Introduction

After the COVID-19 world pandemic was announced on 13 March 2020, slums became more financially and physically vulnerable due to the precondition of inadequate housing, density and insufficient basic services (Wilkinson, 2020). As the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) promotes through the declaration for Cities for Adequate Housing, government-led housing provision is expected to co-produce innovative public-private and community-driven solutions and integrate urban planning and adequate housing with neighbourhoods. In order to achieve them, my dissertation will explore how local governments in the Philippines can foster a community centred-development approach to housing provision for Informal Settler Families (ISFs) and provide recommendations to local governments.

Literature Review

The Philippines contains 7,107 islands where 5.4% of the urban population of about 2.2 million people live in informal settlements or housing inadequacies due to rapid urbanisation (WB, 2017). Globalisation changed the Philippines’ economic trends from agriculture to industry from the 1950s to the 1970s (Cham & Canlas, 2008), and the transition expanded informal settlements in the urbanised areas. Responding to the housing demands, the Philippine government launched programmes focusing on public housing in the 1970s, slum upgrading and joint ventures in the 1980s, security of tenure, and privatised housing in the 1990s and promoted a participatory approach by decentralisation (Ballesteros, 2002). Whilst decentralisation transferred the central tasks to lower government levels, the national government formulates most housing initiatives such as Community Mortgage Programme\(^1\). Local Government Units are sandwiched between the state-led housing programme and producing the outcomes under insufficient coordination among stakeholders. In the Philippines’ Constitution, social justice is indicated and interpreted into the land regulations and housing provision programmes. However, distribution, recognition and participation (Fraser, 1998) were not reflected in the initiatives, ultimately expanding inequality.

\(^1\) Community Mortgage Programme is the national government’s financial scheme that assists ISFs in acquiring and developing a tract of land under the community ownership. However, the payment often delays, and ISFs missed opportunities to buy the land.
Although the government adopted participatory processes like collaborative planning (Healey, 2003), planning lacked the inclusive process of engaging with the people and aligning perspectives. “P”, as in ‘people’, is missing from Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). Thus, insurgent planning (Miraftab, 2009) and co-production (Watson, 2014) emerged by poor communities and grassroots organisations such as Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), and they cultivated their ways of planning to intervene in the formal system through collective actions. As Figure 1 (McLeod, 2020) shows, most slum dwellers develop their homes on informal sites, which contradicts the formal system. Co-production illustrates the form of engagement in planning issues and innovative and potentially positive processes of state-society engagement (Watson, 2014). Understanding of community-centred development practices with grassroots organisations will allow local governments to support ISFs’ right to housing in collaboration with different stakeholders.

**Analytical framework**

My analytical framework combined with a method-based planning framework for informal settlement upgrading (Abbott, 2002) and a framework for the characteristics of successful Public Private People Partnerships (4Ps) in the city resilience-building process (Marana et al., 2018). Abbott’s framework (2002) will provide lenses to see the community-centred development and extract the elements of how local governments can support ISFs with the grassroots organisations. Successful 4Ps’ criteria (Marana et al., 2018) will be used as the principles for the partnerships among stakeholders on supporting ISFs’ slum upgrading. As Figure 2 shows, at level zero which I added, local government can foster support to ISFs with private sector actors and other supporting organisations. Therefore, this framework will be applied for slum upgrading cases with ISFs and grassroots organisations in Mandaue, Metro Cebu in the Philippines.
Figure 2: Integrating analytical frameworks from Abbott (2002) and Marana et al. (2018) by Author, 2020.
Case

Whilst grassroots organisations are not legitimised authorities nor can they establish regulations, interestingly, they take parts of the role of local government (facilitator, partner, community enabler, and providing or facilitating social support) and accomplish the sixteen criteria of 4Ps in the community-centred development. The Homeless People’s Federation Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI) takes the lead of the Philippine Alliance and uses methods to support the members for community development: mobilising communities; encouraging savings-based financial strategies; planning and designing by collecting data through mapping; and engaging with the stakeholders for project implementation (Lipietz & Ortiz, 2016). At the community and households (third and fourth) levels, Lower Tipolo Homeowners Association, Inc. (LTHAI) with 269 households, one of five poor communities in the 9.2ha lot donated by an electoral promise, conducted community savings since 1996 and identified issues through mapping with support from the HPFPI. At the first and second levels that communities and government discuss, the LTHAI joined the government’s 9.2 Task Force Committee with the neighbouring associations in the same lot. The joint community-city mechanism provided the platform for developing subdivision plans, re-block, and initiating a land ownership transfer process. Grassroots organisations became a bridge between LGUs and poor communities, and their networks invited other technical assistance and financial support for housing constructions.

Community-led activities with grassroots organisations effectively respond to COVID-19 as the government’s assistance takes more time to reach ISFs. The Philippine Alliance utilised the spatial and socio-economic data from the previous mapping activities and assisted in identifying and locating the most vulnerable ISFs within the community (Carampatana & Tuazon, 2020). This unprecedented time could be catalytic to scale up co-production enhanced by partnerships among different urban actors.

Recommendation to local governments

- Local government can collaborate with grassroots organisations to co-produce housing solutions by interweaving government’s knowledge and data with communities’ ones and seeking further support.
- A platform (physical/online) like MCDCB where people can engage with different sectors will offer a space for inclusive discussions. That will help the stakeholders to co-produce sustainable urban development plans and solutions by sharing resources and knowledge.
- Local government’s facilitating skills should be enhanced to realise the right to housing for ISFs, especially by engaging with private sectors whilst avoiding profit-oriented purposes only.

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2 The Philippine Alliance is comprised of HPFPI, Technical Assistance Movement for People, and Environment Inc. (TAMPEI), Philippine Action for Community-led Shelter Initiative Inc. (PACSII), LinkBuild and Community Resources for the Advancement of Capable Societies (CoRe-ACS).

3 Metro Cebu Development Coordinating Board (MCDCB), which was established with the NGAs, LGUs, NGOs and academics, discusses Metro Cebu-wide urban development plans with multi-stakeholders including private sector and brings them to the RDC.
Bibliography


