MAKING DECENTRALIZATION WORK FOR THE POOR: SYNERGISCTIC COPRODUCTION OF HOUSING SERVICES FOR INFORMAL SETTLERS IN MANILA AND QUEZON CITY

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ABSTRACT

It is the assumption of this study that under certain conditions incomplete decentralization can eventuate even in modest but important improvements in governance performance and outcomes. To appreciate how and why such experiences have taken place, it is essential to look into the dynamics of state-society nexus that underpins them. By devolving public authority and responsibility, the local can potentially become an arena where development-oriented local authoritative and societal actors could forge mutually-reinforcing relations to pursue common goals. The autonomy granted to local governments allows local governing authorities, particularly the entrepreneurial among them, to recognize the limits of their own governance capacities and appreciate the need of harnessing the organizational advantages of their non-state counterparts in order to overcome the gap between the demand- and supply sides of public service. In the same vein, local empowerment increases the incentives for non-state actors to actively engage local governments and enlist their full support to promote their own development and welfare agendas. In this kind of collaborative interaction, elements of both local government and society can find myriad opportunities to capacitate themselves by building on each other's competencies, complementing each other's strengths and compensating for each other's weaknesses to capture and optimize the advantages and eschew the adverse tendencies of decentralization.

The focus of current discussions on the technical and institutional requirements of decentralization has left this important aspect of the reform experience underexplored. There exists therefore a need to shed light on how and under what condition the collaborative interaction between development-oriented local government and societal actors can make decentralization, despite its inadequacies, realize its governance and developmental promises. The experiences of Manila and Quezon City with decentralized housing provision for the urban poor is a good starting point for an investigation regarding this matter.

Keywords: *Decentralization, collaborative governance, co-production, state-society synergy*

INTRODUCTION

It is assumed that by devolving the powers of the government to bring it closer to the people, decentralization makes local governance responsive and thus leads to improved life conditions at the local level. It also encourages the involvement of citizens in government decisions, which can foster civic attitude among members of the community (Faguet, 2011). But experiences in many parts of the developing world suggest otherwise. Generally, in these countries, despite decentralization, inefficient and ineffective public service continue to persist while citizen participation is usually subverted by particularistic biddings, resulting in inequalities and corruption (Bardhan, 2002; 2006; Ahmad, Khemani and Shah, 2005; Conyers, 2007; Platteau, 2009). Most explanations ascribe such failures to the flawed design and implementation of decentralization. It has been observed that often the devolution of governmental powers in these countries is not attended by a transfer of commensurate capabilities to local governments thereby rendering them weak and ineffective to take on their expanded tasks. Moreover, though decentralization is carried out supposedly to empower the community particularly the poor, frequently, it is used to perpetuate elite dominance (Burki, Perry and Dillinger, 2000; Smoke, Gomez and Peterson, 2006; Devarajan, Khemani and Shah, 2009; Scott, 2009).

Such is the case of the Philippines. The Local Government Code of 1991, the Philippine government's decentralization framework, did not only make the local government units (LGUs) a key public sector actor by transferring to them governmental authority and responsibilities in critical areas such as social services, it also made them an arena of policy-making by opening up the local policy process to and sharing decision-making functions with non-state actors – a far-reaching initiative which inspired observers to call it the most radical decentralization program in Asia (Rocamora, 2003; Atienza, 2006).

In theory, this should create a more equitable and inclusive local condition. The well-being of citizens is expected to improve when local authorities are empowered to effectively match constituent demands with appropriate public services and the citizens particularly the poor and the marginalized are organized, able to contribute in policy decisions and make the local authorities responsive and account for their actions. However, the available evidence yields a completely different picture. Studies indicate that in many areas of the country the quality of local services has remained poor while its record on democratizing the local policy structure has been less than satisfactory (Capuno, 2007). Critics lament that the Code failed to hand over LGUs the necessary resources to carry out their commitments, which often force them to rely upon central support or all together shirk away from their mandates (Atienza, 2006). In addition, many local authorities themselves thwart the genuine and effective participation of citizens in local governance by refusing to comply with the mandatory participatory provisions of the Code. In numerous cases, independent NGOs and PO are excluded and prevented from taking part in local development activities while local officials capture the policy process by creating their own organizations and appointing them in local special bodies (World Bank, 2005; Capuno, 2007). This has often resulted in "a mismatch between local fiscal decisions and the public's need for services (Capuno, 2007: 226).

Consequently, these unfortunate experiences raise questions about the assumed effects of decentralized government to public service delivery and democracy and thus bring to the fore of discussion the potential of the local government as an agent of development. The research question that is explored in this paper is as follows: Can decentralization realize its promise of improved public service provision and local democracy despite its problematic design? By looking into a local case, the urban poor housing and resettlement program in Manila and Quezon City, this paper examines the implications to community development of local government initiatives carried out in collaboration with a non-profit voluntary organization, Gawd Kalinga. It shows that even when saddled by limitations due to the problematic design of decentralization framework, the local government can still provide effective services and promote community participation. But it hinges on its agency and the nature and pattern of relationship it maintains with societal actors. Specifically, it shows that local governments can realize the promise of decentralized governance if they engage civil society in synergistic and mutually supportive ways to deliver effective services that guarantee the well-being and promote the associational life of its members.

This paper is organized into four sections as follows. The next section reviews the literature on decentralization and discusses the theory informing this study. It is followed by a presentation of the context of the study. Specifically, it discusses the decentralized housing sector of the Philippines and its implications to housing provision. It also describes the case study. The last portions of the paper focus on findings and analysis.

1. State-society relations and decentralization

Over the past few years, many studies have sought to clarify why decentralization has inspired remarkable progress in some places but recurring problems in others. Drawing insights from the experiences of decentralizing countries, they have come up with recommendations which in their approximation would guarantee the effective performance of decentralization programs. The most common explanation posits that the design or the technical aspect of decentralization decides its trajectory and outcomes. According to this proposition, decentralization measures have foundered in many parts of the developing world mainly because of shortfalls in their designs.

A commonly observed problem in the design of decentralization programs is the mismatch between devolved responsibilities and capacities. Although the legal framework for decentralized government clearly provides for devolution of responsibilities, it does not however guarantee to local governments the transfer of commensurate administrative, personnel, and above all, financial implements that would enable them to carry out their expanded mandate. This problem is crucial because without these capacities, local authorities are forced to rely more on central support, defeating the purpose of decentralization. In view of this, many recommend that decentralization programs confer upon local officials fiscal authority and expenditure autonomy including the human assets necessary to exercise effectively responsibilities for service delivery (Burki, et. al., 2000).

The issue of institutional capacity is only half of the story, though. Scholars recognize the imperative of greater revenue transfers and capacity-building of local governments. Yet they are also well aware that even with adequate resources, under a decentralized setting, local governments might still dispense substandard public service and/or engage in predatory activities if mechanisms of accountability and monitoring by citizens are not put in place or enforced consistently (Manor, 1998). This is why the issue of political accountability for them is just as crucial a component of any decentralization measure. When mechanisms through which local officials can be held accountable exist, citizens can function as a countervailing force and therefore influence their allocative decisions in favor of the general welfare. Conversely, where there are none or if they are weak or suffer breakdowns, policies will be biased against the most vulnerable sections of the population (Manor, 1998; Crook and Manor, 1998; Ayres, 2003).

Unfortunately, local governments in many developing countries undergoing decentralization usually have less incentive to account for their actions because decentralization, in the first place, is partial. According to Devarajan, et. al. (2009), when there is partial decentralization, local governments do not have the discretion to choose among competing uses subject to a budget constraint, and the citizens have no knowledge of and cannot verify whether such allocative decision is good or not. Subsequently, "citizens continue to place their expectations of service delivery at the door of the national governments. They are more likely to punish national politicians at the polls for inadequacies of service delivery rather than local politicians. As a corollary, this weakens the incentives of local governments to allocate budgetary resources optimally across competing needs" (2009: 103). In order to make them work then, the design of decentralization programs must be complete. Complete decentralization entails institutionalization of mechanisms that would allow citizens to force politicians to satisfy public demand for improved services.

For other scholarships, an appropriately designed decentralization framework has to be introduced and implemented where the initial conditions are auspicious. As to what constitutes auspicious initial condition remains an open area of research (Gerber and Kollman, 2004). There are those who turn to structures associated with democratic political systems as key determinants of effective decentralization and local empowerment initiatives. According to Ayres (2003), in order for decentralization to be a positive force in the promotion of democratic governance, there must be democratically-elected local governments and institutional mechanisms to keep them accountable (See also Litvack, et. al., 1998; World Bank, 2001; 2004).

Some scholars focus on the role of social mobilization. For them the agency not of the actors managing formal political institutions but of civil society groups and social movements ensure the efficacy of decentralized political systems. A notable body of work following this direction is the volume edited by Beard, Miraftab and Silver (2008). The works included in the volume reveal the potency of the activities of citizens and their organizations in "pushing decentralization beyond the rhetoric of inclusion and democratic practices to achieve broader social transformation" (2008: 218). The transformative tendencies of civil society organizations is attributed by the authors to their capacity to offer leadership and take advantage of the existing political opportunities to organize and mobilize with the end in view of articulating effectively the interests and improving the living conditions of their members.

Over all, the conditional arguments in favor of decentralization discussed above reflect how complicated the reform process is. Yet, from a critical standpoint, the recommendations of these bodies of work appear to complicate it more with the effect of undermining the viability of decentralization itself. Scholarships which put premium on technical aspects may be correct in giving attention to the importance of a well-designed decentralization program. But to privilege them as the necessary factor for effective local empowerment initiatives is empirically unsound. Even those who espouse such position admit that some countries have failed to secure the supposed benefits of decentralization despite meeting the institutional preconditions (Smoke, 2001). Meanwhile, others prove that few good things may happen notwithstanding design limitations. Gomez and Edmonds-Poli (2001) and Gomez (2003) show that insufficient fiscal transfer from the center did not thwart some municipalities from satisfying their public obligations and in fact encouraged them to be entrepreneurial in raising revenues.

Explanations related to the quality of the decentralizing country's democratic institutions do not clarify things, either. Though case studies indicate that decentralization has generated tangible positive outcomes in countries where democratic political institutions are fairly established, the evidence still is not conclusive regarding the causal relations between them (Rodden, 2003; Tulchin and Selee, 2004). Meanwhile, there are studies pointing to the reverse: that decentralization may exhibit effectiveness even outside of a democratic political arrangement, as in the case of some local governments in China (Bahl, 1999; Wong, 2000; Tsai, 2007).

Those which emphasize the role of civil society, arguing in favor of the transformative capabilities of social mobilization and other bottom-up reform strategies, do not provide sufficient evidence to prove the assumed universal character of civil society as a change agent. As observed in different places, many of the activities led by social organizations in response to decentralization reforms have not always produced remarkable results (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). While at the same time, a number of experiences indicate that community-led initiatives resulted in significant changes when complemented by effective state intervention (Evans, 2002; Fox, 2004; Postigo, 2011).

A largely unrecognized and underexplored aspect of decentralization experience in the developing world is the positive contributions of synergistic ties between state and society to the performance and outcomes of decentralized governance. This is especially true in the context of the Philippines where most of the studies about decentralization has concentrated on its legal-institutional aspects and its historical development. In the understanding of the present study, an examination of the Philippine decentralization experience – and of the other developing countries for that matter – from the angle of collaborative state-society relations can offer better and more potent insights on how to ensure the effectiveness of decentralization initiatives.

The widespread promotion of decentralization reforms over the years has encouraged local authorities to establish collaborative partnerships with social groups and vice versa as a prime strategy to prosecute development and welfare agendas (Rosenbaum, 2006). Needless to say, the decentralization of policymaking and implementation powers has generated novel local spaces of state-society relations (United Cities and Local Governments, 2008). Inside these new spaces, both state and society can build on each other's competencies, complement each other's strengths and compensate each other's weaknesses to successfully pursue collective goals as well as capture and optimize the advantages and eschew the dangers of local empowerment. Saito (2007) explains that strategic partnership between the government and other non-state entities can help improve government performance insofar as it "lowers transaction costs by bringing resources together for more efficient management" and "facilitate mutual learning by exchanging experiences and skills of the different partners." Moreover, it can help realize the democratizing properties of decentralization. According to King (2004: 236), mutual engagement between state agents and civic organizations may lead to a "virtuous cycle of institutional change. Active engagement in 'co-producing' state services helps to build social capital: working communities make more demands, which push state agencies towards greater accountability and responsiveness." Furthermore, public involvement of non-state actors "has major democratic implications because it locates users and communities more centrally in the decision-making process...[and] demands that politicians and professionals find new ways to interface with service-users and their communities" (Bovaird, 2007: 846).

To clarify how state-society relations can become "repositories of developmentally valuable social capital" it is fitting to use the concept of "state-society synergy" developed by Peter Evans (1996a; 1996b; 1997). Evan's concept of "synergy" maintains that a reform-oriented state and civil society can forge a mutually beneficial relationship, one that can strengthen each other's resources and comparative advantages to pursue their respective developmental objectives. A positive sum linkage between state and society is most likely to emerge whenever their engagement is defined by complementarity and embeddedness. Complementarity pertains to the distinct but complementary activities of the government and citizens. Embeddedness, on the other hand, refers to the close linkage underpinned by relations of trust and reciprocity between the two actors. High degrees of complementarity and embeddedness promote socioeconomic progress since, as he explains, "The former creates a basis for productive interaction, and the latter increases the chances of mutual gains" (1997: 1124). Moreover, through complementarity and embeddedness, state policies and activities can enhance and promote an environment where social capital or active associational life can thrive. This, in the process, increases state responsiveness and accountability and hence renders public policies more effective.

This study validates the robustness of the theoretical framework by examining the urban poor housing program of Manila and Quezon City to address the problem of informal settlements and its implications to the housing condition and associational life of beneficiaries. The next section discusses the decentralized housing sector of the Philippines.

Decentralized housing governance in the Philippines

Most scholars agree that the performance of decentralization is a function largely of its technical aspects, that is, its design and implementation. As have commonly observed, in areas where decentralization has failed either the design was incomplete or its implementation was flawed. Under this condition, the central state hands over an expanded mandate and responsibility to the local government without transferring the commensurate fiscal wherewithal and human resource base to carry them out (Burki, Perry and Dillinger, 1999; Kahkonen and Lanyi, 2001; Olowu and Wunsch, 2004; World Bank, 2004; 2009; Devarajan, Khemani and Shah, 2007). The decentralized housing sector of the Philippines is a good case in point.

Not withstanding the devolution of housing services to local governments and the legislation of pro-poor housing laws like the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992 and the Comprehensive Shelter Finance Act (CISFA) of 1994, decentralization in the Philippines has fallen short of improving the country's housing condition. This is shown by its worsening housing needs. From 2004 to 2010, a total of 812, 463 housing and security units were given out to beneficiaries. But despite government efforts, as of 2010, estimates put the country's housing backlog at 3.7 million units (Philippine Development Plan 2011). Out of this, 496,928 or 13.23% consists of the housing needs of informal residents, slum dwellers and the homeless in Metro Manila (Harabas and Aquino, 2010).

The dismal performance of decentralized housing governance in the country is usually attributed to its problematic structure. Critical evaluations explain that while the legal framework mandates LGUs to assume housing obligations, it does not clarify the functional responsibilities between them and the housing agencies of the central government (Ballesteros, 2002; 2009). Moreover, it does not provide the LGUs sufficient resources to meet their housing mandates. Because obligations are not clearly defined and funding is limited, consequently, local authorities find it difficult to fulfill their housing obligations to their less fortunate constituents. More often than not, it becomes more convenient for them to depend on central

allocations for the provision of local housing needs or worse evade their housing responsibilities. In this situation, it becomes difficult for the local constituents to make their local government accountable for the housing and urban development problems of their locality (Ballesteros, 2002; 2009).

Finding ways to address their own housing problems, the more entrepreneurial and innovative LGUs have taken advantage of the participatory provisions of the Local Government Code and UDHA to engage development-oriented non-government organizations (NGOs) and private sector groups and collaborate with them in producing and delivering housing services for the poor. These collaborations usually involve the construction of housing infrastructure, relocation of informal residents, and financing of long-term mortgages. One good example of these productive collaborations is the joint housing project between several Metro Manila LGUs and the development NGO Gawad Kalinga.

Gawad Kalinga, or more popularly known as GK, is a volunteer organization committed to transforming filthy slum colonies in the Philippines into sustainable and empowered resettlement communities. For more than a decade, it has worked with various public and private institutions for this purpose through the provision of adequate shelter to the poor and addressing their social needs through a host of interventions such as values formation, health, education, and livelihood programs. Particularly, it has taken advantage of the openness and willingness of LGUs to collaborative ventures with the non-government sector. At present, a number of LGUs has inked partnership agreements with it to address their own problem with informal settlements. These partnerhip agreements normally is defined by a sharing of responsibilities between the two: the LGUs target qualified beneficiaries and look for, purchase and develop the resettlement sites while GK builds the houses and organizes the beneficiaries into vibrant, self-reliant and sustainable neighborhoods.

Examining the pattern of relationship forged between these LGUs and GK to fulfill their common development goal of housing the poor can offer invaluable insights as regards how and under what conditions local governments, even in the context of incomplete decentralization, can promote effective public service delivery and facilitate the growth of social capital within poor communities. This paper selected the experience of Manila and Quezon City regarding this matter.

METHOD

This paper takes resettlement communities in Baseco Compound in Manila and in Munoz, Quezon City, as unit of analysis, focusing on the synergy between the local government of Makati and development-NGO Gawad Kalinga (GK) and its impact on the housing conditions of their respective beneficiaries. It uses the case study method, utilizing qualitative statements collected from interviews with pertinent officials and personnel of the LGUs of Manila and Quezon City, volunteers of Gawad Kalinga (GK) as well as group discussions with the members and leaders of these resettlement communities as main corpus of data.

As assumed by this study, effective service delivery and an active community life can be promoted even under conditions of problematic decentralization by the local government through synergistic collaboration with civil society. Drawing on Evans (1997), synergy here refers to the mutually empowering relations between active local government and mobilized civil society underpinned by complementarity and embeddedness. Data for this came from primary sources collected through interview with local authorities and GK leaders and organizers, documentary sources and field observation in the resettlement site. Following the logic of purposeful sampling, the block leaders of each of the resettlement communities, seven from Baseco Compound and 8 from Munoz were selected as source of data. The resource persons formed 2 focus groups. In these FGDs, the participants were asked to describe their housing conditions prior to their relocation, their present experiences in their new homes and neighbourhood, and the impact of the resettlement to their associational life. The narratives from the FGDs provided an opportunity to learn similarities and differences in opinions and understand how the interaction among GK, the city government and beneficiaries facilitated participation in community activities and subsequently the emergence of personal and community feautures associated with a vibrant associational life. This allowed for a comparison of the conditions of the beneficiaries before and after their relocation and thus highlight changes as a consequence of their resettlement. Discussion with each focus group lasted for 1 and 1 ½ hours. All of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Qualitative data, thereafter, were coded and analyzed.

FINDINGS

A. Coproduction through synergistic relations between LGUs and GK

The main objective of this study is to determine the pattern of state-society relations best suited for the realization of decentralization's governance and development promises. This study assumes that decentralization can be made to work in favor of effective government and development even when it's design and implementation is problematic if the local government maintains a relationship with non-state actors underpinned by a synergistic framework. In the case of decentralized housing, this is possible

through synergistic partnership between welfare-oriented local governments and societal groups by way of co-production of housing services for the benefit particularly of the poor. Synergy enhances the capacities of both actors in terms of improving the housing conditions of the less privileged by ensuring the delivery of effective and cost-efficient housing services and in terms of facilitating the health of local democracy by activating the associational life and cultivating the social capital of poor communities. Following the literature on state-society synergy, the concept of "synergy" maintains that a development-oriented state and civil society can forge a mutually beneficial relationship, one that can strengthen each other's resources and comparative advantages to pursue their respective developmental objectives. Under synergistic relations, the state and society link up to overcome lack of capabilities or resources to solve development problems via cooperation and coordination of activities. A positive sum or synergistic relationship between state and society is most likely to emerge whenever their engagement is defined by complementarity and embeddedness. Complementarity pertains to the distinct but complementary activities of the government and citizens. Embeddedness, on the other hand, refers to the close interaction based on relations of trust and reciprocity between the two actors.

As the presentation below illustrates, the agreement forged between the LGUs and GK to collaborate in resettling and housing the informal settlers fits into the mould of synergy as it exhibits these two features.

1. Complementarity

Complementarity can be seen on the mutually supportive relations between the LGUs and GK. Although both actors differ in their nature and function in that one is public and the other is private, each contributed complementary and mutually supportive inputs based on their respective comparative advantages to achieve their common welfare objectives of providing effective and cost-efficient resettlement communities for the poor. As defined by their respective formal partnership agreements, the division of labor between these LGUs and GK puts the responsibility of identifying, purchasing and developing lands for resettlement and making the necessary preparations for the relocation of targeted beneficiaries is in the hands of the former while the contruction of houses and organizing of the community in the latter. In pursuit of this agreement, in terms of developing the resettlement sites, the LGUs invested in the construction of basic infrastructures like paved streets, piped water, drainage and sewer systems including the installation of water pumps and electricity. As for the preparations for relocation, they identified qualified beneficiaries based on their database of informal settlers, guaranteed all the legal and financial requirements for their relocation

as demanded by the UDHA of 1995 and, once they were relocated, arranged for the provision of basic services like health care, livelihood among others.

For its part, GK, raised funds needed for the construction of 30-square meter housing units including other community amenities like function halls, children's playground, school buildings and workshops. The housing units (each costing Php100,000.00 to build) were built utilizing the monetary and material donations made by GK's private sector partners and supporters with the beneficiaries contributing labor during construction. As agreed upon by the LGUs and GK, no housing unit can be turned over unless the intended beneficiaries have contributed the required "sweat equity" ranging from 700 to 1,000 hours of work in the contruction of their houses. The purpose is to guarantee the participation of would-be owners and give them a sense of ownership over their houses. GK provided rudimentary training in housing construction to identified beneficiaries. While its partner housing contractors oversaw and supervised the construction of the housing units to ensure the quality of output. In support of this, GK mobilized hundreds of volunteers from its partner private sector groups to assist in the construction of houses and other community amenities. At the same time, while construction was ongoing, GK took the lead in organizing the beneficiaries to form homeowners associations, gave workshops and training in community leadership and work, and presided over values formation programs as well as skills training and livelihood activities.

According to the housing and social welfare officials of the LGUs, in general, their relationship with GK can best be defined as "complementary" and "mutually beneficial". As one official explained:

"Complementary kami (GK and cityhall) sa isa't-isa. Amin ang site development kanila ang construction ng bahay. Amin ang social preparation kanila ang values formation. Partners kami sa community organizing. Nagawa namin ang trabaho namin sa tulong nila….Tingin ko ganun din sa kanila, nagawa nila ang misyon nila sa tulong namin."

This statement parallels with the views of a top GK organizer:

"Aware kami sa GK na kung gusto nating masolve ang problema ng kawalan ng tirahan, specifically, o ang kahirapan, generally, we need to engage the local governments. Hindi kaya ng GK on its own at di rin kaya ng LGUs on their own… they (LGUs) have the power and the legal mandate. May resources sila, yung nga lang kulang. Ang GK meron at may expertise din na ma-icocontribute. So kung i-cocombine natin ang efforts…surely may positive outcomes."

2. Embeddedness

Embeddedness, on the other hand, is demonstrated by the direct involvement and reciprocal relations between the two actors. Both the LGUs and GK consciously went beyond their usual tasks and were willing to cross the public-private divide to make sure that each other can perform well their individual roles in the joint initiative. Thus, in support of GK's efforts to raise funds for the housing project. On its end, GK worked hand in hand with the social workers and urban poor affairs officials and personnel of the LGUs to provide the basic social services the resettlement communities need such as health, sanitation, education, among others. Moreover, alongside the social workers, GK volunteers laid down the initial capital for organizing community-based groups particularly the Kapitbahayan system, the beneficiaries' homeowners' association. GK brought facilitators and mentors for various development interventions like livelihood, education and health services, values formation trainings, leadership training, dispute settlements and other initiatives. GK's presence in the resettlement communities greatly helped especially in augmenting the limited public personnel deployed in the area by assuming several functions which the LGUs' own personnel were supposed to do but could not due to resource, expertise and logistics limitations. For instance, when the communities were just being built and the homeowners were just being organized, GK activists initially took charge in the management and supervision of the community in cooperation with the city's social workers. They presided over the weekly meetings of community leaders to train them and monitor their progress in managing their new community. They also presided over meetings for dispute resolutions involving members of the resettlement community. When the Kapitbahayan was formed and became operational, it served as a helpful arm of the LGUs in supervising and implementing some of the basic services and community projects in the resettlement site particularly in maintaining peace and order, management of solid wastes and in the delivery of other public services like health and livelihood activities. As some social workers testified:

"Malaking tulong sa amin yung pag-organize ng Kapitbahayan…sila ang kalahati ng paa namin sa community sa pagbibigay ng mga serbisyo galing sa cityhall. Halimbawa pag may feeding program sa barangay o may house to house kami sa pagmomonitor sa health, sila yung kasa-kasama namin lagi…Nagagawa ko ang trabaho ko sa tulong nila."

"Naging malapit ang samahan namin sa GK at nakita naman namin yung tulong nila sa community. Kaya pag may kelangan sila para sa project sa village sinasabi agad namin sa office o di kaya kay Madam (city administrator)…kami din tumutulong kami sa kanila."

"…kung kami lang talaga sa cityhall, hindi kakayanin… Yung trabaho namin sa community actually halos ganon din ang ginagawa nila [sa GK]. Kaya kung tutuusin yung trabaho namin ginagawa nila, yung trabaho nila, ginagawa din namin."

B. Impacts of synergy

Another objective of this study is to describe the outcomes of synergy between the LGUs and GK in housing co-production to: 1) the housing conditions of the beneficiaries; and 2) the promotion of local democracy through the activation of the associational life of the beneficiaries – the expected governance and development benefits of decentralization. The findings regarding this are presented below.

1. Improved housing conditions through cost-efficient and effective housing services

a. *Cost-efficient housing project*

The complementary and embedded nature of the division of labor between the LGUs and GK under a co-production scheme to shelter the informal settlers allowed them to accomplish far more and better than what they could have done had they sought the resettlement project independently of each other. For the LGUs, entering into a co-production scheme with a development NGO like GK practically lowered the transaction costs of housing and building a resettlement community for their informal settlers according to the specifications set forth by the law, the UDHA of 1995 in particular. This was the very basis of their decision to engage GK as their co-producer: the recognition of their own capacity limitations and the appreciation that more can be accomplished through strategic partnership with the non-government sector. The LGUs understood that for them to be effective in alleviating the living conditions of their homeless residents, they have to do more than simply awarding housing units or securing them relocation sites. More importantly, along with a decent place they can call their own all the essential facilities and conditions that make communities livable such as physical amenities, social services and sustainable livelihood should be made available to them. But carrying this out would require enormous tangible and intangible investments which, at the current level of their financial, human and administrative resources, on their own, they will not be able to supply. Thus, they need to partner with non-government actors to be able to meet these requirements.

By working hand in hand and pooling their resources together to achieve their common objective, both the LGUs and GK were able to relieve each other of the huge financial and organizational

burden of pursuing their avowed mission, that is, establishing and sustaining a decent resettlement community. As admitted by local housing officials:

"beneficial ang samahan ng local government at GK: Ginawa namin yung kaya naming gawin na di kaya ng GK katulad nung development ng site. Sila din sa GK ginawa nila yung mga bagay na mas kaya nailang gawin kesa sa amin katulad nung values formation at community organizing. Sa huli mas nakinabang ang beneficiaries ng pabahay pero hindi gumastos ng ganon kalaki ang syudad…"

"dahil sa partnership, nakatipid ang lokal na pamahalaan kasi may sharing kami ng contribution. Limitado lang ang budget natin para dyan sa housing. Pero dahil sa partnership, nakumpleto natin at naibigay ang nararapat sa tao dahil sa pinagsama naming resources."

b. Effective housing services

In general, as the participants of this study testified, the joint housing project effectively addressed their housing needs and thus alleviated their housing condition. It is seen as effective not only because it allowed the beneficiaries to have adequate and liveable houses of their own but also because it guaranteed them a resettlement community where they can enjoy normal and decent lives. Compared before when they were just occupying slum colonies, their houses now have wider floor area, ensuring sufficient living spaces, and are built using adequate and durable materials in planned settlements with proper infrastructure and facilities. The resettlement communities have access to clean water supply and electricity and have their own service and community facilities like primary schools, health centers, function halls, children's playground and places of worhip.

The housing project brought significant improvements in the quality of the living conditions of the beneficiaries. Primarily, it gave them tenure security. Prior to their relocation, they were constantly living in fear as anytime they could be evicted or their slum dwellings demolished. Moreover, due to the lack of adequate and secure shelter they were always in danger of falling victims to crimes and under threat of being displaced by natural and man-made calamities. As stated by the key informants, in their new permanent settlement, the improved physical condition of their dwellings and community environment as well as the availability of support services, they now feel safe and secured:

"Ay malaki ang nagbago…noon talaga ang hirap… wala kang sariling bahay, barong-barong lang. Pag-umulan o bumaha talagang kawawa kami…"

"…walang kaseguruhan kasi kahit anong oras baka mapalayas kami… paglumalabas ka kasi syempre looban kami noon takot kami baka bigla na lang kaming saksakin…Ngayon may peace of mind na kasi alam ko akin itong bahay na ito…pagnaglakad ka di ka takot kasi kilala mo ang mga tao sa paligid mo. Maayos ang kalyeng dinadaanan mo, may ilaw, may tubig…"

"Noon, minsan talaga di ka makakatulog kasi barong-barong lang ang bahay namin, pakiramdam mo papasukin yung bahay mo o di kaya susundutin ka na lang ng ice pick sa silong…Walang katahimikan madalas…mamya baka masunugan paano yung mga gamit namin…Nakakatakot lalo pag may lasing may nagsisigaw…Ngayon hindi na, may sarili ng bahay na maayos, malinis, panatag ang kalooban mo… yung kapit-bahay mo mapapagkatiwalaan…"

Thus, when asked if they are satisfied with their current condition, the informants declared unanimously that in comparison with what they had when they were in the slums they are very much thankful and satisfied with the improvements they are now experiencing in their lives. As a consequence of this, their trust in the local government was enhanced. As some key informant emphasized:

"nagkabahay kami, maayos naman ang pinaglipatan namin… nagkaroon kami ng bahay, nagkaroon kami ng dangal sa sarili…kaya natutuwa kami sa kalagayan namin ngayon at pinagkakatiwalaan namin ang gobyerno… hindi naman kami iniwan kahit na inilipat kami dito, naaavail pa rin namin ang mga services ng government…"

"Nagkaroon kami ng sariling bahay dahil sa cityhall at sa GK. Masaya kami ngayon kaya nagpapasalamat kami sa kanila…oo naman dahil dun nagkaroon ako ng tiwala sa pamahalaan. Pero sabi nga sa amin sa GK, ang solusyon pa rin sa aming mga problema sa community ay ang pagbabago sa aming sarili at pagtutulungan at sama-samang pagkilos… Walang iwanan…Ako nananiniwala ako dun…"

It is noteworthy as well how the beneficiaries gave credit to the joint housing project for its remarkable impact on their social well-being, in particular, how it gave them self-esteem and thus encourage sociality. As these participants described it:

"Marami akong kapalagayan ng loob ngayon…may sarili na kasi kaming bahay kaya hindi na nakakahiyang mag-imbita at makipaghuntahan sa kanila… di gaya dati bago kami narelocate sa tabi lang ng kalsada ang ingay pa…kakahiya sa iba."

"Dati kasi wala pa kaming bahay noon, sa squatter lang kami noon. Kaya nakakahiyang mag-imbita ng kamag-anak o kapit-bahay kasi wala nga e. Kung may kapitbahay, sa labas lang dun lang mag-uusap at tatambay. Ngayon, kita mo naman maganda yung hitsura ng bahay namin loob at labas, nakakatuwa, pwede ng mag-imbita at magpapasok sa loob. Kahit simple lang at least may dangal, nakakapagpataas ng dangal sa sarili, pakiramdam mo irerespeto ka ng iba…"

2. Promotion of local democracy through the activation of associational life in and empowerment of the resettlement community

a. <u>Activation of associational life</u>

Numerous scholars of democracy maintain that a vibrant associational life supports the health and quality of a country's democracy (see Paxton, 2002; Dalton, 2006). Associational activities such as joining and participating in civic groups and voluntary organizations promote democracy because they open opportunities for people to interact and exchange ideas and collectively decide and act for the sake of their common interests. Through them community members learn to think critically, speak out their minds and deliberate, acquire the habit of tolerance, inspire cooperation and participation, in short, obtain the necessary norms and skills for responsible citizenship (see Faguet, Fox and Poschl, 2015). Moreover, associational participation capacitates individual community members to negotiate with public authorities their access to essential public services (Houtzager and Acharya, 2010). Put simply, associational activities promote the health and enhance the quality of democracy by serving as "schools of democracy".

However, in the case of the poor, the economic demands of their daily survival usually discourage them from actively partaking in and expanding their associational activities beyond their immediate family and friends thereby limiting their chances of having and enjoying social life despite democratic constitutional guarantees. The lack of time, avenues and facilities for meaningful associational activities simply disconnects them from wider social networks that could grant them better access to public goods and services. More importantly, they are denied of opportunities to acquire skills and capacity for collective action that may increase their odds not just of surviving but more importantly improving their lot in life. For this reason, they become powerless and, more often than not, left dependent upon clientelistic support from patrimonial political actors.

The experiences of the resettled families in these cities show that poor communities can develop an active and independent associational life and, through it, cultivate democratic skills and norms with the support of the synergistic initiatives of both state institutions like the local government and non-state actors like civil society. In these communities, with the help of the initial investments of local authorities and GK activists, the housing beneficiaries were able to build their capacities to organize themselves and act collectively to address their own community concerns and make the government more responsive to their needs.

Synergy for the promotion of democracy through active community participation can be seen on the cooperative and often interchangeable roles performed by the LGUs and GK. Their relationship is cooperative in the sense that both were never engaged in competitive or conflictual relations but rather in mutual empowerment. It is interchangeable in the sense that, in terms of community organizing, there is no clear-cut division of responsibilities between the two that they permeate each others realms by taking on each other's role whenever it is necessary. For instance, the LGUs provided the institutional support, inputs and infrastructure necessary for the community organizing activities of GK to flourish: they guarantee the legal and political sanctions that justified the community organizing initiatives and programs of GK activists and volunteers; extend logistical assistance by lending their equipment, facilities, personnel and expertise to GK community assemblies and meetings; and even provide material inducements in the form of food, refreshment and free transportation for the participants of GK's skills trainings and volunteer work. On the other hand, GK capacitated the LGUs, in areas where they are saddled by expertise and personnel limitations, to perform and deliver their social commitments: GK taps the services of its private sector volunteers and partners to facilitate leadership training, team-building activities, workshops for community development work in hygiene and sanitation, parenting, environmental protection among others.

As what the following significant statements from key informants indicate, synergy defines the relations between LGU and GK in meeting their tasks regarding community organizing:

"Bumuo kami ng pinaka Homeowners' Association namin, Kapitbahayan ang tawag namin. Lahat ng policies namin dito sa community yun doon namin pinagdedesisyunan. Monthly may general assembly kami…Lahat ng may unit dito automatic member ng kapitbahayan. Yun ang policy ng GK, para mamanage ang community. Pero bago kami maging member, dapat nag-Values Formation muna kami…mahabang seminar yun…Tapos tuwing meeting at seminar may sponsor na pagkain si Kapitan… Baranggay ang nagpahiram ng mga silya at sound system…"

"Tinulungan kami ng GK para ma-organize. Pero yung social worker ng Makati sya ang nagmomonitor at nag-aadvise sa amin. Nagkoconduct sila ng leadership training, mga seminar sa pag-oorganize, team building. Ang city hall ang nag-isponsor ng venue, pagkain at sasakyan tapos yung mga facilitators ng training GK…"

The initial investments of the LGUs and GK in activating the associational life of the housing beneficiaries were very basic and simple yet instrumental in harnessing community energies for democratic actions and developmental activities. According to the study's key informants, the residents regularly participate in the activities of their community groups and organizations. Their participation ranges from simple attending in meetings and payment of fees to the more complicated and labor-intensive activities like governance, keeping the peace and volunteering in house construction. The key informants of this study recognized that their involvement in these associational activities allowed them to experience community life in a way they had never experienced before. Generally, these associational activities created venues for them to learn and practice democracy on a regular basis. They were encouraged to participate actively in community deliberations, learned how to socialize not just with other people of similar economic origin but also with those of different status, acquired helpful leadership and organizational skills, and understood the importance of volunteerism. These, in turn, generated, on a personal level, marked transformations in their values and personalities. For instance, they were able to develop self-esteem, habit of participation and sense of duty and interdependence with others. Consequently, they feel empowered to take on bigger responsibilities for the community and gained greater control over their lives inside the community:

"Marami akong natutunan sa pagsali dyan, naging lider ako. Kasi may team building kami, leadership training. Natuto ako magsulat ng petisyon, halimbawa, pag may request kami sa cityhall, ako ang nagsusulat."

"Nakakahalubilo ako sa mga tao, dati hindi…paupo-upo lang ako sa bahay…Natuto ako sa organizing, lumakas ang loob ko na humarap sa iba...yung pagharap ko at pakikipag-usap sa mga tao at bisita lumakas ang loob ko…di na ko takot…alam ko may magagawa ako…"

"Ngayon masasabi ko makabuluhan ang ginagawa ko kasi para sa komunidad ko ang ginagawa ko."

"Kumpara noon sa dati naming lugar, wala kaming sinasalihan o sinasamahan na organisasyon o grupo. Wala naman kasing nag-oorganize nun doon. Nasa bahay lang naman kami. Tambay…Mas organized kami ngayon, di katulad noon na wala lang. Kaya aktibo kami ngayon sa pagsali kasi alam namin may magagawa kami."

Furthermore, due to their active associational life, the beneficiaries were able to establish links with supportive groups and institutions outside of their resettlement communities. These links have allowed them to receive information that capacitate them to act and improve their well-being. For instance, the key informants of this study stated that their access to information about government services and welfare interventions of the private sector have significantly been enhanced due to their neighborhood association's close link with service providers outside their community like the local government and GK:

"…kasi noon nung squatter pa lang kami, wala kaming alam na may ganun palang serbisyo. Umaasa lang kami sa sabi-sabi ng kapit-bahay o di kaya sa suporta ng barangay. E yun namang unang nakakaalam yung may koneksyon sa barangay. E kami wala naman. Ngayon, may mga NGO na tumulong sa amin, nalalaman agad namin. Halimbawa pag may medical mission nakapagpakonsulta ako…"

"…nalalalaman agad namin pag may nagseservice dito kasi pinapasabihan kami ng taga GK. Halimbawa, pagmay mga magtututor sa mga bata, mga nagvolunteer, yan nalalaman agad namin. Kaya napapapunta ko agad ang mga anak ko…"

"May satellite office dito ang social welfare department, madalas nandito…nag-ooffice yung social worker kaya pag may proyekto ang cityhall halimbawa cash-for-work, pinapaalam sa aming mga officers tapos kami ang magpapaalam sa mga kasama namin sa block. Kung may medical mission ang mga volunteers ng GK ayan malalaman namin yan kasi kinocoordinate ng social welfare tapos ipapaalam sa amin o halimbawa sa general assembly i-aannounce…"

b. Empowerment

Empowerment pertains to "the ability to make decisions that affect everyday activities and may change the course of one's life" (Jones and Woolcock, 2007: 15). People who are capable of working together and mobilizing resources to solve problems affecting them can take action to improve their life conditions. They can also make institutions of power responsive to their demands.

The way the key informants see it, the residents of the resettlement communities are empowered in the sense that they have a greater voice in the management of their neighborhood. They point to their experiences in their monthly General Assembly as evidence to this. According to them, the General Assembly is the governing body of their community. It serves as venue for the heads of the families of the resettlement community to openly discuss and decide on matters of common interest to them. All the rules, programs and initiatives they have been implementing to address community issues in relation to security,

waste management, collection of fees, among others were all sanctioned after careful deliberation by the body. The key informants were one in saying that all the heads of the families regularly attend and participate in deliberation and voting process. When asked why they think they do so, they explained that it is not only because they are required to but more importantly, they find their participation important and worthwhile. It is through the deliberation in the General Assembly that they find solutions to problems they collectively face. Thus, they need to contribute if they want everything in their community to work well. In other words, their responsibility to seek the most appropriate decisions and the dovetailing obligation of carrying them out give them with a sense of "democratic ownership" of the resettlement community. As what can be gleaned from the significant statements of the different resettlement community leaders:

"Sama-sama kami…….natutunan namin sa GK na mahalaga ang bawat isa at alam naming importante na kumilos kaming lahat…hindi magbabago ang kalagayan namin kung di kami sama-samang kikilos…"

"Wala kaming mararating at magagawang maayos kung magkakanya-kanya kami. Sama-sama kami rito kaya dapat makisama kami. Yung napag-usapan, sinusunod namin kasi napagkasunduan."

"Kami kasi pag may problema ang community pinag-uusapan namin sa General Assembly. Nagpaparticipate kami, nakakapagsalita kami, tinatanong kung anong opinyon o gusto namin. Kung anong napagkasunduan sa huli, ginagawa namin…. kami ang humahanap ng solusyon sa problema namin."

Empowerment is also evident through the direct participation of the residents in some forms of political action. Although in this aspect the residents get involved in varying degrees. For instance, the informants explained that all the adults in the village still register and vote. But some become more frequently, actively and directly involved in politics. Often, they write petitions to and interact with the officials and staffs of their respective city governments whom they think have the power and responsibility to help them with their concerns. These are the block leaders who had received leadership training from GK and the LGUs and have developed their social and organizational skills through their various community work and obligations. Through their membership in their various community organizations and through their close affiliation with GK, the housing beneficiaries were able develop strong links with various public official and important leaders of other private institutions. Such connections often serve as support system especially when a member of the community falls on hard times or when the community is in dire need.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study is an investigation regarding the pattern of state-society relations that could prosecute meaningful improvements in public service delivery and promote local democracy – the expected benefits of decentralization. By examining the experiences of Manila and Quezon City in delivering housing services and building resettlement communities for their informal settlers, it found out that despite the expanded responsibilities but limited capacities of local governments under the current framework of decentralization, still, they managed to maneuver and satisfy their public mandate by maintaining a synergistic relationship with like-minded development-oriented societal actors like GK. Through such collaborative relationship the subject LGUs succeeded in enhancing the housing conditions of informal settlers and promoting the active associational life in resettlement communities.

Under synergistic relations, the state and society link up to overcome lack of capabilities or resources to solve development problems via cooperation and coordination of activities. A positive sum or synergistic relationship between state and society is most likely to emerge whenever their engagement is defined by complementarity and embeddedness. Complementarity pertains to the distinct but complementary activities of the government and citizens. Embeddedness, on the other hand, refers to the close interaction based on relations of trust and reciprocity between the two actors. As demonstrated by their respective partnership schemes, the LGUs played the role of co-producer alongside the development NGO GK by supplying collective goods that complemented the latter's inputs. In the part of the LGUs, it bore the financial and logistical requirements of purchasing and developing the resettlement site as well as identifying the beneficiaries and providing them with basic services. On the other hand, GK took charge in building the houses, organizing the community and promoting values formation to its beneficiaries. Their combined inputs capacitated them mutually to achieve their shared goal of providing decent homes and a liveable community to targeted beneficiareis. Moreover, through these efforts, both of them created the enabling conditions for the beneficiaries of their joint housing program to have an active associational life, through which they were able to cultivate basic norms and skills closely associated with responsible citizenship and democratic politics.

An important lesson that can be drawn from these findings pertains to the crucial role of state-society relations in the pursuit of reform initiatives like local empowerment under decentralization. In the case of the Philippines, the Local Government Code of 1991 mandates local governments to assume housing and other urban development responsibilities.

However, in most cases, due to their limited financial capacities, they fail to fulfill them. Oftentimes, they are left to rely on the support of national housing agencies for the relocation and provision of housing needs of their homeless and informal settlers – which defeats the purpose of local empowerment under decentralization. Accordingly, critics and proponents alike have called for reforms to enhance the financial capacities of local governments for them to take on the tasks imposed upon them by the law. The case of these LGUs, though, tells a different story. The recognition of their capacity limitations and the comparative advantages of GK as well as the appreciation that more can be accomplished through synergism between them in the form of housing co-production can capacitate them to deliver their social commitments particularly to the poor. This goes to show that financial resource is not the only, not even the most crucial factor, in making decentralization work for the poor. It shows as well that the local government can accomplish initiatives of wider developmental implications more effectively and efficiently through synergistic collaboration with non-government sectors. This study therefore contributes to the literature that underscores the permeability of the public-private divide and thus the feasibility of both state and society being enmeshed in a positive-sum relationship to promote wider reform objectives (Evans, 1997).

This study shows that state-society synergy enables decentralization as much as the latter affords the condition for the emergence of the former. However, as a case study, it cannot say whether this will work and thus lead to a similar result in other places and/or other aspects. More studies should be conducted regarding this dynamics. Little research has been done to determine the impact of development initiatives of local governments in partnership with private and non-governmental groups particularly in the promotion of local democracy and to social capital at the community level. This should serve as an open invitation for future research.

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