework, match the gaps in role clarity and the capacity of citizens, and summarize the issues into Table 1.

Note that the observations presented in Table 1 are based on the authors’ years of experience in advocating for local governance reforms, numerous dialogues with LGUs and civil society organizations from 2011 to present, and continuous insight-mining and planning sessions with units of DILG. The data presented include anecdotes of success stories of CSOs/NGOs that have overcome these challenges in their localities. However, the data from these anecdotes is not consolidated to fully capture the whole state of affairs in LDCs. Instead, Table 1 describes recurring observations and feedback gathered in the years of the authors’ work with local governments, specifically in developing the LGU Roadmap to Genuine Local Autonomy of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP)\(^7\). It also derives insights from partnerships and programs such as the Philippine Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (PH-EITI) (PH-EITI, n.d.-a, p. 23; PH-EITI, n.d.-b, pp. 288-291);
Philippine Open Government Partnership (OGP) (Mangahas, n.d., p. 23; ULAP, 2016b, pp. 4-9); developing technology-based innovation platforms supporting bottom-up budgeting projects (ULAP, 2016a, p. 2); and local evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) (Candelaria, 2013); among others.

Table 1. Gaps in Role Clarity and Capacity of Citizens to Achieve Higher Levels of Participation in Local Development Councils, based on Arnstein’s Ladder Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arnstein’s Ladder Levels</th>
<th>Gaps in Role Clarity and Citizen Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3: Informing</td>
<td><strong>Access to information</strong>: There is limited source of data for the citizens to respond, engage in dialogue, or question information because data is: (a) scarce at a disaggregated level of municipalities and cities, more so of barangays, and; (b) mostly provided by the local governments or local offices of national government agencies, which do not empower citizens to validate or triangulate the information. This means that the information that government provides is almost always the only data available, because the rigor of data gathering and disaggregation does not yet exist in Philippine practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4: Consultation</td>
<td><strong>Insufficient capacity for evidence-informed policymaking</strong>: Citizens, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, lack the capacity to gather, process, and make arguments out of evidence to back up their anecdotes when being consulted. This affects their ability to strengthen their agenda and assert greater negotiation capacity when faced with power holders such as mayors and LGU department heads. This has been an observation among infomediaries and capacity-building organizations that have worked with CSOs, especially during the time of the BuB implementation. <strong>Unclear government response protocols</strong>: Even if citizens are able to provide their feedback in joint platforms, it is not clear in the procedures of the LDC (and local government decision making in general) how citizens can monitor progress of their suggestions. Hence, local governments may end up consulting for consultation’s sake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5: Placation</td>
<td><strong>Discretion of LGU officials in CSO/NGO accreditation</strong>: The entrenched culture of power accumulation and patronage has long characterized local governance in the Philippines, manifesting in the discretionary powers that local officials employ in their decision making (Yilmaz &amp; Venugopal, 2013). Often reported as anecdotes are instances of the LDCs being co-opted as a means of affirming the power-hold of elected officials on democratic platforms. <strong>While Section 108 of the Code provides for an accreditation process of NGOs by the local legislative council (sanggunian), there is no available consolidated list of all accredited NGOs to vet and verify the quality of representativeness and/or independence of the NGOs from the ruling politicians. Recurring feedback from CSOs indicate that the sanggunian only accredits NGOs that are allied with the administration or are established supporters of the elected government officials. Furthermore, to date, no clear protocols exist to provide options for grievance and redress for NGOs whose applications for accreditation are denied.</strong></td>
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January-December
Table 1, continued

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<tr>
<th>Arnstein’s Ladder Levels</th>
<th>Gaps in Role Clarity and Citizen Capacity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 6: Partnership</td>
<td>Limited capacity of CSOs/NGOs to sustainably finance operational expenses and/or counterparts: Another recurring feedback from LGUs and CSO consortia/program implementers is that community-based NGOs require financial support to regularly attend meetings and perform other representative functions. This triggers broader discussions on the extent to which the government should support the operational expenses of NGOs, or if government should even extend support in the first place. The ideological question becomes practical. Public funding for representation of CSOs may encourage dependency of these organizations on the government or elected officials. However, civil society advocates assert that government financial support is reasonable given the economic limitations of community-based NGOs, which mainly represent vulnerable and marginalized groups especially in rural areas. No clear policy is guiding this issue to date.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited capacity to traverse symbolic violence in power, class, and cultural relations: Pierre Bourdieu describes symbolic violence as a “gentle, invisible, and pervasive violence exercised through cognition and misrecognition, knowledge and sentiment, often with the unwitting consent or complicity of the dominated” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018, “Definition”). This means that power relations are pre-embedded into the consciousness of the agents. Applied to the context at hand, the existence of LDCs as a platform for CSO representatives may not automatically mitigate the feeling/perception experienced by untrained citizens that they are inferior to their elected officials. Often, there is feedback that citizens still struggle to find their voice when faced by these local politicians. There is no partnership if one party feels naturally inferior to another party. In these cases, which are usually reflected in the feedback received from some CSO groups, government officials’ exercise of power is seen as an assertion of their social role over marginalized sectoral representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7: Delegation</td>
<td>Unclear roles to delegate to CSOs/NGOs: Within the provisions of the Code, the LDC is tasked to contribute to plans and agenda to be submitted to the sanggunian. The Code and any other subsequent policies do not provide for concrete roles that CSOs need to perform in the LDC. The unit of analysis of the policies is the LDC per se, which assumes that the 25% civil society representation should be enough to maneuver through the politics of decision making within the participation platform. Given the experience in the LDCs, this is an unlikely assumption. Additional note: Level 7 (Delegation) describes citizens as holding “majority of seats in committees” (Dobson, n.d.). However, this is not applicable to the LDCs. While the Code considers the 25% representation of NGOs a minimum—which means that LGUs can accredit more CSOs at their discretion—there is no policy anchor or program incentive to encourage LGUs to elevate NGO participation above this baseline. However, there are some encouraging stories, such as the “People’s Council” of the late Naga City Mayor (and former DILG Secretary) Jesse Robredo (2000), wherein he expanded CSO and NGO representation in the local special bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8: Citizen Control</td>
<td>As far as guiding policies on the LDC are concerned, the scenario described in this level rarely happens in the current context. This is guided by the limitations set by the Code prescribing the 75% government and 25% non-government composition of the LDC as an operational framework for government-citizen collaboration in local governance. While CSOs participate in the LDC and may qualify to receive direct financial support from government funds under the Code (Section 36, “Assistance to People’s and Non-governmental Organizations”), only few check and balance mechanisms guide the funding of projects implemented by CSOs. Caution may need to be exercised in light of recent corruption-related scandals involving bogus NGOs.</td>
</tr>
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2017
The challenges identified in Table 1 have been discussed numerous times among DILG, local governance reform advocates, and CSO networks in the past decade, and documented in various technical and CSO reports. Through the years, lessons were learned from innovations and experimental models of citizen participation that have been implemented. These lessons will be discussed in the second part of this article.

The preceding discussion points to the need to re-problematize how LDCs are conceptualized, overseen, and measured. Comparing against the standards of highest level of citizen participation, characterized by citizen control of certain components of decision making and funds, provides a springboard to discuss possible amendments to the LDC provisions in the Code. The Code guides the minimum expectations for local stakeholders and allows them to reframe their actions within the platforms. It can be argued that measuring LDC functionality using indicators reflecting higher levels of citizen participation better captures the spirit of representation and inclusion in the LDCs.

**Government and Non-Government Programs on Citizen Participation and Lessons from Implementation**

Given the limitations set by the Code in operationalizing citizen participation in LDCs, government units and NGOs have experimented with citizen participation models. This section takes stock of some of these initiatives in the past years, and the key lessons learned in their implementation. These lessons show that models and successful programs abound for local governments to draw insights from to reconceptualize the roles and expectations that citizens can play for more meaningful participation in the LDCs.

The Code provides for what the LDC should accomplish as a whole (Sections 106 and 109). Among these are: to produce a “comprehensive multisectoral development plan” proposal to be submitted to the sanggunian; formulate investment plans and programs; appraise and prioritize socioeconomic development programs; formulate local investment incentives; and coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of programs.

In other words, the citizens through the LDCs are asked to take part in fulfilling both the executive and legislative functions of the LGUs. The executive functions entail initiation of development planning and proposals, while the legislative functions involve the budgeting process. The LDCs also have project cycle-based roles, including the monitoring and evaluation of the programs. However, as mentioned earlier, the Code
was not clear in identifying the roles CSOs and POs play within the scope of their membership in the LDCs. The roles and expectations are merely assumed. But as this has not been sufficiently problematized, the best recourse moving forward is to draw from models emergent from the practices of government units and NGOs.

Table 2 lists programs that have made explicit the roles of citizens in local governance processes. While this is not a comprehensive list, especially those that are CSO-initiated, it nonetheless provides for the roles and responsibilities of CSOs/NGOs that are currently being considered for expansion and mainstreaming in policies and programs. The table shows that most initiatives have worked on the role of citizens in the monitoring, evaluation, and audit of government programs/projects. This observation suggests two things.

First, what is considered most viable participation of citizens is still to watch the actions of government. This is true to the spirit and history of civil society in the Philippines, especially with the critical role that it played to topple down the Marcos dictatorship, to serve as functional alternative for service delivery to marginalized sectors, and to uphold democratic processes thereafter (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2013). The default mode of civil society is to guard public interests and service delivery against possible corrupt practices in government. Given how corruption persists in the Philippines (Transparency International, 2017), higher levels of citizen participation need to be conceived and operationalized as a means to prevent or curb corruption. Citizen participation, in practice, remains to be an anti-corruption strategy.

Second, it is perhaps more viable to conceptualize citizen participation in monitoring, evaluation, and audit because negotiating as equals and partners of local governments may result in more, and even deeper, socioeconomic and cultural reforms. Earlier, we discussed that deep-seated inequalities perpetuate symbolic violence or, in the case of LDCs, dominance of the privileged over the marginalized. As such, the negotiation space leans towards the assertion of control and reaffirmation of power of government officials. Reforming the negotiation space at the local level can be attributed to civil society’s persistence and dedication, but influencing variables in the larger politico-administrative context need to be addressed. Among other factors are: the persistence of elite capture (particularly by local political dynasties) of resources (political, economic, even armed) that are linked to poverty prevalence (Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2013), and the socioeconomic marginalization of the publics that NGOs represent, e.g., farmers, fishermen, women, and children, considered the poorest sectors according to Philippine Statistics Authority (2017).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program and Initiator</th>
<th>Roles and/or Responsibilities of CSOs/NOGs</th>
<th>Executive Functions</th>
<th>Legislative Functions</th>
<th>Project Cycle-Based Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bottom-up Budgeting</strong> (BuB) (DBM, DILG, DSWD, NAPC, 2016)</td>
<td>CSOs and local leaders take part in the preparation of local poverty reduction action plans (LPRAPs) to identify priority projects to be funded by national government.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Implementing agencies: DILG, DBM, among others per project; from 2013-2016, with project completion activities 2017 to date.</td>
<td>CSO members of the LPRAT, through their elected representatives, are authorized to endorse local priority projects to the chief local executive. These are for review and/or adoption of the sanggunian.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Citizen Participatory Audit (CPA)</strong></td>
<td>Citizens (e.g., civil society, academic groups, community members and private sector) work together with the COA to audit the processes of public service delivery and government programs (ANSA-EAP, 2014).</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Initiated by the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability - East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP)</td>
<td>The program develops and capacitates citizen-monitors to monitor government activities and outcomes, specifically in the areas of education (textbook counts), infrastructure (school building and public works projects) and social services (disaster relief), among others (Aceron, Villanueva, Leonillo, &amp; Tugawin, 2010).</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Government Watch (G-watch)</strong></td>
<td>Under the Enhancing Transparency Impact (ETI) project, citizens and community leaders are capacitated to conduct participatory performance monitoring through scorecards, a social accountability tool that allows assessment of programs and services of the government (ANSA-EAP, 2013).</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Initiated by G-Watch project, Ateneo School of Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program and Initiator</td>
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| Community Monitoring Tools
*Initiated by Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG) | The program engages community-based volunteers to monitor government infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, water systems, irrigation systems, and buildings in the province of Abra, Philippines (International Budget Partnership, n.d.). | | | X |
| Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG)
**Implementing agency: DILG** | CSOs and private sector representatives are invited to sit as members of regional assessment teams (DILG, 2017a). | | | X |
| Full Disclosure Policy (FDP)
**Implementing agency: DILG** | The FDP portal enables the public to view, download, and print quarterly and annual LGU financial documents to monitor and understand the LGUs' budget and expenditures (DILG, n.d.). | | | X |
| Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities (ADM): 2018 pipelined community-based monitoring guidelines* | A duly accredited CSO representative signs the municipality's list of priority projects under the ADM Program (DILG, 2017a). | X | X | |

*Incepted by implementing sector representatives in the agency DILG validation process through its validation team and national quality committee (DILG, 2017b).
These factors may induce perceived inferiority among marginalized groups, eventually disempowering them in the negotiation and decision-making processes in local governments.

This is not to say that these problems are unsolvable. Some case studies show how communities may break away from traditional power relations in local politics (Esguerra & Villanueva, 2009). Problematizing the roles of citizens and outcomes from citizen participation involves accounting for the qualitative variables affecting the negotiation space. Through this, citizens can be empowered as true coequals and partners of their local governments.

Returning to the stocktaking exercise, the programs have their own sets of capacity-building components and other forms of support extended to participating CSOs. Each program, especially the CSO-initiated ones, has experimented differently on how the results of the monitoring, evaluation, and audit reports of citizens can be accounted for and incorporated in the planning and policymaking of local governments.13

This remains a challenge in making local governments more responsive to citizen feedback. At the same time, the approaches used in these programs affirm that citizen participation can be conceived, implemented, and measured using more meaningful indicators of influence and roles, other than just presence in committees and councils.

It is worth noting that only the now-defunct BuB program, by virtue of government funds14 and number of years implemented, significantly ventured into expanding the role of CSOs in the planning process, wherein the civil society representatives stood coequal with the local chief executive (governor or mayor) in heading the LPRATs. This had real implications on BuB implementation, because an LGU’s proposed project list would be considered void without the signature and approval of the CSO representative.

However, BuB was discontinued upon change of national administration in 2016. The Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities (ADM) of the Duterte administration, at least in its first design, should not be construed as replacement of BuB. In its first iteration, ADM is a “financial subsidy to municipalities for the implementation of their priority programs and projects” (DILG, 2017a). One feature of BuB that was missing in the ADM was the platform of the LPRAT that co-created the project plans and proposals. The ADM relied only on the project list submission of the municipalities of their priority programs and projects. What remained from the LPRATs’ practice is the required signature of a

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CSO representative in the proposed list of projects, assuming that the requested projects underwent joint review and planning at the local level.

The DILG and its partners acknowledge that joint planning and review of priority projects of the LGU with CSOs is a huge assumption to make due to the same reasons earlier explained in the context of the LDC. In response to this, the DILG is currently exploring two directions: first, reviewing the LDC functionality to strengthen citizen participation; and, second, reincorporating elements of community-based monitoring into the design of ADM. These will be further discussed in the succeeding section.

Based on what has been discussed in this section, it is evident in the stocktaking of initiatives that, even if the Code provided for minimal administrative baselines to guide citizen participation, local governance stakeholders have been trying to find ways to define the roles and responsibilities of CSOs in making citizen participation more meaningful. From these experiences, the prospects of future reforms in citizen participation in local governance could be made clearer.

**Prospects for Deepening Citizen Participation in Local Governance through Policy and Programs**

So far, the article has discussed that the Code and other policies have conceptualized citizen participation using a limited lens. Elevating citizen participation beyond administrative, platform-focused standards allows local stakeholders to substantially influence government decision making. Moreover, lessons can be drawn from models and experiments to clarify citizens’ roles in the process, and to build on their capacities to perform these roles successfully.

What then are the prospects for deepening and improving citizen participation in local governance? Reshifting of the gaze of DILG’s policies and programs towards problematizing LDC functionality is a “step in the right direction” (World Bank, 2017). Based on the conversations with DILG officials, the agency is planning to link LDC functionality to ADM and SGLG.

The BuB program was recognized internationally (Gutierrez, 2014), and it was found to strengthen citizen participation (Manasan, Adaro, & Tolin, 2017). However, it was implemented at the level of LPRATs, a participatory platform separate from the LDC, which is the main statutory platform.
Nonetheless, even if BuB and ADM are two different policy designs, the insights from the implementation of the BuB program have helped DILG and its partners from development organizations and civil society groups in moving forward with local governance reforms at the program level.

Since ADM is a financial subsidy, and allocations are decided from the list of proposed priority projects from the LGUs, the opportunity for intervention to affirm the space for citizen participation is the LDC. From conversations with DILG, it is apparent that the program direction is to focus the ADM criteria on three key indicators: (a) good financial housekeeping (GFH) compliance, (b) CDP development, and (c) LDC functionality, which are all, except for CDP development, included in the SGLG criteria. However, in learning the lessons from earlier programs, LDC functionality should not be limited to administrative and activity compliance of the LGUs. Indicators operationalizing meaningful citizen participation can be explored. For instance, percentage of citizen proposals adopted by the LGU as priority projects may be used as an indicator.

Moreover, based on the authors' continuing work with the DILG, its Project Management Office is consolidating the lessons learned in community-based monitoring in BuB, CPA, and CCAGG to integrate citizen participation in ADM. Should this materialize, civil society groups will be more deeply involved in the executive (planning), legislative (budgeting), and monitoring, evaluation, and audit of projects.

However, all these energies for reform are hinged on the existence of ADM as a national program. As noted, even with the successes of the BuB, the Duterte administration dropped the program (ABS-CBN News, 2016) and reformulated its own, the ADM, as a financial subsidy to LGUs. Moreover, the 2017 allocation for ADM of Php19.3 billion (DBM & DILG, 2016) was reduced to Php11.71 billion in the General Appropriations Act of 2018.

In principle and in practice, budget allocation is reflective of government agenda. If the significant reduction of the ADM budget allocation is any indication, DILG and its national and local stakeholders need to assess carefully how to pursue local governance reforms if the ADM budget will continue to be reduced in the following years.

Moreover, ADM is only for municipalities. There is a separate program for provinces, the Conditional Matching Grant Program (CMGP) for provincial road rehabilitation (DILG & DBM, 2017), and for cities, the Assistance to Cities. CMGP is tied to governance and technical capacities of the LGUs, while the Assistance to Cities has yet to be fully

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implemented in 2018. Citizen participation in these two other programs are not yet clearly operationalized; if at all, they will be different from how ADM is being linked to LDC functionality. However, what DILG has is the SGLG, which is considered the highest performance-based award that LGUs can receive in the Philippines to date. SGLG may be leveraged to trigger behavioral and performance changes in LGUs, as it is coupled with incentives and eligibilities for other national government financial support programs.

The capacities of civil society to negotiate and continue working for their agenda and advocacies need to be reassessed and supported through both government policy and CSO-led initiatives. In the previous section, the gaps that hinder meaningful engagements between CSOs and local governments in decision making were discussed. These gaps can be addressed by improving citizens' access to information (i.e., beyond FDP), building their capacity to engage in evidence-based policymaking, providing funds for their operations to regularly attend and engage in administrative meetings and activities, and strengthening their negotiating capacity. These all need significant investments in time, technical inputs, and resources.

Since there is no data on which assessment of CSO participation in LDC can be grounded, we turn again to BuB, since its impact on citizen participation is relatively well-documented. A study by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (Manasan, 2016) showed that the BuB model added value to CSO empowerment and increased demand for government accountability, to LGU-CSO relations, and to inter-CSO relations. However, with the LPRATs and the BuB program out of the picture, there is a gap in LGU-CSO engagement that is left to DILG's pipelined strategies to fill under ADM. The possibilities of strengthening capacities for citizen participation—no matter how promising and exciting—have not been operationalized to date. This may adversely affect community-based CSOs that were trained and somewhat involved in the negotiation with local governments.

However, perhaps there lies the deeper problem—that BuB was government-initiated. The conditions for empowering CSOs in the LPRATs as a negotiation space, including the project funds that incentivized compliance to the participatory planning and budgeting process, were created by national government and handed down to local stakeholders for implementation.

Hence, when BuB was discontinued by the national government under the succeeding administration, there was little to nothing that CSOs
could do but to appeal through their national representatives (Rappler.com, 2016). The appeals were disregarded and the BuB LPRATs were dissolved.

This is not to say that BuB is a better policy than ADM because the promising provisions for citizen participation in ADM are yet to be seen. But, as what a CSO national representative said in a 2017 interview, “[t]he CSOs were babied [by government] during BuB. Their requests were handed to them easily. [As a result], they’ve gone soft. They need to rediscover how it is to claim their own space” (Personal communication, 22 November 2017). This is more than a policy and programmatic question, and delves more into the future of civil society and democratic spaces.

Hence, CSO networks and coalitions in the country need greater support and capacity building. CSO groups and coalitions at the national level are continuing their own programs regardless of the government policy changes, but also in the same direction that the DILG is taking. The challenge for CSOs and advocates of citizen participation lies in learning from the lessons of their capacity-building initiatives.

Concluding Notes

This article reviewed citizen participation in local governance within the context of the local development councils. The Code has prescribed citizen participation at a limited level of inclusion in the platform of the LDC. The Code and the LGU performance measurements the law has set for citizen participation failed to clarify the roles and capacities needed by community-based civil society groups for more meaningful participation in the LDCs.

Moving forward, there is ample experience to draw lessons from, based on the programs and initiatives of both the DILG and CSOs. DILG is on track in leveraging on ADM and SGLG to enhance the understanding and indicators of LDC functionality, but these are all yet to be implemented. CSO networks and coalitions need stronger, more strategic approaches to reposition themselves in new forms of negotiation with government, given the changing political landscape in the current administration.

The trajectory of the reforms pipelined for LDCs may change at any point in the implementation of ADM and SGLG. However, as a concluding note, it is hoped the insights put forward in this article contribute in the effort to better prioritize the citizen participation component of the
proposed amendments to the Local Government Code. While decentralization and devolution discourses are usually spoken in the language of distribution of powers and funds between the national government and LGUs, there is a dimension of powers and funds redistribution that involve a third but essential stakeholder—the civil society in the local communities.

In particular, this article may help provide the following directions for amendments: (a) expanding the percentage of citizen representation in the LDCs; (b) concretizing the roles that CSOs play within the scope of their involvement in the LDCs, by way of policies honored and supported by LGUs; (c) conceptualizing a sustainable platform to support funding and capacity building for CSOs; and (d) developing appropriate indicators that better reflect citizen participation through the LDCs. Further exploration of these directions merit continuing study, regardless if the political support for amending the Code gains ground or not.

Endnotes

1 Section 287 of the LGC provides for the allocation of 20% of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) of local government units (LGUs) for development projects. This is referred to as 20% development fund.

2 The IRA pertains to the 40% share of LGUs in the national revenue taxes based on the collection of the third fiscal year preceding the current fiscal year, as provided for in Section 284 of the LGC.

3 The SGH is a performance-based rewards program that assesses the LGUs on their attainment of minimum governance standards. This was launched in 2010 by the DILG under the late Jesse Robredo. LGUs that receive the Seal are provided with a performance-based grant under the Performance Challenge Fund. Also, passing the Good Housekeeping (later called the Good Financial Housekeeping or GFH) renders LGUs eligible for additional grants and financial subsidies under other national government programs.

4 The SGLG is the scale-up iteration of SGH in 2014. The SGLG expands its core assessment areas from good financial housekeeping to include social protection and disaster preparedness. It also requires LGUs to pass at least one of its essential assessment areas: business friendliness and competitiveness, peace and order, or environmental management.

5 From a Powerpoint presentation shared by DILG on the 2017 Assessment Results for the Regional Management, dated 13 December 2017.

6 The CDP is the “action plan utilized by every local administration to develop and implement priority sectoral and cross-sectoral programs and projects in the proper locations to put flesh on the skeleton as it were, gradually and incrementally, until the desired shape or form of development is eventually attained over the long term” (DILG, 2009).

7 ULAP is the umbrella organization of all local government leagues and federations, and local elective and appointive officials in the Philippines, and is the platform for consolidation of local government agenda in national policy development and implementation discussions. The
authors worked in the ULAP in various executive and technical positions from 2011 to 2017. This experience allowed the authors to be heavily involved in policy and program discussions, from where the insights in Table 1 are derived.

* The table starts at Level 3 because as the framework indicates, Levels 1-2 do not show citizen participation.

9 Evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) is a process wherein policymakers (or decisionmakers in general) use best available evidence to make policy decisions. It is slightly different from evidence-based policymaking since the latter concept assumes that policy is decided on evidence alone, which does not account for political, sociocultural nuances that may exist in the context of decision making. Refer to Newman, Capillo, Famurewa, Nath, & Siyanbola (2013).

10 This is a stark contrast to open legislation innovations that are gaining ground in other countries under the Open Government Partnership initiative. Open legislation is being practiced in the United Kingdom, Greece, Japan, Denmark, Switzerland, Samoa, Kenya, among others (Open Government Partnership, 2012).

11 In 2013, entrepreneur Janet Lim Napoles allegedly masterminded the transfer of Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) of lawmakers to bogus NGOs, in a suspected scam involving the use of pork barrel funds (Rappler.com, 2017). This issue has not been resolved to date. This significantly affected mechanisms for reviewing and accrediting NGOs, even if funds for their projects and daily operations are not PDAF-sourced.

12 From community-based monitoring guidelines and tools shared by DILG Project Monitoring Team.

13 The use of citizen reports in government planning and decision making is called by many names in the emerging literature on public projects—“uptake” of government, “vertical integration,” and “mainstreaming.” These practices assume that citizen participation is successful when government units take citizen feedback into account, partner with citizens in the decision making and subsequent implementation of programs, and apply the lessons learned in a broader scale of local governance work.


References


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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS


———. (n.d.). Percentage of municipalities with Comprehensive Development Plans per Region, as of 2nd quarter 2017.
Percentage of municipalities without Comprehensive Development Plans per Region, as of 2nd quarter 2017.


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A VSO-Bahaginan Framework for Active Citizenship

ERWIN GASPAR A. ALAMPAY*

This article is based on a commissioned work for the Volunteer Service Organization (VSO)-Bahaginan to develop its organizational framework for active citizenship. The primary objective of the paper is to define the role of VSO-Bahaginan in the development of active citizenship in individuals and communities. The resulting framework derived in this paper was based on surveys, interviews and focused group discussion with various VSO-Bahaginan stakeholders, including volunteers and staff. This complemented other workshop outputs and secondary data provided by VSO-Bahaginan. Taken together, these inputs were used in crafting an active citizenship framework that is culturally sensitive to Filipino values. It discusses how VSO-Bahaginan volunteers describe the progression of active citizenship, from kamalayan (awareness) to kamulatan (consciousness) to having a paninindigan (conviction), as an agent of change.

Keywords: VSO-Bahaginan, active citizenship, volunteerism, civic engagement

Introduction

This article is based on a commissioned work done by the author for the Volunteer Service Organization (VSO)-Bahaginan, to develop their organizational framework for active citizenship based on the profile of volunteers recruited by the organization, the support the organization provides them, and the tasks assigned to them. VSO-Bahaginan is "a Filipino development organization that fights poverty through a wide range of volunteering programs" (VSO-Bahaginan, 2012, p. 1). The organization recruits, trains, and assigns skilled professionals to work with other organizations in the global South (e.g., Asia, Africa, Latin America, etc.). It also develops and manages partnerships with companies by providing venues for short-term volunteer placements.

While it deals with volunteerism, VSO-Bahaginan is, first and foremost, a development organization. This distinction is important in

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understanding and developing VSO-Bahaginan’s active citizenship (AC) framework. The organization views active citizenship (AC) as a form of citizen participation wherein “the capacity of citizens to perform their duties and to exercise their rights are strengthened, both individually and collectively, to fulfill aspirations for the general well-being of community and the larger society” (VSO-Bahaginan, 2012, p. 5) [emphasis added]. This implies that AC needs to be operationalized both at the individual level and the collective level.

Certain national laws emphasize the importance of citizen participation. For one, it is enshrined in the 1987 Constitution (Sec. 16, Article XIII), as well as more recent laws, such as the Volunteer Act of 2007 (Republic Act 9418), which strives to strengthen volunteerism as a national strategy for sustainable development and international cooperation. Moreover, the government has institutionalized mechanisms for active citizenship. An example of this would be the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), which allows youth representation and participation in local governance (Alampay & Angeles, 2012). These constitutional and legal bases reinforce the need to develop an active citizenship framework to guide citizen participation initiatives, hence, the conduct of this study.

The VSO-Bahaginan’s AC framework was partly derived from desk review of local literature on citizenship and active citizenship. The concept “active citizenship” was not commonly found in local literature; rather, there exist various nuances of the culture and context of citizen participation in the Philippines. De Leon (1996), for instance, cites the importance of the word bayanihan and the symbol of the native hut to portray the volunteer spirit associated in Filipino agricultural society. Thus, the desk review focused on local literature to determine how citizenship and active citizenship is being portrayed and applied in the local context. In addition, volunteer workshop outputs provided by VSO-Bahaginan and results of surveys, interviews and focus group discussion with VSO-Bahaginan stakeholders were content-analyzed. These inputs were altogether used in crafting the AC framework.

This article discusses literature on active citizenship and related concepts in the Philippines. It then presents an analysis of the VSO-Bahaginan stakeholders’ views about active citizenship. Finally, the paper discusses the AC framework as it is operationalized in VSO-Bahaginan.
Citizenship: Republican, Liberal, Global

Understanding active citizenship requires first analyzing the concept of citizenship, which has legal, political and identity dimensions. From a legal perspective, citizenship is defined by civil, political and social rights. From a political perspective, citizenship is viewed as the participation of citizens as political agents. Lastly, citizenship can also be understood in terms of membership in a political community, which can be an individual's distinct source of identity (Leydet, 2011).

There also exist republican and liberal views on citizenship. The republican view of citizenship originates from the ancient Greeks, who differentiated a good person—i.e., honorable and virtuous as a private individual—from a good citizen—i.e., a good person committed to participate in civic and public life (Cariño, 2005, pp. 2-3). In this sense, Cariño (2005) argues that citizen participation is a redundant term, given that citizenship, by itself, already entails participation in public affairs.

Meanwhile, the liberal view of citizenship originates from the Romans, who consider it primarily as a legal status, protecting individual freedoms as well as political liberties. However, the predominant approach to citizenship is that in the world of private associations and attachments, rather than in the political domain (Leydet, 2011). It is likely that the concept of an “active citizen” was developed to counter the idea of “private citizens” and the passivity associated with it. As Cariño (2005) contends, the reality is that citizens usually sit on the sidelines. Walzer (1989) says that this should not be the case: “the passive enjoyment of citizenship requires, at least intermittently, the activist politics of citizens” (p. 217).

In a broader context, the disintegration of nation-state concept of citizenship as source of identity and power (Armstrong, 2006, p. 350), mainly due to growth in transnational identities, mass migration, globalization, and collapse of the nation-state, further complicates notions of active citizenship. Hence, in its development efforts, VSO-Bahaginan extends the view of citizenship beyond the formally documented members of a nation-state. For instance, the organization sends Filipino volunteers to other countries in the Global South. These volunteers are not technically citizens in the states where they are stationed, but they practice active citizenship through volunteer work.

This role of VSO-Bahaginan connotes that citizenship is characterized by relationships with institutions and non-state actors in the community (Gaventa & Benequista, 2011). For instance, the Development Research Center on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (Citizenship DRC), a research institute funded by the UK-based Department for International
Development (DFID) and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, has worked with marginalized groups who are not legally citizens of any country, such as migrants and refugees, but are nonetheless considered political actors (Gaventa & Benequista, 2011). This is consistent with the emerging concept of “global citizenship” characterized by universal rights, duties, and a “global civil society” (Linklater, 2002, as cited in Armstrong, 2006, p. 350).

Defining Active Citizenship

Kearns (1992) refers to active citizenship (AC) as the “moral responsibilities of individual citizens to care and provide for their needy neighbors and to meet their obligations to give of their talents and skills in the management of public and welfare services” (pp. 22-23). Examples of active citizenship include neighborhood patrols, parent-teacher associations, charitable activities, and self-managed social housing, among others.

Hoskins (2006, as cited in Hoskins, D’Hombres, & Campbell, 2008) defines AC as “participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy” (p. 389). The definition covers both memberships in political parties and non-government organizations, and newer forms of AC, such as those involving social and environmental responsibility and single-issue politics. On the other hand, it excludes participation in extremist groups that promote intolerance and violence. Although AC pertains to individual action, it also focuses on the ensuing societal benefits, particularly in upholding democracy, good governance, and social cohesion (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009, pp. 462).

Meanwhile, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007), created by the Irish government in 2006 to review trends on citizen participation, defines active citizenship as “the voluntary capacity of citizens and communities working directly together, or through elected representatives, to exercise economic, social and political power in pursuit of shared goals” (p. 4). This definition applies to individual citizens, groups and partnerships that manifest active citizenship in various ways. In this sense, the concept of active citizenship is broad and encompasses many related concepts, including volunteerism. That being said, AC goes beyond volunteerism, the former granting both state and non-state actors certain rights and responsibilities beyond what volunteerism entails (Talcott, 2011, p. 10).

Also related to AC are civic and civil participation, which Chanan (2003, in Paine, Locke, & Jochum, 2006) and Gaventa and Benequista
(2011) differentiate in terms of the direction of relationships between actors. In civic participation, citizens are vertically related to state institutions because their rights and responsibilities enshrined in constitutions, laws and policies created at the local and national levels, as well as those enforced by multilateral or supranational institutions. On the other hand, in civil participation, citizens are horizontally linked to non-state actors, e.g., families, religious communities, local associations, and trade groups, which could likewise exercise power and influence. How citizens relate with these groups defines their sense of citizenship. For example, certain individuals or groups that are excluded or disenfranchised may be called upon to challenge this practice (Gaventa & Benequista, 2011). As such, vertical participation refers to citizens’ engagement with the state, whereas horizontal participation refers to their engagement with the community. However, even these forms of participation are also multidimensional. Some individual actions, such as voting during elections, do not necessarily involve direct engagement with government, while others require direct contact with government. Some actions are carried out collectively (Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2003, p. 465).

Another related AC concept is citizen participation. Cariño (2005) describes citizen participation as the involvement of persons, in their private capacity, in the planning, management and evaluation of public affairs (pp. 2-3). Cariño considers active citizenship the obligation of members of the body politic, thus separating AC from citizenship per se. Cariño makes this distinction because she reckons that not all citizens actively participate in political affairs.

Active citizenship shares many similarities with such concepts as people’s participation, empowerment, and civic engagement, among others. The concept also continues to evolve because it is highly contextual, shaped by cultural factors (Paine et al., 2006; Flores & Jocano, 2005). Hence, coming up with a universal definition for AC is a complex undertaking. As Buendia (2005) argues, “the dynamics and character of people’s participation in western and industrializing states are far different than those in developing and underdeveloped countries” (p. 4).

Filipino Concepts on Active Citizenship

The rich cultural context in the Philippines has largely shaped the Filipino idea of active citizenship. The term bayanihan, for instance, is loosely defined as “working together” (De Leon, 1996). Other concepts similar to active citizenship, such as damayan, pagtutulungan and pahinungod, originated before the Spanish colonial period and were considered instrumental in the development of civil society in the country.
Philanthropy has also been linked to *pakikipagkapwa* (a shared sense of one's humanity), *pagtutulungan* (mutual self-help), and *kawanggawa* (charity) (Fernan, 2002, p. 115). Culture is, thus, deemed important in the discourse of active citizenship, as it consists of values, norms and modalities human mobility and interaction. Flores and Jocano (1995) explored the cultural roots of volunteerism in the Philippines and argued that volunteer programs must take into account the culture of the communities being served.

Contemporary concepts related to AC in the Philippines include people’s participation and citizens’ participation. Buendia (2005) defines citizens’ participation as “the basic sector’s action within the various public and private governance institutions, mechanisms and processes to seek redress, control or access towards influencing outcomes within a given societal milieu” (p. 36). Buendia highlights key points in the definition, namely: the (a) subject, (b) process, (c) venue, (d) purpose, (e) impact, and (f) context of people’s participation. On the other hand, linking people’s participation to governance, Buendia (2005) further elaborates on the concept as “the expression of citizenship and the collective exercise of power of the organized disadvantaged basic sectors to advance the people’s interests for the greater public good, which is pursued within and beyond the confines of the public arena in a given social context” (p. 101). The definition links the concept of participation with citizenship, and supports the notion that citizenship goes beyond the public sphere.

Similarly, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS, 2008, as cited in CODE-NGO, 2011) defined civic engagement in terms of active citizenship, particularly social and policy interactions. CIVICUS measured AC in terms of extent, depth and diversity of social-based and political engagements (CODE-NGO, 2011).

Moreover, concepts such as *engagement, involvement, participation, sharing, individual and collective actions, active, voluntary, community and public concern* are repeatedly mentioned in literature on topics related to active citizenship (Table 1). Reyes (2011) explained that these terms have become more nuanced but they convey the same meaning and goals (i.e., active participation of citizens) and are thus used interchangeably. Reyes also considered citizen participation a recent development in light of the growing consciousness on, and greater demand for, accountability in government policies and performance. This was the same impetus for promoting governance as an alternative to government (Reyes, 2011).
### Table 1. Definitions of Active Citizenship and Related Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Citizenship</th>
<th>Civic Engagement</th>
<th>Citizen/Civic/People’s Participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refers to the voluntary capacity of citizens and communities working directly together, or through elected representatives, to exercise economic, social and political power in pursuit of shared goals. (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007)</td>
<td>Involvement in an activity related to the community, often connected with duties and obligations. (Defining citizenship and civic engagement, n.d.)</td>
<td>Consists of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect concerned and active membership in a community. (Defining citizenship and civic engagement, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active engagement in collective activity in one of four areas or “domains&quot;- the state/formal politics, the workplace, civil society and the private domain. (Engaging people in active citizenship, n.d.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A philosophy espoused by organizations and educational institutions which advocates that members of companies or nation-states have certain roles and responsibilities to society and the environment, although those members may not have specific governing roles. (Wikipedia)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-engaging citizens with decision-making processes (especially at the local community level) and sharing risks and responsibilities between citizens and state. (Jochum et al., 2005)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence, and in accordance with human rights and democracy. (Hoskins, 2006, as cited in Hoskins et al., 2008)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It refers to the extent to which individuals engage in active citizenship through various social and policy related interactions. This is measured in terms of extent, depth and diversity of social-based and political engagements of individuals. (CIVICUS, 2008, pp. 1-3, as cited in CODE-NG, 2011, p. 25)</td>
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### Making an Active Citizen

According to Carino (2005), the degree to which citizens participate in governance is determined by both their innate motivations and other exogenous factors. Carino explained that some citizens do not participate...
because they may be interested only in living out their personal life, while others actually face social, economic and political barriers to participation. Still, others consider how their participation in public affairs affect their private lives. This may be driven by direct intervention of the state through conscientization and mobilization (Carino, 2005). The definitions below show different levels of citizen participation:

- A process which provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions (Parker, 2003);
- A process of deepening involvement such that demands are translated into tangible outputs and outcomes (Martins, 2011); and
- A transformation of social power: people's struggle against oppression, assertion of rights, demonstration of people's creativity and capacity for self-reliance (Zialcita et al., 1995, as cited in Carino, 2005).

VSO-Bahaginan Stakeholders' Views on Active Citizenship

Given the various conceptual definitions discussed above regarding and related to active citizenship (AC), this section discusses how the volunteers, through whom VSO-Bahaginan implements its development interventions, view active citizenship. During the Volunteering Expo in 2012, a feedback wall was provided for participants to answer this question: “how do you demonstrate active citizenship?” Volunteers’ responses ranged from learning more about issues and education, to advocating for the environment and participating in politics (Table 2). The answers coincide with the emerging western literature on AC. As Gaventa and Benequista (2011) explained, citizen participation empowers citizens and helps them develop a sense of citizenship, which, in turn, further strengthens participation, cooperation, and sharing of knowledge and skills across various issues and fields.

The answers also reveal varying degrees of “activeness” in participation, namely, awareness, lifestyle, service and advocacy. It is assumed that active citizenship begins with awareness, understanding and knowledge. Individuals can then apply their sense of citizenship as part of their personal lifestyle. They may eventually serve the community; their acts of service may help shape their advocacies that would, in turn, change policies.

Where VSO-Bahaginan fits in this active citizenship progression, as viewed by return volunteers and partners, is presented in the next section.
Table 1. Volunteers’ Answers to “How Do You Demonstrate Active Citizenship?” in the Feedback Wall in 2012 Volunteer Expo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education / Awareness</th>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Service (Participate / Volunteer / Act)</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Learn about the issues that confront us. * Right start – planting opportunities for children to have a right start.</td>
<td>* Don’t eat GMOs! * Change must start from oneself. Little things can make a big difference. * Be the change! * Make a change. * Inclusive participation! + positive attitude! * Sex happens...make it safer! * I love nature, don’t destroy it! * Always strive for excellence * Save gas! Use public transport! Walk! * Reduce your carbon emission, delay the global warming. * Being the best Filipino I can be. * Plant trees. * Look, listen. See the beautiful places in the world. Peace and prayer for the nation.</td>
<td>* Small acts = big impact = change * Get M.A.D (make a difference)! * It is an absolute great experience [through]志愿服务...you can achieve positive change. * Participate in different community outreach programs. * Plant trees. * Promoting, supporting and participating in community projects. * Viva Volunteers! * Participation in politics. Use your vote and hold your leaders to account. * Go out, get involved and participate * Inclusive participation! + positive attitude! * Participate... become a volunteer! * A world of hope! A world with VSO. Be part of it! * Bayanihan para sa Kalikasan! * Plant trees. * I care. I share. I volunteer * Makialam! Be an active citizen. Love the Philippines.</td>
<td>* No to nukes! * Initiating a campaign for the environment: No to conversion of agricultural land to residential land NOW! * Participation in politics. Use your vote and hold your leaders to account. * Promote biodiversity conservation! * Defend our oceans! * By not only integrating “positive” change (social work), but by also enforcing “negative” action (fighting political injustices) * Promote human dignity through policy and culture. * Speak, act and be heard. * Raising awareness of the need to work cross-culturally with communities and not dictating them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Views from Return Volunteers

Results of the focus group discussion (FGD) with return volunteers (RVs) supported the assumption that the practice of active citizenship varies from awareness to advocacy. One return volunteer said, “my idea [of active citizenship] would just [be] participating in a community, sharing skills that you have; that, for me, is participating and sharing.”

Another RV considers herself an active citizen when she votes. She said, “I participate [in the] process in choosing the leader [in] government.” She also engages in volunteer work because she sees helping other people and sharing knowledge as part of the local culture. Meanwhile, according to another volunteer, active citizenship is about “seeing the whole picture” and “solving whatever problem.”

The notion of awareness and kamalayan or consciousness also emerged from this FGD. In one volunteer’s words:

You cannot act if you are not conscious of what is going on. There [comes] a point [when] you [are informed] about what is going on and you get into action, but it is not enough that you know [what] is happening. You have to move because you know this is happening.

The volunteers also argued that the progression of active citizenship begins with awareness. From there, it is expected that they develop kamalayan (consciousness), which may compel them to act and develop paninindigan, or commitment to make a change. Their views indicate that active citizenship emanates from the individual itself, whose degree of participation may progress towards changing the community and the policies of the state. This process supports the cycle of awareness creation that Carinio (2005) earlier described as a consequence of direct intrusion of the state or through conscientization and mobilization. Most of the volunteers claimed they already had a certain level of awareness and consciousness of social realities before joining VSO-Bahaginan, which they were able to develop further through the organization.

Views from Partners

In an interview with key officials from VSO, they asserted that active citizenship may be expressed in terms of a free press, transparent government, participation in planning and budgeting, active engagement in the delivery of services to citizens, monitoring and giving feedback, citizen’s rights to access information, secure livelihood and a fair and impartial judicial system. Some of these factors were echoed in a short survey of VSO-Bahaginan partners, who say that active citizenship:
"Refers to a person’s active involvement or participation in society in fulfilling/his/her rights and [privileges]"

“A person doing better for the country”

“Participating dynamically in activities that involves national interest and responding to the call of duty in times our country needs help”

“Being active in one’s respective communities with the intention to help in its development and [the] residents”

“Paying the right taxes, obeying the laws, voting the right people in the government, supporting government projects and programs that alleviate the lives of people in need, and being a volunteer”

The answers reveal that, at least from the view of VSO-Bahaginan partners, active citizenship is driven by institutions at the community or national level. The partners also recognize volunteering as a strategy for promoting and practicing active citizenship. One respondent said, “volunteering complements active citizenship, as volunteering [inspires] people to serve the community for the better good.”

VSO-Bahaginan Framework for Active Citizenship

As mentioned earlier, VSO-Bahaginan works through and with volunteers, although how the organization interacts with its volunteers is largely driven by context. The volunteers come from diverse backgrounds; nonetheless, the volunteers already possess kamalayan, that is, consciousness of particular issues that affect the community and society.

To understand kamalayan and the development of active citizenship, one can view the development of the volunteer as an “active citizen” through Brofenbrenner’s bioecological model (Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The model sees human development as a function of process, person, context and time. It also assumes that interaction with the external environment shapes human development:

[T]hroughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving bio-psychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Such enduring form of interaction in the immediate environment is referred to as proximal processes (Brofenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996)
Framing the experience of VSO-Bahaginan volunteers related to active citizenship using Brofenbrenner's bioecological model, it can be said that VSO-Bahaginan volunteers' notions of active citizenship and social consciousness are shaped by their experiences and the context in which they had developed these attributes. Their interaction with the state and civil society over time also affects their participation in state affairs and development initiatives.

VSO-Bahaginan provides a platform and opportunities for volunteers to further act on their motivation to participate in community development on a regular basis. On the other hand, their active participation may both change the environment (i.e., the communities and partners), and the volunteer itself. The relationship is thus two-way; active citizenship (AC) helps shape communities, which, in turn, instill in the volunteer new knowledge, kamalayan, and a greater sense of active citizenship (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. VSO-Bahaginan Framework for Active Citizenship**

```
Volunteers
- Values/Culture
- Family
- Education
- Church
- State Policies

Impact on marginalized communities/asset reform

Outcomes
- For whom?

Process
- Active Citizenship

Impact on volunteers

To develop

Improve access
Inspire/
Educate
Strengthen CSOs
```

**Measurement and Indicators**

Based on the discussion above, the means by which AC can be measured depends on the unit of analysis. It can be practiced on an individual or personal level, or it may involve the organization or the community at large. The AC outcomes developed by Take Part Network January-December
(2011) reflects this assumption. AC can be seen as both a process and an outcome at the individual level and at the societal/community level (Figure 2) (Refer to Annex for examples of outcomes).

![Figure 2. Outcomes of Active Citizenship](image)

Adapted from Take Part Network (2011)

A number of studies attempted to measure individual or personal volunteering in the Philippines, one of which was done by Fernan (2002). Some of the metrics on citizenship developed by the US-based Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) (Flanagan, Syvertsen, & Stout, 2007), was applied by Alampay and Angeles (2012) in their study of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) leaders and the youth (2012). The metrics consist of civic engagement activities individuals are able to practice in a given period of time (e.g., one year). The constructs developed by Flanagan et al. (2007) are based on individual self-assessments. They also include the future orientation of the individuals. For example, most of the questions ask the respondents to estimate the likelihood that they will engage in various community and political activities after high school. Other items ask the respondents to rate their perceived ability to respond in various ways to hypothetical scenarios. The constructs were measured by either calculating the mean scores of individual items or summing up the frequencies.
The instrument by Flanagan et al. (2007) looks at the individuals’ perceptions about their ability to engage, the intention/motivation to act in the future, and their perceptions of their leaders and government. In this way, much like Sen’s (1999) capabilities approach, the said instrument incorporates issues of capabilities, freedoms and operations into the equation of active citizenship. As such, changes in the nature and extent of citizen participation may depend on changes in their interests and knowledge, their capabilities to act on their aspirations or goals, and the way they view and relate to their leaders or the government. Take Part Network (2011) operationalizes active citizenship outcomes in terms of capabilities and functions. It interrogates what people feel they are now able to do; what they now know more about; and their ability to make a change (Table 3).

Table 3. Active Citizenship as Process and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal— the ways in which people gain the knowledge, skill and confidence they need to take action on things that matter to them</td>
<td>Personal – people are more confident, have the skills, and they understand and feel more able to do things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relations— actions that bring people together to recognize and challenge inequality and exclusion</td>
<td>Community relations – people accept the principles of social justice and opportunities for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil participation— actions that support and strengthen the range and quality of organization and communities</td>
<td>Civil participation – thriving community groups and networks in which people are active and involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement— ways in which people and communities interact with the outside world to achieve change</td>
<td>Civic engagement – strong, democratic, effective community organizations, and responsive services and governance structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Take Part Network (2011)

The typology of civic engagement by CIVICUS (as cited in CODE-NGO, 2011), which is also used by CODE-NGO, involves measuring the extent, depth and diversity of engagement. It also distinguishes between social and political types of engagement. Meanwhile, the extent and depth of engagement was defined in terms of the nature (i.e., active or inactive, and mode of participation) of the citizen’s membership in social and political organizations in the past five years.

Meanwhile, Buendia (2005) proposed a Participation Measurement Index (PMI) to measure participation or engagement of organizations. The index is made up of three sets of indicators: (1) context of participation; (2) dimensions of participation; and (3) impact of participation. The
dimensions of participation are further broken down into four sub-dimensions: principal actor, public agenda, people's action, and public arena.

Development organizations such as VSO-Bahaginan can apply these indices in their respective projects or communities, taking into consideration the context in which the indices are applied. In turn, these contexts might also be influenced by the interaction of VSO-Bahaginan with its stakeholders. These indicators can measure how communities participate or engage with VSO-Bahaginan. They may also indicate the community's practice of active citizenship. On the other hand, the impact of participation can be seen as an input into VSO-Bahaginan's other important pillar, asset reform, which involves impact on the communities; integration of their interests in the public agenda; institutionalization of community participation in governance systems; and maximization of spaces for governance.

Conclusion: VSO-Bahaginan and Active Citizenship

As previously mentioned, VSO-Bahaginan works with volunteers and communities to bring about positive social change. In this way, the organization helps mold into more active citizens its volunteers, who already have kamalayan (awareness and consciousness) and paninindigan (commitment or conviction) but limited opportunities to participate or engage in citizenship behaviors due to internal (e.g., skills, experience and knowledge) or contextual (e.g., absence of opportunities and connections) factors. In particular, VSO-Bahaginan helps the volunteers overcome these limitations through training and education, making them more conscious of the interconnectedness of problems. The organization also provides opportunities for volunteers to continue delivering services to the communities. This is where matching volunteers with community needs also becomes crucial. Meanwhile, where there are organizations, communities and, at times, issues, in which change may be difficult to realize due to contextual limitations, skilled and motivated volunteers are needed (Figure 3).

Recognizing that institutional linkages help strengthen the credibility of the organization and its volunteers, VSO-Bahaginan also partners with other organizations and networks through the social capital built and nurtured by the organization and its volunteers over time. This is part of the organization's role in enabling trust between individuals and communities, and between communities and governments. Moreover, part of VSO-Bahaginan's mission is creating an enabling environment for active
citizenship. This may involve either working on policies that allow participation, or facilitating communication between volunteers, communities and government. In this way, the organization addresses higher levels of civil engagement.

**Figure 3. VSO Bahaginan and Active Citizenship**

In sum, the AC framework developed for VSO-Bahaginan in this article helps identify spaces for participation and governance. It also helps define the role of VSO-Bahaginan in developing active citizenship in individuals and communities. Its role is to help its volunteers, who are already aware and involved to a certain extent in development work, to further practice active citizenship. This is by providing the volunteers skills, opportunities, and access to a credible network of development partners and by enabling open communication and engagement between communities, organizations and government. In turn, VSO-Bahaginan also develops social capital by allowing interaction among volunteers, communities and the state. By helping individuals and communities to be more actively engaged in attaining development goals, the organization contributes towards more sustainable development.

**Endnotes**

1 Volunteering Expo is a volunteer fair organized by the VSO-Bahaginan that brings together representatives from various sectors and communities to promote active citizen participation and strategic volunteering for development. The theme of the 2012 Volunteering Expo was "Active Communities, Sustainable Future."
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### Annex. Outcomes of Active Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Citizenship Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Citizenship Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(They feel able to...)</td>
<td>(Local, national, regional and global dimensions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(They know more about...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(They know how to...)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>- Value own skills, knowledge and confidence</td>
<td>- Identify and articulate their own issues and problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Know where to go to obtain their needs</td>
<td>- Take leadership roles in their community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Communication skills, lobbying skills, negotiation skills</td>
<td>- Have the power and will to make choices about their life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feel able to have a voice</td>
<td>- Voice their concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td>- Recognize that social exclusion is the responsibility of all</td>
<td>- Improved relations between diverse groups of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Understand how their behavior affects others</td>
<td>- Community projects are inclusive of people with different backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Know the basis of inequality and how power operates</td>
<td>- Increased points of contact between different communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Understand more about people who are different from themselves</td>
<td>- Increased networking between communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feel more confident in asking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Participation</td>
<td>- Understand how groups/networks work</td>
<td>- More civil society groups active in community-led service provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Know how to encourage fair and democratic decision-making</td>
<td>- Well-run democratic groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Understand how to encourage, support, and develop volunteers</td>
<td>- Increased informal community organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Know the importance of networking and delivering change</td>
<td>- Increased networking between civil society groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chair meetings and facilitation skills</td>
<td>- Effective representation in partnerships and involvement with public bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Negotiation and campaigning</td>
<td>- Increased volunteering opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>- Know how the external world operates</td>
<td>- More people want to and feel capable of having a responsible role in formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Understand your current democratic position and the opportunities for change</td>
<td>democratic structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Understand the rules of engagement</td>
<td>- More people take an active role at the neighborhood/community level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Know how meetings work</td>
<td>- Citizens work with public bodies to set and achieve common goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Feel able to contribute and ask questions in a public forum</td>
<td>- Improved relations between citizens and statutory agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Recognize how to influence policy and practice at a global, regional, national and local level</td>
<td>- More people take part in dialogue with decision makers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- People lobby for change to the way forums and other structures operate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Despite its potential for growth and development, the Bangsamoro region has seen decades of demographic marginalization, repression, and underdevelopment. These social problems, which were attributed to colonialization, are further aggravated by armed conflict between rebel groups and the government, and weak legal framework for regional autonomy. In her speech, Amina Rasul-Bernardo argues that the Bangsamoro conflict can only be addressed with a better understanding of its history and context. Rasul-Bernardo urges the passage of a Bangsamoro Basic Law that strengthens regional autonomy and ensures genuine, sustainable development in the region.

**Keywords:** Bangsamoro conflict, Bangsamoro history, regional autonomy

**Introduction**

The topic that I thought I would like to discuss is called “Islam, Bangsamoro and Democracy,” because I am a democracy advocate. However, actually, it is really more about history and context. What matters in governance, for us in the minority areas, are history and context. Look at what has happened in Bangsamoro. Many mistakes have been made because people do not seem to pay attention to context. You get context through history. I think the Local Government Center (now the Center for Local and Regional Governance) should be at the forefront in making sure that people always know the context before they start developing government policy.

I will discuss four topics: (1) the history of Bangsamoro struggle; (2) autonomy versus independence; (3) what is going on in ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), why people are calling it as experiment, and what is unique about Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL); and (4) whether autonomy is important enough to be strengthened.

*President, Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy. This article is based on the transcript of the author’s lecture at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Center for Local and Regional Governance held at Microtel UP Technohub, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.*
To begin, let me just say that I consider myself a very fortunate Muslim because I was born in the Philippines. Here in the Philippines, I grew up, I worked, I married, and I had children in a community where women have liberties, which are denied most of my sisters in the Middle East, the heartland of Islam. When people start talking about Islam and democracy and they say that Islam and democracy are incompatible, they only have to go to Southeast Asia, where, after all, you have most of the world's Muslims. Indonesia alone has hundreds of millions of Muslims. See how democratic we are in these regions, and how democracy has helped these regions develop multiethnic, tolerant, and peaceful communities that tend to resolve their conflicts in a non-militaristic fashion. That is, except in some areas of ethnic conflicts, mostly in Mindanao; we have it now in Myanmar, and we have it in parts of southern Thailand. Here in the Philippines, why do we have ethnic conflicts in the South? Let us take a very quick look and fly through centuries of Philippine history.

This presentation is an attempt from the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID) to provide our fellow Filipinos as well as those of different nationalities, especially the youth, with some vital information about the conflict in Mindanao. This is an attempt to bridge the gap of misunderstanding and misconception between and among Filipinos about the plight of the Moros.

While media frequently refer to it as the “Mindanao problem,” the decades-old conflict in the Southern Philippines concerns every Filipino who envisions a country enjoying equitable progress and genuine democracy. On a similar note, this problem also concerns the international communities and fellow peace stakeholders, since paving and sustaining of peace is a global initiative. This is why it is important for us to engage in a national, and sometimes international, dialogue.

A good example of this misconception was the controversy brought about by the non-signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The problem was that misinformation, political posturing, and opportunism characterized the discussion. At the height of that controversy, many people were making judgments without having even read the document. Worse, many do not really understand fully the history and complexity of the Moro question.

We at the PCID believe that the solution is education and engagement. If we are to achieve lasting and genuine peace in Mindanao and in our country, we need to understand the problem fully and make informed opinions on the matter. This is the reason why we go around the country,
mostly in universities and colleges, discussing about our history, our problems, and our dreams of peace and development.

**History of the Bangsamoro Struggle**

Why do we have this conflict? Why does it seem to be such an intractable conflict? To answer these questions, let us take the lesson taught by one of the Philippines’ national heroes, Jose Rizal, who wrote, "[h]e who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never get to his destination."

Speaking of [Jose] Rizal, according to the venerable Cesar Majul, there are two theories about the etymology of the name Rizal. One is, the word “rizal” comes from “roz”, the Spanish word for rice, or from Spanish “ricial,” which means green field. The other one is Arabic word “rijal” (men), which is the plural form of “rajul” (man). In fact, the name “Rijal” was popular among Malays, with the influence of Islam and Arabic language in Southeast Asia since the 10th century.

When Miguel Lopez de Legazpi wrestled Manila from a budding Islamic sultanate on 17 May 1571, Manila was already under the sway of Brunei, particularly the fifth sultan of Brunei, Sultan Seifu r-Rijāl (roughly translated as “valiant king of men” or “king of valiant men”), who was related to Muslim chiefs, namely, Rajah Matanda of Pasig, Rajah Sulayman of Manila, and Rajah Lakandula of Tanduh (later named Tondo).

If we want to understand the nature of this problem today with the hope of solving it in the future, we need to understand the past—the historical foundations of the Bangsamoro struggle. A historical audit of the Moro struggle can be divided into four historical periods:

1) the arrival of Islam in Sulu, 13th century;
2) the long period of Spanish colonization, which started with Magellan’s arrival in 1521;
3) the transition of the Philippines as a colonized state of Spain to the hands of United States in the 19th century; and
4) the declaration of Philippine independence in 1946.

**Arrival of Islam**

When Islam came to the Philippines, it was not through conquest. It was very peaceful—through trade. Islam arrived in Sulu in the last quarter 2017
of the 13th century. Natives did not have any monotheistic religion. Religious orientations at that time were more on ancestral, nature and animistic worshipping.

The Sulu sultanate was established in 1451. The Maguindanao sultanate was established in the second decade of the 17th century. Each sultanate was independent, had sovereign powers, and had diplomatic and trade relations with other countries in the region. The sultanate started to expand to three major sultanates in the whole of Mindanao: (1) the sultanate of Sulu that ruled over Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, parts of Zamboanga peninsula, and, some say, as far as Cebu and Manila; (2) the sultanate of Maguindanao—the great empire of Maguindanao; and (3) the sultanate of the Maranaws.

Together with this political system called sultanates, what else did Islam bring us? It brought us to the first widespread system of education. Everybody had the same educational system. It was called Madrasah, the Islamic school, Islamic educational system based on the Quran. What else did it bring? It brought law—one law for everyone, the Sharia (Islamic law). It also brought with it international trade. As evidence of this, the Sulu sultanate had relations with China. In 1417, Sultan Paduka Batara of Sulu traveled to China, together with 340 others, in a goodwill mission and were received by Chinese Emperor Zhu Di during the Ming Dynasty. Unfortunately, the sultan died and was buried in China, given grand funeral rites befitting a sultan (Scott, 1983). The emperor put up a mausoleum for him and, up to this day, that mausoleum is there and was recently improved, making it a tourist attraction. Two of the sultan’s sons stayed behind. The sultan’s heirs visited Sulu in June 2005 (Banagudos, 2005).

What do these historical facts tell us? The early development of Islam, which predated the arrival of the Spaniards and the establishment of the Philippine nation, stands on record as the first political institution, the first institutional religion, the first educational system, and the first institutional legal system, and the first civilization in the Philippines. Its economy was far more advanced than that of the other indigenous communities.

We had a political system, a widespread Islamic judicial system, foreign trade, and education, which characterize a sovereign state. We need to understand this as this is the historical basis for asserting the independent existence of the Moros.
Spanish Colonization

When the Spanish arrived in the islands in 1521, most of these islands were governed by Muslims. Spanish colonization of the Philippines commenced more than a century later in 1565. Superior Spanish forces pushed the Muslims to Mindanao, where the sultanates' resistance against colonization was strongest. When the Spaniards came and they saw all these Muslims fighting them from Manila to Cebu, what did they call us? Moros, after the Moors who occupied Spain for hundreds of years. They drove us back until they could no longer drive us further back. We were back to our own base in Mindanao: the sultanate of Sulu, the sultanate of Maguindanao, and the sultanate of Lanao. Because they could no longer overpower us in our home base, what did they do? The Spaniards decided to do treaties.

It is crucial to note that the Spanish government recognized the sovereignty of the sultanates, by entering into treaty arrangements with the latter. Even when the sultanates were at their weakest, the Spanish government respected the treaty arrangements. Sultan Jamalul Alam signed the last treaty with Spain on 22 July 1878. This treaty had translation flaws. While the Spanish version stated it had sovereignty over Sulu, the Tausug version described the relationship as being a protectorate, and that Sulu customs, laws, religion were not subject to Spanish jurisdiction (Saleeby, 1908).

The Spanish colonization, which came after the existence of the Islamic sultanates and principalities, represented the beginning of a parallel yet separate historical development between the Muslims and the soon to-be-independent Filipinos. While Filipino nationalism was essentially anti-Spanish, the nation that was created after the 1896 Revolution remained Catholic.

Spain Cedes the Philippines to the Americans

Then came the pursuit of independence. The Filipinos revolted against Spain. They had become allies with the Americans. The Americans were supposed to help us become independent but, instead, they became our next colonial masters. We had lost again our independence, with the Bangsamoro fighting for their freedom and sovereignty against the Americans.

The Americans still could not defeat the Muslim fighters of the South so they also did treaties. Again, even when the sultan was at its weakest, there was a little piece of paper called a treaty. Again we have a treaty granting sovereign power. But, unfortunately, the Americans gave
independence to the Republic of the Philippines. They gave the republic the sovereign of the South. This is the core of the Bangsamoro struggle.

When Spain turned over the Philippines to the Americans, through the Treaty of Paris, they illegally gave away the sovereign sultanates. In simple terms, Spain cannot cede what was not theirs. As a form of resistance, wars were waged by the Muslims against the American forces. Again, American troops forced the Muslims to retreat.

Mark Twain wrote about the massacres of the Muslims in Bud Dajo in Sulu (Clemens, 1906). In August 1899, Sultan Jamalul Kiram II reluctantly signed a treaty with General J.C. Bates, which included mutual respect, non-interference with religion, social and domestic customs or internal economic or political affairs. Under these conditions, the US would not give or sell Sulu or any part of it to any other nations, among others. The US probably signed this peace treaty as a way of stemming any resistance to its occupation in the South while it was suppressing the resistance in the North. This treaty was unilaterally abrogated by the US on 2 March 1904 (Gowing, 1968).

**Philippine Independence**

As the Philippines was certain to gain its independence, Muslim chieftains gathered in Dansalan (now Marawi City) on 18 March 1935 and wrote the US President a petition not to be included in the new republic. The Muslims preferred to be under the US rule, recognizing that they would become second-class citizens if made part of the Catholic Philippines. Their petition was ignored. The Christian _ilustrados_ gained their independence along with control over the Muslim territories (Rasul, 2009).

The inauguration of the Filipino Republic, therefore, presented a paradox. It was able to establish a state and a semblance of an identity. On the other hand, while the new republic tried to consolidate its newfound sovereignty, the Moros, reeling from decades of animosity with the Christianized Filipinos, leaned towards independence instead of integration. This historically parallel development of the Filipino nation and the Muslims gave the rebellion its ideological character in calling for the realization of a Moro nation separate from that of the Filipino nation.

But let me stress this: the Moros are not anti-Christian. What we are saying is that, when we look back at our history, we will discover that there was a Moro nation prior to the establishment of the Filipino nation. Our struggle is for the recognition of and respect for that historical right.
Elements of the Struggle

The struggle for Moro independence has historical roots. This has become the basis for the peace process with the Muslim liberation fronts. What complicates this further? The threatened Moros again—the belief that the majority rule or government is out to eradicate the ethnic groups of the Muslims of the South.

Demographic Marginalization

Muslims now are rather politically marginalized. Back then, we were sovereign; we ruled all the way up to Manila. In 1918 Mindanao, who was the majority? There were Muslims (49%); Lumads (29%); and Christians (22%). But, less than a hundred years afterwards, the population has shifted dramatically. Now, the Muslims are the minority and even fewer are the Lumads. The country is now populated mostly by Christians who descended from settlers.

The term “Bangsamoro” literally means the “Moro nation” (or the “Moro people”). “Moro,” which is Spanish for “Moor,” was considered a derogatory term until it was adopted by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). It meant that a Moro is illiterate, poor, barbaric, and ignorant. But when Nur Misuari started to organize the MNLF, he took what was a very negative term and developed it into a political badge and an identity of a people. Eventually, more and more Muslims accepted it. Hence, the saying, “We are Moros, not Filipinos.” Technically, the term Moro includes Muslims who are born or who are related by blood to original Muslim settlers in Mindanao. They are settled in Western and Southern Mindanao, Sulu, and in Southern Palawan. They share a distinct culture, speak different dialects, and are varied in their social formation. However, they all share a common belief in Islam (Che Man, 1990).

The Bangsamoro is made up of 13 ethnolinguistic groups, including the Iranun, Jana Mapun, Palawani, Molbog, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Maguindanao, Maranao, Sama, Sangil, Tausug, Badjao, and Yakan. Among the 13 Muslim groups, the biggest are the Maguindanaoan, Maranao, Tausug, Sama and Yakan groups (Russell et al., 2004). Meanwhile, around 20% of Mindanao's population is Muslim. Muslims are said to be around five percent of the total estimated population of 104 million (CIA, 2017), a figure that is contested by Muslim groups as too low. A 2012 estimate revealed that there were 10.7 million Muslims in the Philippines, or around 11% of the total population (National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, 2012, as cited in Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2014, p. 1).
Muslim Underdevelopment

Aside from demographic marginalization, Muslims also suffer from underdevelopment. However, Muslims in the Philippines were not always poor and underdeveloped. It is important to consider measures of development: access to water and electricity.

For instance, in comparing years 1970 and 1990, Table 1 shows that, in 1970, Sulu's rank in terms of the number of households with piped water was comparable to that of Bataan (38th) and Pampanga (39th), while Lanao del Sur ranked even higher at 28. But by 1990, Sulu and Lanao del Sur plummeted to ranks 52 and 53 respectively. Pampanga, on the other hand, improved to 15th (National Statistical Coordination Board, as cited in Rasul, 2015).

Table 1. Number of Households with Piped Water: 1970 and 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Norte</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bataan</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pampanga</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), as cited in Rasul (2015)

The same is true when we look at the data on access to electricity. In 1970, Sulu was ranked higher than Camiguin and Ilocos Sur. By 1990, Sulu was already ranked 73rd, while Ilocos Sur was ranked 13th (Table 2) (NSCB, as cited in Rasul, 2015). Some people would criticize us for “victimization” syndrome, which means we are paralyzed into inaction because we always complain about how we Moros are being marginalized. But let me tell you this: these numbers do not lie. Something happened in our communities between the periods of progress to marginalization.

Table 2. Number of Households with Electricity: 1970 and 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamboanga del Sur</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilocos Sur</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bukidnon</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camiguin</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSCB, as cited in Rasul (2015)
We were not always poor. The poverty that our people experience now is not self-inflicted. Contrary to popular belief, our poverty and state of lawlessness were the product of years of war and neglect. We have not returned to the thriving years of the 1970s where we had active barter trades with neighboring countries like Malaysia. It was, then, a very progressive community.

**Autonomy in Lieu of Independence**

In 20 years, the ranking of at least the two provinces in Muslim Mindanao drastically went down because of the war in Mindanao, and as a result of the declaration of martial law by former President Marcos. For the government to strongly justify its declaration of martial law, it had to prove that there was a serious threat to the state. This justification was the secessionist movement in the South and the communist threat in the North. The military implemented widespread operations against the secessionist movements all over Mindanao. With military operations in Muslim Mindanao came the destruction of physical infrastructures in the region: ports, factories, and mills, among others.

Martial law reduced the Bangsamoro to hamlets. Our towns were bombed. With destruction of infrastructure, capital flight followed. Businesses left Sulu, Lanao and other provinces to go to Cebu, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, and General Santos. Consequently, people lost jobs and found it difficult to find them in Bangsamoro, which led to brain drain. All the best and the brightest left the Bangsamoro homeland.

Unfortunately, we have not recovered from this “triple whammy.” No funds were given for infrastructure; capital has not been invested in provinces and, definitely, the best and the brightest had stayed in Manila. We have this very complicated picture. We were struggling and our sovereignty was stolen away from us. So, what did we do?

During the martial law period under the Marcos regime, the Muslim resistance materialized. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) became an organized group under Misuari, who was a lecturer at the College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines. The Marcos-led government and the military could not reduce the resistance of the MNLF. Instead, they had peace negotiations with the MNLF. Eventually, the Liberation Front accepted autonomy. “We will end our war for independence, we will have autonomy instead.” Until today, Misuari continues to gain support of communities, especially from the island provinces.
There was one group, though, that did not agree with the peace process that Misuari started. Disgruntled members of the MNLF organized the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Salamat Hashim, the late founding chair of the MILF, broke away from the MNLF hierarchy due to ideological differences and leadership squabbles with Misuari. In 1983, Hashim announced the separate presence of the MILF.

The MILF, dominated by the Maguindanaos, is asserting Islamic ideology as distinct from the secular tendency of the MNLF. The MILF is currently the largest Muslim secessionist group in the country, with membership conservatively estimated at 15,000-20,000. Its original objective was to secede from the Philippine Republic and transform Mindanao into an independent Islamic state. MILF rebels are largely distributed in Central Mindanao, particularly in the provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur and, to a lesser extent, in Western Mindanao.

But, since then, they have realized they cannot survive a war for independence. Their people suffer. With the MILF, they continued to fight for independence but, later on, realizing they could not win, went into a peace process recovery. The Philippine government under former President Fidel V. Ramos initiated peace negotiations with the MILF. A government panel was created to explore terms with the MILF in September 1996. Meetings were held to discuss cessation of hostilities. The agenda included the following issues: ancestral domain; displaced and landless Bangsamoro; destruction of properties and war victims; human rights issues; social and cultural discrimination; corruption; and economic inequities and widespread poverty.

Former President Joseph Estrada later broke off negotiations and declared an all-out-war policy against the MILF, resulting in the displacement of some 500,000-800,000 Muslim civilians in Central Mindanao in 2000. The government’s action to give up peaceful negotiations in favor of military action was widely criticized by Mindanao leaders, civil society, and the Catholic Church as a no-win situation. Today, a majority of the internally displaced persons have yet to be resettled in their original home villages.

The government of former President Macapagal-Arroyo resumed negotiation with the MILF. However, the negotiations proceeded in fits and starts. Under then President Benigno Aquino II, MILF dropped their demand for independence but sought the establishment of a substate under the central government in Manila. According to Marvic Leonen, then head of the government peace panel, “(t)heir proposal is that they be considered Filipino citizens but with Bangsamoro national identity” (as

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cited in Bordadora, 2011, p. A6). The details of the substate proposal were presented to the government panel during formal meetings held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The result of that peace process is the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro which was signed March 2014. This should now be the basis for the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

ARMM: Failed Experiment?

Given this history and context, is it so difficult to give autonomy to the Bangsamoro? In exchange, they are ending their struggle for independence. Why is it that our national leaders and legislators cannot accept that autonomy is a working solution? It is a pragmatic solution to end internecine warfare, which has killed hundreds of thousands, created millions of bakwit, and led to the loss of billions of pesos and opportunities.

Unfortunately, the ARMM experiment is, according to President Aquino, a failure. Why? The region remains the most commonly affected. Its population has many of the poorest of the poor (Table 3). It fared the lowest in terms of human development indicators (Table 4). It has the highest illiteracy rate; more than a third of adults are illiterate (Table 5). The data tables cover years after the signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) with the MNLF that promised peace and development in Muslim Mindanao.

Strengthening Autonomy

If we were given autonomy and already allowed self-rule, why is the picture as dismal as before? This is because the powers of autonomy that were given on paper are weak. This is why the Bangsamoro Basic Law is intended to correct the errors committed during previous congresses. When they pass the law, the Bangsamoro will be an autonomous region.

Table 3. Comparative Poverty Incidence in Selected Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>71.30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicol</td>
<td>61.90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Visayas</td>
<td>51.10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Mindanao</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Mindanao</td>
<td>52.20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Human Development Index: Bottom 10 Provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sulu</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawi-Tawi</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilan</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maguindanao</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao del Sur</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ifugao</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agusan Sur</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samar</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanao Norte</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarangani</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Philippine Human Development Network (2009)

Table 5. Basic Literacy Rate of Population 10 Years Old and Over by Region, Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population 10 years old and over (in '000)</th>
<th>Basic Literacy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>70,818</td>
<td>95.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCR</td>
<td>9,021</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>1,277</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3,941</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>7,752</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV-A</td>
<td>8,951</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV-B</td>
<td>2,136</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>5,819</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>5,283</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>3,310</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>3,234</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>3,302</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII</td>
<td>2,991</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARAGA</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2010)

The 1987 Philippine Constitution says, “[t]here shall be created autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and in the Cordilleras consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures, and other relevant characteristics within the framework of this Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines” (Art. 10, Sec. 15). As such, we should give autonomy to our indigenous communities and to the
Bangsamoro. The BBL used this grant of autonomy by the Constitution and created a better framework for autonomy.

The remaining members of the constitutional convention/commission have said that the intent of the Constitution is to be flexible, to accommodate what is needed by its citizens. If the intent is to create a real autonomous region for the Bangsamoro, to give them all its powers, which are in the BBL, then yes, it can be done. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), together with other groups, has looked at these issues, and they said, yes, the Bangsamoro can be established without constitutional amendments.

Why should we care? We should care because, even though we are the most affected, the least served, and with the highest illiteracy rate and lowest human development indicators, look at the contribution that we make to the nation (Rasul, 2015):

- More than 60% of the country’s agricultural products came from Mindanao. ARMM contributes 11.46% in corn production; 11.43% in coffee production; 8.09% in coconut production; and 3.57% in palay production.

- ARMM had the highest contribution to national fish production, which accounts for 17.5%, but contributes only 6.5% of value (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, 2010, as cited in Rasul, 2015).

- Seaweeds, an acknowledged export market winner, is largely cultured in Mindanao, accounting for 56.33% of national output from 2003 to 2008, growing at a rate of 12.18% within the same period. It is equally important to note that ARMM accounts for 70% of the Mindanao production.

- Region XI contributed about 41% of the Philippine banana production, followed by Region XII (11.2%), Region X (10.1%), ARMM (6.8%), CARAGA (3.6%), and Region IX (3.2%).

Imagine, if the region did not get affected by war, how much more can it still contribute? We can legislate on our own. We can provide business incentives for investors to come in and develop these areas in Mindanao. We are rich in natural resources, such as oil and gasoline. Remember, we share the continental shelf together with Brunei. Also, we must remember the sultanate of Sulu or in Sabah. I do not know why we are fighting over a small group of islands called Spratlys and then give up Sabah. Many disagree with me, but national leaders should think about it.

We have cultural trades with rich Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Because of the Bangsamoro region, we can now access new capital through
these countries. There are many reasons why we should care about the Bangsamoro region. But I think the best reason why we should care is the Bangsamoro children. What is the future in store for these young children from the Bangsamoro—future doctor, nurse, businessman, farmer, or rebel, terrorist, drug pusher, kidnapper?

This is why we should care. It matters what we do. It matters if we have the Bangsamoro Basic Law and real autonomy, because the future of our nation and our community rests in the future generation's being positive contributors to the community. Together, peace in Mindanao will be enriched if we work together.

Endnotes

1 Even when the sultan was a puppet, the Spanish government had the so-called treaty. This meant that, even as Zamboanga was open for colonization by Spain, it could not enter Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. They could not go to Lanao and Maguindanao based on the treaties.

2 Mark Twain is the pen name of renowned American author Samuel Clemens, who wrote the article "Commentary on the Moro massacre" under his real name.

3 Hamletting mainly refers to a strategy that involves ridding a community of alleged rebel presence and maintaining military presence to secure the area. This is to keep citizens away from contact with alleged rebels and deprive the latter of morale and resources (Tulfo, 2016; De Santos, 2016). Journalist Rigoberto Tiglao (as cited in De Santos, 2016) associated hamletting with torture and summary killings.

4 Bakwit, which means "evacuate" or "evacuee," refers to internally displaced persons whose communities are caught in recurrent armed conflicts (Canuday, 2009).

References


January-December


Reflections from Scholars and Practitioners

Against Federalism: Why It Will Fail and Bring Us to the Brink

ROMEBO. OCAMPO*

The proposed shift to a federal form of government is unlikely to succeed and may lead instead to the dismemberment of the Philippines. Given the dominant Pimentel model of the proposal, federalization will critically weaken the central government by sharing its sovereign powers, devolving most of its functions, and substantially more of its resources with the new component states. Rather than promote equitable development, federalization, according to this model, will promote interstate competition and thus enable the better-endowed regions to develop farther ahead of the others. The central government will be too emaciated to equip weaker states to catch up, aggravating their laggard conditions and may further fuel secessionist sentiments. While one possible effect of federalization may be to inhibit centrifugal tendencies, it also risks sufficiently arming defection-prone states to secede and leads to the breakup of the nation-state. This article argues that, for all its faults, the existing unitary system is better because it can do at least one thing a federal government can no longer do, that is, redress imbalances in favor of lagging regions and retrieve devolved power if it is misused. Moreover, the parliamentary system that the proponents put on top of their federal structure may be able to do far fewer things faster and will be less democratic than the central as well as areal division of powers embodied in the existing unitary system of the Philippine government.

Keywords: federalism in the Philippines, federal vs. unitary, government systems, Pimentel model

Introduction

The federalism proposal had been advocated since at least the turn of the millennium. Concrete constitutional proposals were made in the first decade with prominent leaders like Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Jr. sustaining the movement. Even some in the National College of Public

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Administration and Governance (NCPAG) seemed sold on the idea; the only task remaining was to shine a light on the experience just past and on the way forward. The federalist proposal was stalled with the defeat of the whole constitutional reform project back then. But it hardly killed federalism, which today has found new life and vigor with the Duterte administration.

Dissenting opinions about federalism have also been revived (Doronila, 2016; Cruz, 2016). However, the Duterte administration seems hell-bent on pushing federalism and constitutional change, in the expectation that it will enable the different regions, particularly the lagging regions of Mindanao, to pursue their economic and social aspirations more freely than has been achievable under the present unitary system and the much-maligned central government of “imperial Manila.” The federalism proponents' enthusiasm is such that the President himself promises to retire from his office before his term ends in 2022, as soon as the shift is adopted, with the constitutional change now poised to get underway.

With all due respect to the well-meaning proponents of federalism, I present my reasons for thinking it is probably a bad idea. Based on what I call the “Pimentel model,” I outline the big changes proposed in the basic structure of the Philippine government, and the drastic differences and consequences that they are likely to produce, including the risk of secession and dismemberment of the Philippine nation-state. Aside from my own prognostication, I rely on some scholarly works abroad that cite evidence of this risk and help the case for retaining the existing unitary form of government. In the concluding section, I also argue that the idea of superimposing a parliamentary central government atop a federal system is inappropriate.

The Shift is Radical and Hard to Undo

A central objection to federalism (i.e., federalization) is that it is unlikely to accomplish its goals. The movement for it reflects a strong faith in the ability of structural change in the institutions of government to effect economic, social, and cultural progress. However, there are many other complex factors that can shape or influence government's capability and impact on the nation, including the people who operate the institutions involved and their surrounding cultures. A glance at a chart showing this complexity in governmental institutions should suffice to suggest that belief in structural change alone is unwarranted (Figure 1).
Nevertheless, shifting to a federal government system from a unitary one is truly a game changer, a radical move that goes well beyond tinkering with the existing system, with management improvement, administrative reorganization, or even with the decentralization undertaken through the Local Government Code of 1991. Going federal means changing the basic rules of the governance game, determining who will be the new players and rule-makers, and how these rules will be made. The shift will be even more radical with the superimposition of a parliamentary form of government to replace the existing presidential system at the national government level, a feature that President Rodrigo Duterte (not Senator Pimentel) wants.

Shifting to a federal form will be difficult to achieve. For one thing, it will require constitutional change, which has proved impossible to pull off due to suspicions that it might have a hidden agenda, particularly the intention to re-elect a sitting President. Our experience tends to confirm reform scholars' observation that "[b]ecause constitutional change faces such enormous obstacles, whatever its potential payoffs, this route to reform is least likely to succeed" (Weaver & Rockman, 1993, p. 462). Even if constitutional reform is possible, it will be very difficult to undo, although that has not deterred recurring proposals abroad to convert unitary to federal systems—and for federal systems to go unitary.
The present administration, however, seems to be confident that constitutional change can be pushed through, given the strong grip of Duterte's party on most members of the bicameral Congress (at least in the House of Representatives). It has already taken the first big step by pivoting from the elective constitutional convention mode of reform that President Duterte originally preferred, to the assembly-of-incumbent-legislators mode that he now favors. However, some federalism advocates and adherents may still change their minds if they are open to reasonable arguments about the cons, as well as the pros, of federalism and parliamentarism.

A Radical and Irreversible Change

To repeat, federalization entails no ordinary reallocation of powers and resources, but a subdivision and redistribution of fundamental, sovereign, or supreme state powers and corresponding functions and resources (Føllesdal, 2016; Philpott, 2016). Designing federalism is hard enough: the federal system must be conceived holistically, and yet, it must immediately grapple with issues about the number and boundaries of the new states. Implementing it is even harder in an environment of incrementalist pressures from regional interests. Once locked in with the ratification of its constitutional framework, the federal system may well be irreversible. Turning back can no longer be done unilaterally by the central government, i.e., without the consent of the states created (Føllesdal, 2016), since they have "veto power" with their share of sovereignty over policy decisions of the central government (although this is not explicit in the Philippine proposal described in the next section). Finally, keeping a federal system intact despite secessionist movements may take a costly civil war to resolve, such as what the United States experienced to remain a union.

By design, the federalization process favors the states created at the expense of the national government, in substantial and extensive ways. Just how big a difference it will make in the Philippines is not yet clear. No concrete proposals have been crystallized and presented under the current administration. The leading proponents in the administration still seem to be groping with amorphous ideas.

For example, both the President and the Speaker of the House have alluded to a French model in their visions. This may apply to its combined parliamentary-presidential form that they want for the central government, but certainly not to any federalist features in the larger structure, for the French government is the apotheosis of unitarism and
centralism, where the mere mention of "regionalism" would raise political hackles during certain periods (Schmidt, 1990).

The Pimentel Model

From a perusal of leading proposals made in the recent past, however, we gather that the structural changes will be huge. The advocate still in the best position to influence current charter drafters is former Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., principal author of the 1991 Local Government Code, founder of the PDP Laban political party, which worked for President Duterte's presidential campaign in 2016, and father of the present Senate President, Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III. In 2008, former Senator Pimentel filed Senate Joint Resolution No. 10 for a Philippine Federal Republic, "meant to accomplish two major things": cause the speedy development of the entire country by unleashing the forces of competitiveness among the states; and dissipate the causes of rebellion in the country and particularly in Mindanao (Pimentel, 2008, p. 440). Before analyzing the meaning and implications of these goals, let us first describe the other important provisions of Senate Joint Resolution No. 10.

Reallocation of Functions

The Senate Joint Resolution proposed the assignment of 38 functions or responsibilities to the "exclusive [legislative] jurisdiction" of 11 states and left 20 others to the Federal Congress. The jurisdictions, however, will not be all mutually exclusive. A number of the functions to be retained by the federal government will be shared or will overlap with some of those assigned to the states. This is implied by the functions preceded by the word "federal," and is explicitly stated in the case of foreign trade, in which the states may engage. Moreover, there are at least nine state functions, which, in my view, can be concurrently undertaken with the federal government, and one in which state legislation will take precedence over federal legislation (Table 1).

What will be mutually exclusive are a dozen legislative jurisdictions allocated to the federal government and twice this number listed for the 11 states. While national security and defense, foreign relations, the armed forces, and others will stay at the federal level, the exclusive remit of the states will include economic and social planning (Table 1, No. 25), labor and employment (30), science and technology (31), free basic education and subsidized tertiary schools (32), social security, pension plans, social relief for displaced persons and victims of calamities (26), natural and environmental resources (22, 23, and 24), fisheries, aqua-
maritime culture, swamps and marshlands (6), public corporations (8), and others that one might expect will be retained or at least shared by the federal government.

Table 1. Federal, Shared, and State Legislative Jurisdictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Congress</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>State Legislatures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1 – National security and defense</td>
<td>F4 – Foreign trade (S9, S10)</td>
<td>S4 – Cadastral or land surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2 – Declaration of war</td>
<td>F6 – Federal currency, fiscal and monetary, system, taxation, budget and audit (S5)</td>
<td>S6 – Fisheries, aqua-or-marine culture, and swamps or marshlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3 – Foreign relations, treaty ratification</td>
<td>F9 – Federal public works and infrastructure (S7)</td>
<td>S8 – State public corporations and quasi-public corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5 – Customs and quarantine</td>
<td>F11 – Federal air, sea and land transportation (S7)</td>
<td>S11 – Bankruptcy and insolvency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7 – Immigration, emigration, extradition</td>
<td>F13 – Meteorology and standards of weights and measures (S28)</td>
<td>S12 – Trust and trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F8 – Interstate commerce and trade</td>
<td>F20 – Offenses defined in the Penal Code (S17)</td>
<td>S13 – Compelling attendance of state and LGU officials in state proceedings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F12 – Intellectual property and copyright</td>
<td>S1 – Public health, sanitation, hospitals, facilities (except those established by Congress)</td>
<td>S16 – Salaries and allowances of all State officials and employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F14 – Grants-in-aid to States</td>
<td>S14 – State’s share of the national public debt</td>
<td>S18 – Police over offenses within states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F18 – Cloning, genetic research, and engineering</td>
<td>S15 - Courts for indigenous populations</td>
<td>S21 – Interstate transfer of accused and convicted persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S23 – Mines, minerals, gas (except those covered by acts of Congress)</td>
<td>S22 – Wild animals, birds, endangered species, and flora and fauna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S38 – General welfare of the states’ people only to Constitution’s prohibitions and existing laws passed by Congress</td>
<td>S24 – Water, water supplies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S25 – Economic and social planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S26 – Social security, pensions, and disaster relief and rehabilitation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>S27 – Cooperatives, microfinance, etc.</td>
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<td>S29 – Price control</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S30 – Labor and employment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S31 – Science and technology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S32 – Free education from pre-school, subsidized colleges, and universities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>S33 – Libraries, museums, and records other than those covered by existing laws</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S34 – Charities, charitable institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S36 – Pilgrimages outside the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S37 – Banning or regulating tobacco, alcoholic drinks, including labels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Senate Joint Resolution No. 10, as cited in Brillantes et al. (2009, pp.131, 148-152)

Note: See Annex 1 of this article for the original list. The letters “F” and “S” preceding the numbers indicate whether the function identified was listed under the “federal congress” or “state legislatures.” The author of this article rearranged the listing based on his reading whether the functions are shared or truly exclusively assigned to the federal congress or the state legislatures.
One notable feature of the exclusive reallocation proposed is that what used to be national government functions that have been regionalized, if not partially devolved, to the local government units (LGUs), such as economic and social planning, are dropped to the state level without any federal counterpart remaining. Moreover, while the federal government will retain certain interregional linking or complementing functions, such as interstate commerce and trade, and federal communications and transportation (5, 10, and 11), the Joint Resolution does not have any provisions for interstate cooperation*, unlike the Local Government Code of 1991, which provides for inter-LGU cooperative associations.

A few of the functional statements even hint at the possibility that state legislation can harden the state boundaries (e.g., prohibited transfer or movements across boundaries (13 and 21); the reference to internally displaced persons to be served by disaster relief (26); and the exclusionary prohibition or regulation of the production, transport, and sale of “sin” commodities like tobacco and alcoholic products (37). The build-the-border-walls implications of these provisions would be consistent with the federalism proposal’s aim of “unleashing the forces of competitiveness among the states,” as former Senator Pimentel said in his introduction to Senate Joint Resolution No. 10.

President Duterte reinforced this sense of state exclusivity by saying, before a Mindanao audience, that there will be a reconfiguration of territorial boundaries in Mindanao and that “Kung ano ang territory, inyong lahat. Kung ano ang inyo, inyong lahat niyan diyan [Your territory will be yours. Whatever is yours will all be yours],” but he hastened to add, “except that we have to maintain the Republic because to secede is not ... hindi puwede ‘yan [it is not allowed]” (Kabiling, 2016). This statement is, of course, ambiguous—it quickly pivots—but its basic thrust is clear enough.

**Fiscal Federalism**

Former Senator Pimentel and the Senate Joint Resolution, in its fiscal-financial provision, made clear just how big the change will be. In his introduction, Pimentel wrote that the Resolution contained a formula for budget allocation: 20% will go to the federal government and 80% to the states. Of the 80% accruing to the states, 30% will go to the state governments and 70% to the provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays. (Pimentel, 2008, p. 440).
This is the portion of "[a]ll revenues and taxes collected" by the LGUs or by the national government agencies according to the Local Government Code of 1991, where the taxes mentioned "shall include all revenues and taxes imposed or collected by the federal government" (Rev. No. 6, Art. XII, Senate Joint Resolution No. 10, as cited in Brillantes et al., 2009, p. 159). Given that the existing division is said to be roughly 60%–40% of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) alone (60% for the national government), the proposal will, then, make a very big cut back for the federal government. Moreover, the federal government is likely to find it difficult to sustain itself financially due to the removal of its more direct access to tax and operating revenue sources below the states.

The Pimentel proposal to relocate the legislative branch to the Visayas and the judicial branch to Mindanao will further weaken the national government physically, leaving the executive branch in the "Federal Administrative Region of Metro Manila." This will stretch the separation of powers and functions physically, and make their sharing more difficult, perhaps in a more adversarial than coordinative manner. Modern means of communication may moderate this effect, but political leaders will have to do more shuttling by air to maintain personal contacts across the divide for consultations and negotiations. Even top government and business leaders find face-to-face transactions and "shuttle diplomacy" often necessary to address effectively the critical jurisdictional issues. The centripetal forces behind urban agglomerations would tend to counteract the institutional transfer of power centers proposed by the Pimentel model.

The Difference Federalism Would Make

What difference would the proposed organizational and fiscal changes under federalism make? I think that the following advantages of the existing unitary system will be drastically curtailed, if not entirely lost, for the national-federal government, the proposed states, and the LGUs themselves, not to mention their constituencies:

1) The economies of scale and scope of having a strong national government that can transcend the limitations of the state and LGU boundaries, functionally and financially;

2) Having an adequately fiscally endowed, and legally strong-enough central government to establish and maintain interregional transportation, communication, trade linkages, and transactions;
3) Having a central government that can enhance comparative advantages and complementarities that may exist among the different regions and effectively resolve any conflicts between them;

4) Having the central institutional capacity to plan and implement policies and programs that call for national scale, perspectives, and resources to be able to promote common, national values and standards of well-being while respecting and nurturing the country's cultural and natural diversity; and

5) Having a central-national government that can draw on the foregoing sources of constitutional, functional, and economic strengths to be able to perform its tasks of defending the whole country, being respected abroad and at home, and maintaining the country's integrity against centrifugal forces.

Consequently, the twin objectives of the Pimentel model of accelerating the country's economic development and dissipating rebellion will very likely fail. Only the part about "unleashing the forces of competitiveness" will succeed, and it may succeed very well as cutthroat competition among states. With their newfound wealth, power, and functions, those states already well poised at the new starting line are likely to surge even faster and farther ahead, economically, politically and, perhaps, even militarily. Pimentel's proposal will allow the states to have their counterpart police, but it stops short in terms of the military armed forces. President Duterte has also wisely resisted demands or suggestions to allow the states to have their own armed forces as part of the federalization bargain. Yet, with the civilian resources and organization conferred by federalization in the form of state governments, secessionist forces may easily use these facilities for their own ends. They can easily recover any military capabilities they may be asked to give up as part of the federalization bargain, especially with imminent foreign invasion.

One thing that the central government can do if it wishes to now but can no longer do under a federalist framework is to redress the spatial development imbalances to which our diverse, archipelagic country has been vulnerable. The federal government would be too weak fiscally, financially, and functionally to undertake any reverse discrimination or re/distributive policies and programs in favor of the lagging regions. Greater competition trumps any possible cooperation among the states, and the dire economic and social conditions resulting from uneven development may fester and fuel rebellious and secessionist sentiments in the disadvantaged regions.
A Scholarly Cautionary Prognosis

A scholar cautions against hastening to a grim scenario of eventual secession and break up resulting from federalization. According to Hechter (2000), a sociologist at the University of Washington who studied the possibility of containing nationalist6 regional demands for independence, federalism may serve to calm down and mute such agitation. Nonetheless, there is also the equal risk that extreme decentralization through special regional autonomy or wholesale federalization can facilitate secession by equipping its drivers and movers with the resources and institutional means of the new state governments, with or without federal permission, for them to acquire military assets.

Hechter cites case evidence of efforts to mute nationalist conflict in the UK’s offer of regional devolution to Scotland and Wales, then moves towards federation in unitary Spain and Belgium, France’s devolution of authority to Corsica, India’s federalist palliative for the Sikh independence movement in the Punjab, and in the Swiss and US federations (since the American Civil War in the latter case). On the other hand, he also cites the same US Civil War as a violent though failed attempt to break up the American Union. Other examples of the failure of devolutionary or federalist arrangements are Pakistan’s loss of Bangladesh, the Soviet Union’s dissolution in favor of a weaker federation, and the continued agitation for independence in Canada’s Quebec province and Spain’s Catalonia7. Russia’s forcible annexation of the Crimean region and efforts to rope Ukraine back in show what it takes and costs to recover from a breakup.8

Hechter states that decentralization may provide greater resources for a rise in protest events but “may erode the demand for sovereignty.” However, rebellion, as distinguished by Hechter from protest, is more likely from groups “concentrated in territories that already have their own governance structures” (Hechter, 2000, pp.146-147). He also presents data showing that “centralization is strongly associated with nationalist rebellion,” a consistent pattern observed in the 1980s in less developed countries like Uganda, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

However, one case raises doubts in Hechter’s mind about the robustness of the statistical relationship: Yugoslavia’s breakup into five and, eventually, six states. Yugoslavia was the most decentralized federation in Hechter’s sample, and thus seemed the “most immune to nationalist rebellion. Yet in the very next decade the country was plunged into a severe and prolonged civil war, and the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ entered the English vocabulary” (Hechter, 2000, p. 149).
Hechter (2000) disputes the implicit premise in other studies that the key dynamics of dissolution like Yugoslavia's are internal; "time and again nationalism has been strongly affected by exogenous forces... [a] country that decentralizes as a means of containing nationalist violence is at risk of fragmenting when its center declines due to exogenous shocks such as military defeat or fiscal crisis" (pp. 149-151). We argue here that federalism in the Philippines will be primarily an internal, self-inflicted injury, but that the external factor is worth keeping in mind: mainland China has planted its bully boots on our territory, and our central government has met it with a rather docile foreign policy despite our having won the international arbitration case for our maritime claims in the West Philippine Sea. While President Duterte may be making gains playing off the superpowers against one another at another level, China is now so close geographically, with its forward military facilities in our territory, and it can easily sow unrest, rebellion, and secession in our most vulnerable regions by, for example, smuggling arms to dissident parties there. For the moment, though, civilian Chinese invaders, in the guise of drug dealers and gambling operators, are now doing this subversive work.

Aside from the more violent possibilities, federal nation-states, such as the US, have encountered difficulties in keeping their system decentralized and in making creative federalism work in the relatively newer policy area of environmental protection (See Annex 2 on “Environmental Federalism”).

Theoretical and Empirical Evidence for Unitary Government

We hope that our dismal scenario will not actually transpire, and that we can hold off exogenous aggression long enough to build up the internal strengths of our country. This seems to be an uncertain prospect under our present unitary government, and it will be even more unlikely under a federal system. At least, with the existing unitary form, we can claim to have a better system with the capabilities to perform the integrative functions described earlier. Aside from our inferences from the premises supplied by the Pimentel federalist model, there are also theoretical and empirical grounds for believing that a unitary system is better than a federal one.

Professors Gerring, Thacker, and Moreno, faculty members of Boston University specializing in political science, international relations, and economics, have done research and statistical analysis to prove that a “centripetal democratic government,” which combines unitary and parliamentary forms, is better in achieving its policy objectives than a
decentralized one combining federalism and a bicameral legislature. Their theoretical arguments first pit the usual federalist vs. unitarian arguments, as summarized in Box 1. We have covered some of the issues addressed therein, so we need not linger on them all.

### Box 1. Federalist Arguments – Pros and Cons

a) **Competition.** Federalists argue that federalism would induce healthy competition among states to improve their services, which would induce local residents to “vote with their feet” and move into better performing local units. Gerring et al. counter that the local government theory (Tiebout, 1956) will face limits as many other push-pull factors motivate migration. Capital can cross borders more easily than humans can, and capital competition could be a “race to the bottom” as excessive local incentives to outside investors reduce the local tax base and degrade the quality of governance (Gerring et al., 2007, pp. 5-6).

b) **Fiscal federalism.** Subnational public goods and services can be better suited to regional and local circumstances through decentralization. However, such adaptation can be easier to achieve with administrative processes rather than a constitutional change. A federal system is more rigid and not necessarily more adaptive than a unitary one. Fixed state boundaries, often historically and culturally determined, may not adjust with current realities and changing circumstances. They may inhibit interstate actions to deal with externalities produced by a state. Central intervention and assistance needed in such instances can be hamstrung in a federal system (Gerring et al., 2007, pp. 6-8) (See Annex 2).

c) **Veto power.** The veto points added by federalism make it harder to change central policies and therefore enhance “credible commitment” and citizen and investor confidence in the continuity of national policies. However, this federalist argument assumes that the status quo is favorable to policy continuity, but if it is not (e.g., if the existing policies and institutions are corrupt, inefficient, or poorly devised), the multiple veto points “will only serve to institutionalize a low-equilibrium trap.” An increase in veto points may drive out bad ideas, but “it may also drive out good ones” (Gerring et al., 2007, pp. 9-10).

d) **Accountability.** Federalists argue that federalism enhances political accountability by bringing decision making closer to the people, where politicians are more attuned to local concerns. However, whether federalism strengthens local accountability is doubtful, since there may be discrepancies between the origins and impacts of policies and local perception of their benefit and cost incidence. Subnational economic policies may have national or external outcomes that local voters may not readily understand and properly attribute (Gerring et al., 2007, pp. 10-11).

e) **Size of the federal government.** Federalists contend that the central government should be smaller and impose fewer regulatory burdens on the market and civil society. Federalism may constrain government size in terms of aggregate revenue and expenditure. Unitarians, on the other hand, doubt whether a small government is necessarily “a sign of good governance.... Big government has both advantages and disadvantages” (Gerring et al., 2007, p.12).
Among other things, Gerring et al. (2005) contend that there is no a priori reason to suppose that it would be easier for a federal government to undertake or implement the difficult task of actually reallocating functions, because regionally ensconced politicians are likely to have competing agendas; a central government in a unitary system can assign functions in a more flexible and rational fashion. With respect to accountability, subnational governments are more vulnerable to capture by special interests and cannot have the diverse civil associations to serve as “counterweights to official malfeasance.” Federalism also tends to fragment political party organization and competition, enhancing “localistic political allegiances, leading to weaker, more fissiparous national parties” (Gerring et al., 2005, pp. 8, 11).

The results Gerring et al. presented in a later (2007) paper show that the unitary form is “associated with higher levels of political development but the relationship is not robust across all dependent variables” (Gerring et al., 2007, p. 20). Unitarism is correlated with lower levels of corruption in one statistical format but not significantly in another format. It is strongly related to bureaucratic quality in the full model test, which covers all five dependent variables or outcomes of governance, but not in the reduced-form model test, which mainly covers variables that are statistically significant. Unitarism likewise correlates negatively with political stability. However, Gerring et al. (2007) admittedly found that “[r]esults for government effectiveness and rule of law are inconclusive” (p. 20).

Nonetheless, the analytical results favoring unitarism are much stronger for indicators of economic development (e.g., better telecom infrastructure), investment rating, and human development (e.g., lower infant mortality and illiteracy rates). Gerring et al. (2007) conclude “there are theoretical grounds for doubting the federalist argument, and strong empirical evidence supporting unitarism” (p. 23). Federalism may be useful as an expedient, temporary way station to unitarism, as in Iraq or the European Union, but in the long run, “most polities will be better off if they are able to form ... unitary constitutional arrangements” (Gerring et al., 2007, p. 20).

On Parliamentary/Federal vs. Presidential/Unitary Form

I concur with Gerring et al., but disagree with respect to their combining a unitary system with a parliamentary form. Former Senator Pimentel himself did not propose a parliamentary central government on top of his federalist model, but the leadership of the Duterte administration seems strongly inclined toward such a combination, perhaps to counteract federalist infirmities. For my part, I think that this would be going in the
opposite, less democratic direction. Parliamentary governments merge the legislative and executive functions, and members of parliament, rather than popular election, choose their leader (except where a President is popularly elected to head a parliamentary government, as in France). Since they do not have fixed tenure, parliamentary governments have usually been unstable, because of parliamentary votes of non-confidence—hence, the term “government of the day.” Putting such an unstable central authority on top of a shaky federal set-up is doubly enfeebling for the entire structure of government.

Another reason I doubt the feasibility of a parliamentary form for the Philippines, apart from the experiment with the parliamentary-presidential form under the Marcos dictatorship, is that we have not developed the political *delicadeza* to make such a system function so responsively to popular sentiment. No heads have rolled from the most embarrassing events, like the assassination of a national leader or, more recently, the deaths of thousands of drug suspects at the hands of the police and vigilantes who may also be police officers. Incumbent elective leaders often cling to power even after being voted out of office. Besides, we have not developed a political party system that can firmly support a consistent and coherent pattern of interest aggregation in policymaking. Instead, we have instituted a multiparty system that has been even more fragmented and brittle, with members quickly changing colors after every presidential election. These deserve more attention for reform than the wholesale revamp of the governmental system.

For all its faults in both design and practice, the present presidential system is still better in its fundamentals and in fitting into the existing unitary framework. First, the unitary government itself was conceived to firmly encompass a naturally and culturally diverse set of communities in this archipelago of more than 7,000 islands. The unitary form was implicitly assumed in the 1935 Constitution to be the suitable one for the Philippines. It occasioned no serious debate or question at that time. A Federalista Party was organized not to advocate a federal alternative for the Philippine government but to obtain statehood for the Islands in the United States, a project that failed (Hayden, 1955, pp. 53-54).

The Philippines has grown into a bigger nation-state now with more than 100 million people, and with scale comes greater complexity. While it may argue for a more adaptive decentralization, this development should not cross the constitutional line to federalism. Instead, it should reinforce the imperative of a unitary framework to keep the country together, in view of its persisting diversity and the centrifugal forces threatening its integrity from inside and outside.
Federalists usually equate unitarism with centralism, often ignoring the measures taken toward decentralization and the country’s population distribution, economic development, and the natural diversity that underpins the distribution of public and private investments. Metro Manila may usually get the lion’s share of national government benefits, but it also has a disproportionate share of the nation’s economic output and the social and functional problems due to rapid population growth, immigration, and urban primacy.

Institutionally, the unitarist arrangement in the Philippines is complemented by the American-style central division of powers (CDP) and roles with presidential government. This ensures a diffusion of powers through the separation of legislative and executive powers and branches in the national government, an independent judiciary and other constitutional offices, a bill of rights, and freedom of religion, expression, assembly, and non-governmental organization. Moreover, the Congress is bicameral, with different national, district, and sectoral (partylist) constituencies, and with some specialization of functions between the two Houses. The legislative power is structurally divided but functionally shared with the President through his veto, certification, planning, and budgetary powers. The CDP serves as a foil, as well as a complement to the unitary framework, and provides additional points of access to power for citizens, due process, deliberation in policymaking, and greater public information, transparency and accountability. Together with the areal division of powers (ADP) represented by the local governments (the provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays), the CDP ensures that the whole system is basically democratic, liberal, and welfare-oriented (Ylvisaker, 1959).

To its credit, the parliamentary form of central government may have the advantage of making and changing policies faster, assuming that it is not dragged down by the veto points added by federalism. However, parliamentarism may be as brittle as our present party system, and, given the severe weakening inflicted by federalization, a parliamentary government may be able to do much less faster—in a fragile framework endangered by runaway competition, uneven development, and dissolution of the Republic.

Conclusion

As I said earlier, I hope that what I fear will happen with federalism on a model as radical as Senator Pimentel’s will not actually materialize. My prognosis is a contingent one. Reasonable people in our government
can either change their basic position on the issue or do something to counteract or moderate federalism's centrifugal tendencies. If the federalist project will push through anyway, my advice to today's framers would be to amend the Pimentel model (or others like it) in favor of a much stronger federal government that can more effectively redress regional disparities, restrain secessionist movements and, together with loyal states, resist external aggression.

Endnotes

1 After former Senator Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel, Jr., author of the federalism bill, examined in this article. For background and discussions, see Brillantes, Ilago, and Montes (2009).

2 Federalism is one of the "broad framework institutions" in this conceptual scheme, with judicial review and bureaucratic strength and autonomy being the others (Weaver & Rockman, 1993, pp. 31-32). The secondary characteristics include unicameral or bicameral legislative organization and electoral voting rules (recorded or secret, simple or super-majorities). Regime and government types pertain to whether single- or multi-parties dominate, simple, "party government" or coalition government prevails, etc.

3 We assume that with each function come some corresponding authority and resources. Specific provisions of the revised Constitution could qualify this correlation. For more on functional reallocations, see Rev.11, Art. 10, Senate Joint Resolution No. 10, as cited in Brillantes et al. (2009, pp. 148-152).

4 The only possible venue for interstate and intergovernmental cooperation is the provision for a federal equalization fund to be governed by a council with 13 state representatives and four federal government representatives. This is to be created with an initial Php100-billion appropriation by Congress, for allocation among qualified states, and autonomous or federal administrative regions, as aid for their basic government services (Brillantes et al., 2009, p.180). Nothing was said about the comparative-relative social and economic conditions of the different states as a qualification criterion, e.g., whether lagging ones would be favored.

5 The 30% - 70% division would actually mean 21% for the 11 states and 49% for the LGUs. However, the new layer of states will still be the prime beneficiaries and the central government the biggest loser. As noted by my faculty colleague, Professor Jose P. Tabbada, 21% will be a very great additional expenditure for the new layer of state governments. Moreover, they will likely seek to augment their share at the expense of their local governments as well as that of the federal government.

6 By "nation," the author refers to subnation-state groups or communities located within geographic regions (like the Basque in Spain and the Bangsamoro in the Philippines).

7 On 27 October 2017, the Parliament of Catalonia declared independence from Spain amid a constitutional crisis over the Catalan independence referendum. In response, the Spanish Senate enforced Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, granting the Spanish government power to suspend Catalan independence. In the days that followed, most of the officials of the proposed Catalan state were deposed and charged with rebellion, sedition, and misuse of public funds. At the time of this writing, the Spanish government has temporarily taken direct control over Catalonia.
Ambassador Hermenegildo Cruz, former Philippine envoy to Canada, the US, the USSR, and Chile, also makes this point. He recounts these countries' struggles and costs in making their federal systems work and keeping them intact: The US Civil War killed 630,000 of its 33 million people, and more recent conflicts in Nigeria-Biafra and Yugoslavia likewise cost human lives. "If our own federal experiment fails," he writes, "and we fight a civil war ... to preserve our nation, there will be two million casualties out of our present population of 106 million" (Cruz, 2016).

Another comment by another former colleague, Jimmy Rañeses, was that, before the American colonial takeover, some Filipino leaders had contemplated a federal alternative for the Philippines. However, their idea did not surface in Hayden's account.

References


January-December


### Annex 1. Division of “Exclusive” Federal and State Jurisdictions Proposed in the Pimentel Federalism Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Federal Congress</strong></th>
<th><strong>State Legislatures</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. National security and defense</td>
<td>1. Public health, sanitation, hospitals, drug rehabilitation, other health facilities except those established by Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “The sole power to declare war…”</td>
<td>2. Agriculture, agricultural lands, except those under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, those previously proclaimed as reservations under existing laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Foreign relations including treaty ratification</td>
<td>3. Land use and development, including urban land reform, except land previously proclaimed as reservations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Foreign trade but states may enter into trade relations with other countries…”</td>
<td>4. Cadastral or land surveys of any kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Customs and quarantine</td>
<td>5. Taxes and duties—except those reserved to the Federal Congress—agricultural income, business of all types, electricity generation, consumption, and distribution, oil, gas and other energy products, entertainments and amusements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “The federal currency, fiscal and monetary system, taxation, budget and audit”</td>
<td>6. Fisheries, aqua-or-marine culture, swamps or marshlands except areas within the 15-km from shore lines under LGU jurisdiction by existing law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Immigration, emigration, and extradition</td>
<td>7. Public works and infrastructures, airports, seaports, wharves, drainage systems and the like, except those initiated by the federal government; roads, bridges, municipal tramways, inland waterways, ferries, and other means of travel or transportation and vehicles that use the infrastructure built by any state within its boundaries.</td>
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<td>8. Interstate commerce and trade</td>
<td>8. State public corporations and quasi-public corporations</td>
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<td>10. Federal postal and telecommunications</td>
<td>10. “The trade relations that states may establish with other countries shall not include ... armaments ... of any type ... any war material, toxic, noxious or poisonous materials or resources ... declared non-commercial and may not be brought from or traded with other nations”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Federal air, sea and land transportation</td>
<td>11. Bankruptcy and insolvency</td>
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<td>12. Intellectual property and copyright</td>
<td>12. Trust and trustees</td>
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<td>13. Meteorology and standards of weights and measures</td>
<td>13. Compelling the attendance of any state, LGU officials, or persons doing business in the state or testifying or producing documents for the state legislature or any of its committees. The person/s summoned cannot be prevented by any federal or state executive department officials “including the officers and members of the Armed Forces or the Police.” [See p. 178 on federal and state police.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Grants-in-aid to states</td>
<td>14. Payment of the state’s share of the national public debt used for national development</td>
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<td>15. Federal census and statistics</td>
<td>15. “Courts for the governance of indigenous populations including those in the Cordilleras and the Bangsamoro State. State legislation on this matter shall take precedence over federal legislation”</td>
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<td>16. (Federal) Loans to or from the Republic</td>
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<td>17. Federal penal system</td>
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<td>18. Cloning, genetic research and engineering</td>
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<td>19. Settlement of territorial and other disputes among states, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Offenses defined in the Penal Code and other laws passed by Congress</td>
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Source: Senate Joint Resolution No. 10, as cited in Brillantes et al. (2009, pp. 131, 148-152)

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### Annex 1, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Federal Congress</strong></th>
<th><strong>State Legislatures</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>16. The salaries, emoluments, allowances, and the like of all officials and employees of the states.</td>
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<td>17. Penalizing offenses against matters lodged in the state jurisdictions.</td>
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<td>18. Police with jurisdiction over crimes or offenses committed within the boundaries of the individual states.</td>
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<td>19. Total ban or regulation of gambling activities. Federal or state governments, “including members of the Armed Forces, their state officials or employees including members of the Police … may not in any manner engage … in any gambling activities”</td>
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<td>20. “Local prisons, reformatories, Borstal institutions and the like …”</td>
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<td>21. Transfer from one state to another of persons under investigation, accused of crimes, or convicted prisoners</td>
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<td>22. Wild animals, birds and other endangered species, state flora and fauna</td>
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<td>23. Mines, mineral resources, gas, gas-works except those within ancestral domains and those covered by acts of Congress</td>
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<td>24. Water, water supplies, irrigation and canals and water power arising from and used within the boundaries of a state</td>
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<td>25. Economic and social planning</td>
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<td>26. Social security and social insurance, employment and unemployment, pension plans, social welfare including relief and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons and places affected by natural or manmade calamities.</td>
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<td>27. Cooperatives, microfinances or micro-credit and money-lending activities</td>
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<td>28. Weights and measures</td>
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<td>29. Price control</td>
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<td>30. Labor and employment</td>
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<td>31. Science and technology</td>
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<td>32. Free education from pre-school up to secondary schools, and subsidized colleges and universities. The dominant language of the communities may be used as instruction medium from the first to the third grade.</td>
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<td>33. Libraries, museums and like institutions, ancient and historical monuments, and records other those covered by existing legislation</td>
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<td>34. Charities and charitable institutions</td>
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<td>35. Registration of marriages, births and deaths, certified true copies of which shall be furnished monthly to the National Statistics Office.</td>
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<td>36. Pilgrimages to places outside the Republic.</td>
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<td>37. “Totally prohibiting or regulating the production, manufacture, transport and sale of tobacco, cigarettes or other tobacco products, beer, wine or alcoholic beverages or intoxicating liquor including labels thereof.”</td>
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<td>38. “The general welfare of the people of the states subject only to the prohibitions provided for under the constitution or by existing laws passed by Congress”</td>
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Source: Senate Joint Resolution No. 10, as cited in Brillantes et al. (2009, pp. 131, 148-152)
Annex 2. "Rethinking Environmental Federalism" in the U.S.

In the earlier postwar period, the US federal government enacted a number of landmark legislations on environmental protection while the states and local governments showed a capacity for initiative and innovation in this new policy area. However, the ideas of "constructive sharing of authority" close to the heart of federalism scholars eventually proved "difficult to translate into... actual policy, particularly in the area of environmental policy" (Rabe, 2013, p. 46).

According to Rabe (2013), three additional developments are likely to shape the future role of states in environmental policy. First, the states' likely insufficient fiscal resources to maintain core environmental protection functions and to continue considering new initiatives; second, the dominance of Republicans in most states since 2010 and the departure of governors who had championed environmental policy innovations meant increased hostility toward and reduced state resources for environmental measures; and third, uncertainty about which state innovations would be scrapped by federal preemption in view of the many congressional proposals for new federal legislation on climate change, air quality, chemical regulation, and energy diversification.

Rabe (2013) notes, "a more discerning environmental federalism might... begin by concentrating federal regulatory energies on problems that are clearly national in character" (p. 53). For example, many air and water pollution problems are cross-boundary concerns, relative to indoor air quality and cleanup of abandoned hazardous waste dumps. Rabe also suggests federal fees on long-distance waste shipments and on greenhouse gas emissions, more federal-state partnerships, sharing of policy ideas and environmental data, and federal encouragement of greater interstate cooperation especially on common boundary problems.

Reflections from Scholars and Practitioners

Public Administration as a Scholarly Discipline Today—and How ICT Will Affect It

WOLFGANG DRECHSLER*

After sketching out how Public Administration (PA) scholarship looks today, this lecture asks how information and communication technology (ICT) will, or might, influence it in the near future. First, we look at what information and communication technology can already do today and how it has changed our life-world by 2017. Two critical, interlinked phenomena are then analyzed: MOOCs (massive open online courses) and their effects, and the current ability of algorithms to write a certain type of texts. These may have the effect to strongly enforce, even lock in, the current tendencies of PA, but they may also give rise to an altogether different kind of development of scholarly inquiry in the discipline and beyond.

Keywords: Public Administration, ICT, algorithms, MOOCs

PA as a Scholarly Discipline Today

Public Administration (PA), as such, is a field that is, in its natural state, without a methodology, because it is created and brought together by its subject, not by its method. That subject is the working state. Traditionally, PA has been done by lawyers, economists, public-finance people, governance scholars, bureaucracy scholars, management experts, and so on (see Drechsler, 2001). But we live today in a scholarly world in which method is more important than anything else, certainly more than the subject. The application of methods has become the point, not a tool.

What happened during the last 30 years or so is that international globalized PA borrowed its method from other fields. Very simplified, PA borrowed its methodology from political science. Political science borrowed its methodology also, just a little earlier, from economics. Economics did not have this kind of methodology before World War II, either, but

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subsequently, it borrowed its methodology from the hard sciences (see Drechsler, 2011; Raadschelders, 2013). That is why today, we in PA, if totally watered down and still more in tendency than in practice, have more and more a methodology for top articles in top journals (not good ones but high-ranked ones) that pretend that we all are physics professors (Groeneveld et al., 2015).

Thus, we have a hard-science approach. We ideally want things expressed by formulae. Everything should be rigorous and empirical with hard data and reproducible experiments. That is the ideal; that is what we want (although in PA, of course, we hardly ever achieve it). Why do we want that? Because that is what physics people want, or wanted. In a world that trusts hard scientists, the economists borrowed their methodology from physics, so they looked more serious. The political scientists borrowed it from the economists, so that they looked more serious. And we in PA borrowed it from the political scientists. Why is this so? A hundred years ago, people in the university did not want to look as if they were engineers or scientists. At Oxford or Cambridge, if someone said, “you look like an engineer,” this was an insult (Snow, 1959). Today, our world privileges the natural sciences; the natural sciences are cool. We think what is true is what has been proven by a natural scientist, so we borrow their certainty for our field via this big cascade of methodological legitimacy.

We tend today to think of claims that are mantled in scientific attitude as more convincing than of those that are just based on anecdotes, although there often is no reason for this. Most recently, the abhorrence against U.S. President Donald J. Trump’s “alternative facts” (Alternative facts, n.d.) and anti-science stand has ironically revived and re-legitimized, as a counter-measure, a late 19th century positivist understanding of “reality,” reinforcing this attitude, if often based on good intentions. However, originally, one of the reasons why the latter theory had been promulgated in the U.S. social sciences after World War II was to delegitimize any criticism from the Left (McCumber, 2017).

The leading journals in the social sciences promote this attitude. The top journal in political science is the Annual Political Science Review, published by the American Political Science Association. It actually makes room for one or two essays about thinking and theory, but all the other essays are very empirical, and the more math you have in it, the better. The scholarship in the top-ranked journals, also in PA—which included Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, and, more recently, Public Administration Review, and so on—tends towards quantification, counting, not discussing something, and modeling; in PA

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admittedly less so than in most other social sciences, but the tendency is clear. That means that, ideally, I create a theoretical model by mathematical means, preferably of how things work. This bias towards modeling and quantification strongly pushes articles that tell their readers what they already know. Anything that is based on models, anything that is based on quantification, is a push towards something that is not new. You think intuitively that an essay with a research line is correct if it confirms something you already know; so, you replicate what people want to hear. The Jan Hendrik Schön plagiarism case illustrates this very well—he wrote all kinds of articles, two top journal articles every month. Schön really had a mass production of articles, all of which he made up himself. The way he did this is that he did experiments with results that were exactly as all his colleagues expected them to be. So he did not have anything new, but all his essays corroborated the findings of senior colleagues, and for career purposes, that was fine (Ross, n.d.).

The funny thing with all this quantifying, modeling methodology is that nobody in the hard sciences agrees with that anymore. Physicists believed something like that 70 years ago, and mathematicians believed it maybe 90 years ago. For physicists, all that precise modeling is laughable (see Drechsler, 2011). But for us in the social sciences, it is very actual. Albert Einstein, who is the iconic image of hard science in our modern times, in his famous Prussian Academy lecture of 1921 already said that the more mathematical modeling you do, the less the model will say about reality, and the more you talk about reality, the less you are precise (Einstein, 1921).

In other words, operationalization, that means putting real-life questions into a testable formula, creates scenarios that are trivial. Anything in the classical social sciences that can be put into a formula is not interesting because it is so simple. If this article says, “this is the question, these are the databases, that is what we want to know, and now we are going to rigorously test it by so and so many interviews, n equals this,” and so on, Einstein, as well as other scientists, would say, that this is necessarily a trivial article. “Trivial” is a technical mathematical term, but in the social sciences, it is a normative judgment—if you say to social scientists that their essays are trivial, they are usually not happy. But this is a good reminder nonetheless. What is scientifically interesting is what you cannot operationalize.

A consequence of “method first” is that it privileges form over content. We want a rigorous empirical kind of essay, never mind what questions it answers, rather than a new question, an interesting thought or anything like that. That would, as the saying goes, “not make it through peer review.” So we do not so much look for problems that we can
investigate, or investigate phenomena that present themselves to us, that astonish us, which is actually the traditional basis of inquiry since Aristotle. Rather, what we do—or at least what tendency we have—is that we look for obvious things that we can state in a “rigorous” manner in order to get a publication out of it, so that we have another publication, and so that we are being promoted or gain prestige among our peers.

The current trend, however, of how we measure whether an article is good or not is a move from input to output. And that is enabled by ICT. As I mentioned before, the usual way today of how you describe that a professor is good is that he/she has published in the right journals (yesterday, the criterion was what he/she had published, with an emphasis on books). I recall when, in a faculty meeting of an institution I was visiting, a science administrator said, “If you have a paper accepted by a journal that is not one of the top ten, reconsider publishing it at all.” The reaction by the senior people even at that place was very negative. The leading PA scholar of our time later commented that this was really enforcing “normal science”—a devastating criticism—but, of course, the administrator was “only following orders” from the university in question, which focuses almost exclusively on indicators and rankings rather than on real contents and science (Hoffmann, 2017).

Why do you publish in the right journals? Because on average, more people read a good journal than a bad one. So if you get yourself into a good journal, more of your colleagues read what you are writing and will, perhaps, also cite it. Thus, a journal is good because, on average, articles in this journal are good. But that, of course, is a 1980s way of thinking, because today we have very large databases, the most famous—and paradigmatically superior—one being Google Scholar (Harzing, 2017), which track exactly how often individual essays are actually cited by one’s colleagues (Bakkalbasi, Bauer, Glover, & Wang, 2006). Hence, the reason why we say that an essay is good because it appears in a specific journal is obsolete.

Today, and a fortiori tomorrow, even a working paper that you just put online yourself, if it is cited a lot, might be much “better” than an essay in a top journal. There are articles in the top journals in PA that do not ever get quoted by anyone, not even by the author’s sister. They were written, essentially, for nothing. But 20 years ago one could not know very easily how many people quoted an article. Now “the Web” reads all the articles in the universe, and a few more. That is what Google is all about, to read everything. As such, Google can tell you how many people cited your articles in a semi-objective way. At least, this is where most places are tending towards—we are not there yet, but the road on which we are leads to assessing the quality of a professor with one number. All of us
professors really hate this, but this is the logic of the ICT techno-economic paradigm. We are getting one number, and this, by and large, is the previously mentioned \( h \)-factor (Hirsch, 2005; Bornmann & Daniel, 2007).

The \( h \)-factor is a mathematical model that indicates how many essays one has published that have been cited by at least as many people as articles you have published. So if you have an \( h \)-factor of 13, it means that you have at least 13 essays that have minimally been cited 13 times each. So you may have 100 essays, but many are not cited that often, but you have 13 essays of which the least-cited essay has been cited 13 times. So your \( h \)-factor of 13 is the number at which the number of your essays and the number of your citations meet. That is partially very nice because it privileges continuous publication of decent stuff, and it is, of course, horrible for the one-book people who write one classic and nothing more, because that does not show at all. There are many problems with that approach, but it gives you, also—and not least—students, a very quick reference of how good somebody is.

This approach is strongly pushed by the need for competitive research funding. How important this is today depends on where you are. Some years ago, there was a big thing in the press about two University of Columbia anthropology professors who were fired because they brought less than 80% of their salary every year. Their contracts were terminated (Goldberg, 2014). Yes, there are attempts and practices today to establish “social relevance” or “social impact” as additional criteria for measuring the quality of scholars and scholarship (European Commission, 2017), but I would say that, so far, all boils down to research, measured in top-level publications and/or their impact. There is also a serious, hitherto unsolved problem of how to measure social impact beyond appearance in media or board membership in non-government organizations and the like—and the fact that, once again, what will be measured will not be the actual relevance or impact, but their indicators, i.e., at best the shadows at the cave’s wall (Drechsler, in press-a).

Most of science and research money these days, and since well over a decade, comes from central agencies, either national or international (Connell, 2004; Conraths & Smidt, 2005). You really need this money to survive, to go to a conference, to buy a keyboard, and to pay your PhD students, among others. The decision on whether you get competitive research money or not is assessed based on your quality and your track record and a couple of other things, including the project itself, of course, but how good you are in terms of publications, measured by input (top-journal essays) and/or output (citations), is crucial. So this is not just a matter of vanity, but it is about how you live and even whether you survive.

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Now, what about scientists' quest for the truth? Social scientists wanting to change the oppressive world, social scientists trying to find out how the world really is held together? As my colleague Rainer Kattel likes to say, today, science is really just a way for a segment of the middle class to live in peace (or so they thought). The argument is that most people who go into science these days do not want to know anything and that universities essentially promote a life that the monasteries did. If you are not fit enough for business, you go into science, because as a professor you can still live. But it only seems this way; in reality, of course, you are pushed into a business environment. All of us in science have to behave like entrepreneurs these days. If we do not, there is little money left and where there still is money left, these are niches that are rapidly dwindling away.

So in sum, this means, for PA scholarship in the year 2017, that the incentive, that means what we should do or how the system pushes us to behave, is to write replicative essays—essays that say the same thing that we know, for mainstream journals, soon essays that will be cited often, that say exactly what our colleagues want to hear. By and large, this is what makes a career. These are essays that put method over contents and that tend towards the countable, the quantifiable, the rigorous, the scientific—towards what can be put, in essence, into a table, an equation, a graph.

What Can ICT Do?

How information and communication technology (ICT) influences, and especially will influence in the future, PA, is one of the most-researched and published—and talked-about—topics in our discipline, often under the label of e-Governance—even the state as an institution might be transformed (Drechsler, in press-b). But how about ICT's influence on PA, not in the sense of bureaucracy, but PA as a field of scholarly inquiry?

In this context, I like to say that in ICT, the future is here already. What that means is that most people, and the older they are, the less, are not fully aware of what is actually going on in ICT and what we already have achieved. The Snowden affair (Greenwald, 2013) brought some of us a little closer to realizing how the world ticks and how many people try to know what we all think. The idea of all big social media sites, as they will very openly say—both Eric Schmidt from Google and the chief finance officer of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, have said this (Thompson, 2010; Vis, 2014)—is that they want to know what you want before you know it yourself. A key idea of social media, maybe the main one that drives it beyond the rhetoric of uniting people, is that information is there that

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knows better about yourself, who you are, what you feel, what you want and whom you love than you do.

One of the big horrors of science fiction was that we have machines like robots that imitate being human persons; that is already a pre-ICT fear; recall Olimpia in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Sandmann* (1817). But, in order not to recognize that Olimpia is an automaton, your vision must be manipulated. When you chat with somebody, and that is not a real person, then it is a computer program, an algorithm. The big horror was always that you have machines that are not recognizable anymore; more so, that lie to you and tell you that they are actually not machines but real persons (Dvorskyi, 2013a).

A recent story had it that this had actually happened—lying algorithms that try to sell health insurance. It looked that way, but later, some people said that this had not actually been a robot but nice ladies in India with a heavy accent, who, when they interact with you, have a selection of pre-recorded statements, and they click on it to reply. There is still a human in it, and that may well be (Dvorskyi, 2013b). But, on the other hand, this showed how close the step to a computer telling you “I am a real person” really is (Nicks, 2013). On 7 June 2014, a program called “Eugene Goostman” passed the Turing test (Furness, 2014). While there are well-known issues with the Turing test (Halpern, 2006), the fact remains that this does make a difference, as we will see. True, last year, an “AI robot fail[ed] to get into [the] University of Tokyo” (Japan Times, 2016), but it is noteworthy that this was seen by some as a surprise.

Academics in the past few years have been very much impressed by the rise of what is called “massive open online courses” or MOOCs. These days, everybody has to be into them. The main driver in science is what is cool and in fashion, and if everybody does it, you have to do it, because if not, you look like a loser. You do not want to look like a loser—if this sounds like 14-year-olds, that is how it is (Economist, 2012; Friedman, 2013).

MOOCs are mass-enrolment online courses, centrally offered, to which everybody can subscribe; these are legatees of putting lectures online and long-distance learning. There is no business model for them yet, and the creation of MOOCs is very expensive, but since everybody does it, you do it, too. You study something online, the teacher is online, maybe the exams are local, but often, there are no exams.

Some of the MOOCs are successful, many of them have enrolments in more than hundred thousands, and there are a couple of important platforms, like Coursera, that offer them and bring them to about any
connected household. Then you get the story that this is so nice for poor little children in poor countries, that they can get a top MIT education for free.

But the MOOCs have an interesting consequence, and this now slowly ties together what I have been talking about so far. If you have an online course for 200,000 people, what kind of exam can you give? How can this be graded? You can only ask questions that are basically multiple-choice checkable or checkable by computer or other infrastructure, because, otherwise, it is not possible. That is one of the influences of the MOOCs, and if MOOCs get more popular, that, in return, has an influence on science. MOOCs privilege knowledge that is replicable, general, and usual. You cannot have courses for a lot of people in which you ask essay questions for students to react in a nuanced way to complicated problems. Of course, the more literary computers become, the more they can ask complex-looking questions, because they can understand, and judge, the answers to them as well. On the other hand, the tendency to ask simple, easily evaluated questions is not only technology-driven, but it also conforms to the logic both of large classes and or teaching being a quite low priority in an academic system where—often existentially necessary—funding is allotted based on anything but good teaching, however measured.

Hence, the MOOCs are pushing the very technical approach, which we talked about before, and which, remember, is our approach in PA, and in university teaching generally, anyway. This has two consequences. First, an already visible split between elite and virtual education, i.e., actually it is not so that now the poor people from the provinces get an MIT education. MIT people still get an MIT education, for which they pay a lot of money, tens of thousands every year or semester, and whether the education is worth it or not may be debatable, but the networking surely is (Rothman, 2014). Neither is it so you get a mass education for the masses, and the top people still get to talk in an exclusive environment with the top professors (not in an intelligence sense, but in a money one) (Allen, 2013). Recent research has even shown that even within the MOOCs itself, students from a more elite background do better (Hansen & Reich, 2015).

The second key consequence of MOOCs, perhaps even more important for us, is mainstreaming and non-specificity. If a school says, "we borrow the accounting class from Ohio State, and everybody in the world takes the Ohio State accounting class," what that means is that everybody learns Ohio State accounting. Now, with accounting, as well as courses such as mechanics and astronomy, this may be okay. But, in PA, if absolutely everybody takes the introductory class from Ohio State, there...
is no specificity anymore, there is no different methodology, there is no way for a young scholar or a very senior one to challenge the mainstream, because the mainstream has become the law (Bustillos, 2013; Heller, 2013), and that, in a field that does not even have standard textbooks.

This might not sound very horrible, but actually this is a serious horror story if one believes in context, legacy and specificity. Because what does it mean that everybody does the same in the world? That means that everybody does what is done in the United States, because that is, of course, with English, but not only because of that; the nation that is dominating the science world and particularly, together with Britain, the PA world (Drechsler, 2013). That is the type of PA we have talked about, the one inherited from political science, economics, and, ultimately, 19th century physics.

This brings me to my connecting point, and that is that algorithms and computer programs can already write essays today (Lohr, 2011). We already live in a world in which some normal human texts, or what sounds like normal human texts, have not been created by a human, or have never even been revised, checked, or edited by one. Texts can be written by machines. But what kind of texts can be written by machines? Writing is done by machines already, especially if just data change but how they are put together remains, over the years and decades perhaps, the same. What the computer programs do is that they look at a field, then they see how humans have written about it before. They see that just the data change, sometimes this, sometimes that, and then they take the sentences of tens, hundreds, thousands, maybe soon millions of texts on the same subject, tie the particles and connections around new information and present it to you as a report, or statement, or even an essay. Once again, we are not talking about the future, we are talking about now, and this is not that often realized (Lobe, 2015).

It started, apparently, with sports reports. For a lot of people in the world, in the newspaper—even if it is just online—this is the central part. You read about how people played soccer and who won. But if you think about it, even live soccer reporting is always the same. There is always an inflated piece of leather, and some young guys run behind it, trying to catch it and putting it into the goal. It is always the same story, always the same people. There is nothing new in sports, really. It is an internal game that goes on and on and on. So anything that has happened in soccer has basically happened before. All you actually need is the hard information: ball goes from A to B, you can know that by tagging; then you say, even live, “Yes, yes, yes, he should be ... there is a struggle here ... he is taking over ... he is not taking over ... he is going in ... yeah, goal!” and things like that. In the end, it sounds exciting—but any machine can
do that. The first reports that were actually done by computers concerned, as it seems, is American football—not the major league, but regional or college football. This was apparently done by a firm that is called Narrative Science, and their motto is, “retransform data into stories and insight.” That sounds cool, and it also sounds really scary. This has steadily increased. There is already sports reporting in the media that has not been written by humans, because it is, essentially, always the same, and nobody notices (Kurz & Rieger, 2013, pp. 250-251, pp. 260-261; Lobe, 2015).

Another example is weather forecasting. If you go to any of these weather pages, such as weather.com, which are very popular and thus lucrative, as they attract a lot of viewers, what you will see is that there is usually not just graphics and tables but also a text, “tomorrow it’s getting more cloudy but still warm in Baguio, but we expect some more sunshine on the weekend.” Nobody has actually written this; this has been generated. It is like the text from your GPS. The weather data are there, and a computer program ties this into language.

Yet, by now, another typical way for computers to write essays is through the quarterly reports of firms (Kurz & Rieger 2013, 251). That means if a text is nothing but a story based on data, a computer program is probably even better than you at writing the text around it. These texts—sports texts, weather texts, report texts—can be written by computers. “Whenever prose narrates a table, algorithms can write it as well” (Kurz & Rieger 2013, p. 251). By now, this has even reached the level of normal news (Dorrier, 2014; Lobe, 2015).

This even pertains to posing questions—research, if you will. In Wolfram Alpha, for instance, you ask a certain question, and then it goes through the archives, finds this thing out and gives you the answer in somewhat nice prose (Wolfram Alpha is behind Siri to a good extent; see Sterling, 2012). You could even go and find your research question and ask it to one of these computers, and they will answer it—and for quite some time already (Spivack, 2009).

So, anything where I have the same kind of essay, just a variant of questions where the core of knowledge is a table or a quantification the outcome of which I then report, is something that can be done by machines. They can also do the basic research, and they can probably do this better than you, the more so the more databases we have, and then they can put it together as an article. Precisely this structure, this shape, and these contents are typical, as I explained earlier, of what counts for the best or most successful PA articles today.
We are, therefore, at a point in time right now when normal mainstream PA articles can almost be written by machines. When I mentioned that to the managing editor of *Public Money and Management*, she said, “Oh my God, that means you and I are going to be unemployed.” I, of course, said, no, and that *Public Money and Management* is actually a really good journal, with many essays where this would be impossible, but it depends on what essay you write. Mainstream PA articles of the variety I described are, in principle, “machine-makeable” (In fact, but still close to science fiction, when machines will be able to grade standard student papers, it would hardly be a problem for them to review this kind of PA articles as well, potentially cutting out the human middle-man altogether).

**Prospects**

In sum, we can say that MOOCs, and other ICT-driven learning modes, push PA scholarship further towards research that can basically be done, and that can be done soon, by machines, and this kind of research is our default anyway. So in a sense, PA scholarship is on the road to becoming obsolete, and the business we PA scholars are in is like owning a bookshop. Remember bookshops, shops you went in to buy books before Amazon? While printed books still seem to survive for the moment (Preston, 2017), bookshops are quaint and cute and nice and dead. We buy books from Amazon (Siracusa, 2009).

But, of course, this is a highly pessimistic scenario, and there is no reason to be pessimistic unless one has to be. One of the fathers of the ICT world, Nikola Tesla, when talking about computers taking over—and he was one of the pioneers of that as well—famously said:

> Today the robot is an accepted fact, but the principle has not been pushed far enough. In the twenty-first century the robot will take the place which slave labor occupied in ancient civilization. There is no reason at all why most of this should not come to pass in less than a century, freeing mankind to pursue its higher aspirations. (Tesla 1935, p. 7)

Two German authors and internet activists, Kurz and Rieger (2013), wrote a book called *Free of Labor*, which I have cited earlier quite frequently. It is a general account of machines replacing people, especially in intellectual jobs (Kurz & Rieger, 2013; Frey & Osborne, 2013). Talking about science, they have pointed out that if robots wrote all these boring essays, scholars could focus on interesting ones again (Kurz & Rieger 2013, pp. 272-273). So we could, if we wanted, leave, say, the usual comparative-empirical papers and the like to the algorithms. Those papers often do not need humans to write them, sometimes not even machine-
like humans (It would be interesting, if not very collegial, to go through a list of PA scholars and categorize their work by their being machine-writeable or not.) The traditional scholars could get back to the aforementioned seminar room with some good students to seriously discuss what matters as far as the institutions of the state are concerned (which is of serious policy relevance, as well; see Drechsler, 2001).

Thus, we might actually see the return of classical scholarship, exactly when we need it, because of the challenges we are facing due to ICT, including the shift in human self-identity. The positive story would be for us to say that, because of this insight, we will quit writing machine articles and switch back to writing scholarly articles. The dynamics of Western-global science is not like that today, because funding is not allotted thus, but tomorrow, that may change—money and technology are the two forces today against which little can stand in the long run, but they may change course swiftly and surprisingly. Things certainly will be more likely to change for the better if those of us who share this perspective keep pushing, in the various roles they have within the scientific world and outside of it, into the right direction.

Acknowledgments

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