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Lungs of the Metro: Analyzing LGU-NGO Partnerships through Green Space Management in Manila City

Julia Cruz, Trisha Mae Mariano, & Amr Solon Sison

University of Santo Tomas, Philippines

julia.cruz.ab@ust.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years highlighted the need for more urban green open space as is evident in the crowding of parks especially in metropolitan areas. However, in today's new normal, the development of programs concerning green spaces in the capital City of Manila is currently facing several challenges which revolve around complications in LGU-NGO partnerships, particularly concerning funding and technical assistance. The aim of this research is to investigate and explore the relationship and partnership between the local government of Manila and environmental non-government organizations as well as the significance of green spaces in the City of Manila through the lens of Urban Political Ecology. The research used a qualitative method particularly the Case Study method and utilized interviews from key informants in the local government, non-government organizations, and urban experts. In order to determine the success of the relationship between the LGU and NGOs in terms of creating sustainable programs and how it transforms the city, the study also made use of documents such as ordinances. The findings indicate that the past and present administrations have engaged and collaborated with various NGOs in the urban planning process and in implementing the NGOs' programs. The NGOs are also instrumental in the city's development as they provide their expertise and aids in managing the green spaces without utilizing government funds.

Keywords: *urban planning, urban sustainability, public green spaces, local government, civil society*

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INTRODUCTION

Urban planning generally refers to the technical, environmental, and political process of city planning which focuses on the development and integration of the city's environmental features such as air, natural land masses, and infrastructures in public areas. In the context of the Philippines, urban planning not only pertains to efficient road systems, parkways, and buildings. Rather, green spaces must also be given attention as it yields benefits to the growing populace in Manila; specifically in terms of strengthening public physical outcome, social efficiency, and economic impacts brought by the changes in open land spaces, public environment, and city infrastructures (Fainstein, 2020). Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship of the Local Government of Manila and its corresponding non-government organizations in terms of determining the state of green spaces in the City of Manila. This will be specifically addressed by seeking to analyze the programs and efforts committed by the local government and its partner organizations.

RELATED LITERATURE

Given the importance of environmental governance especially in highly urbanized areas, the interrelationship of the local government and various sectors of the community are crucial in the development of green spaces in the city. One of the major themes of this study is to address how these spaces

develop overtime; given that as of 2019, maps and data from the Philippine Statistics Authority and National Mapping and Resource Information Authority indicate that green spaces are largely declining across the Metro. Out of the 16 cities in the National Capital Region, Manila considerably needs the most green spaces. According to Arturo Calderon, the chief of DENR-NCR's Production Forest Management Section, the scarcity of green spaces is mostly attributed to the governance aspect, specifically ineffective urban planning, a conflict in government policies such as the Build Build Build Program, the inadequate prioritization of green spaces in urban development projects, and the absence of a proper database to identify the existing green spaces. Most importantly, the City of Manila struggles to find sufficient manpower to implement its programs and to get the private sector involved (Madarang, 2019; Ranada, 2020). In light of these challenges, Regmi (2017) stresses the importance of incorporating environmental issues into the planning of urban areas as it is crucial in reducing the risk of environmental degradation.

According to Saloma et.al (2021), the term 'public green spaces' often refer to the ownership of a national or local government body, a non-government body entrusted to manage the green space for the public, and or a private individual or organization that makes the space available for public use and access. This underscores the instrumental role of the local government as the key or central actor in the attainment of urban

sustainability, as it concerns the provision of resources, services, and opportunities for the city's current inhabitants and for the years to come (Swann & Deslatte, 2018). Hartley and Habitat (2017) also advocates for the implementation of a new approach to urban development, namely the New Urban Agenda that calls for unity among different sectors to shape the cities' sustainability and inclusivity. The local government along with its departments, urban professionals, the private sector, academics, civil society, and local communities are cited as crucial in creating livable and accessible public open spaces.

Redefining LGU-NGO Partnerships

According to Aldaba (2002), the role of Philippine NGOs is starting to emerge in recent years, stating that the Philippines is known for having the most dynamic NGO communities in the world. Furthermore, Philippine NGOs have also made an impact in policies pertaining to housing, urban land reform, and the environment among a few. Thus, it is recognized for its networking activities on a local, national, and international level. Hence, to expound on what the term 'partnerships' entails in this study, public-private partnerships proved to be sustainable in maintaining the green spaces in New York City. Like Arroceros Forest Park, the Central Park Conservancy (CPC) model began through a public-private partnership wherein the neighbors close to Central Park expressed its willingness to manage, maintain, and restore the

park's 843 acres. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg also invested heavily in public green spaces such as parks, making public parks occupy 14% of the city's acres. The model has now existed for over 30 years and became sustainable three years after Mayor Bloomberg finished his term. However, as reflected in this study, donations and private advocacy proved to be crucial in maintaining and restoring the city's public green spaces (Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, 2013).

In providing safe access to nature and community, urban greenspace regeneration type of partnership between NGOs, local government units, and other community groups is crucial in strengthening the benefits of green infrastructure, utilization of public green spaces, and preventing further risks of the natural environment. This highlights goals that are in line with the development of green spaces in the city, programs for public forest restoration, and long-term plans for the integration of the community's natural environment. Moreover, this allows a wider connection to nature through the enhancement of the city's natural environment, allowing for a more sustainable community that contributes to the improvement of quality of life in the city.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was utilized by the researchers to obtain a formal description of the respondents' feelings, opinions, and experiences in understanding the relationship of the

Manila LGU and Environmental NGOs towards green space management. The data gathered was interpreted by classifying the narratives of the participants using cross-case data of analysis which was obtained through an online interview in virtual platforms such as Google Meet. With the usage of the qualitative approach, the researchers were able to gather the relationship between the participants and the variables of the study. A descriptive-exploratory method was also used by the researchers to determine the psychological and social aspects

obtained from the respondents' behavior and attitudes. The Case Study Method was also utilized since it enables the researchers to conduct an in-depth study on the problem of urbanization in Manila since it also focuses on the stakeholders' experiences and feelings towards the rise of urbanization in their city, which in turn, helps in the process of determining the state of public health governance in the City of Manila.

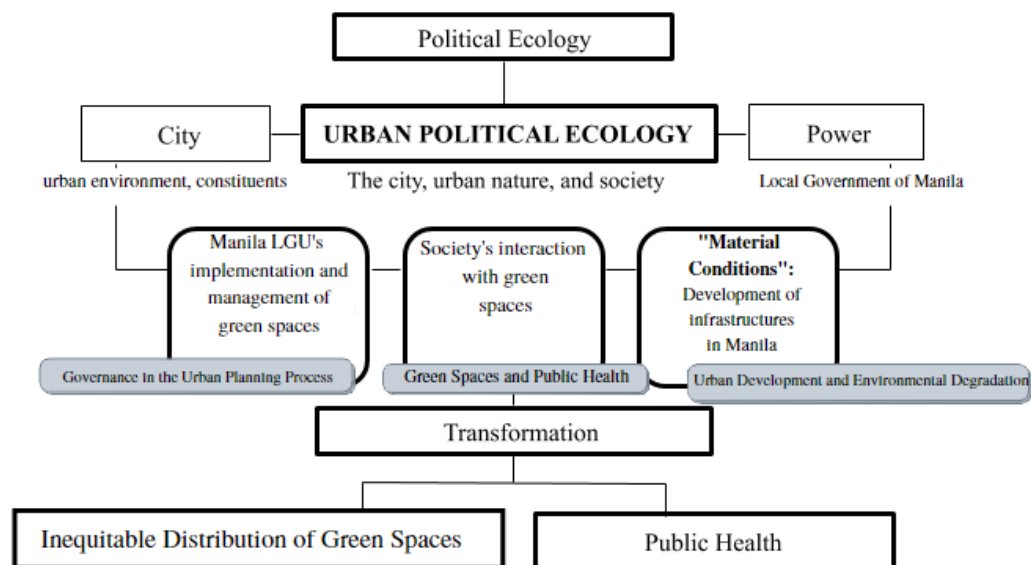


Figure 1. Urban Political Ecology (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003)

In connection with the research methods, the theory of Urban Political Ecology was integrated into this study as it highlights the socio-ecological processes that lead to the transformation

of the urban environment in the City of Manila. Through this theory, Urban Political Ecology was the center of the study in further emphasizing the processes and transformation that

occurs in urban areas which constitutes the city or urban environment and the power of Local Government in the City of Manila. It explains the power of the LGUs towards the three variables which played a great role in the spatial planning of the city. Moreover, the LGU's power through material conditions created developmental processes with the occurrence of infrastructure changes in the community, and towards implementation and management of green spaces in the city.

It also explained the relationship between Manila's implementation and management of green spaces, Society's interaction with green spaces and Material Conditions of the Development of infrastructures in Manila, that was analyzed using the interactions through following the factors of biodiversity, which enables Ecology systems that explained the behavioral aspects of ecological communities, structure and functions of ecosystems, air quality consumption, and environmental aspects such as damages due to greenhouse effects, waste, solid and drainage problems, land use, pollution and flooding. Thus, emphasizing the relationship of the variables, that showed the cause-and-effect relationship and results in the City of Manila towards the transformation of Urban Landscapes and Inequitable Distribution of Green Spaces.

Moreover, this theory illustrated the relationship between the local government of Manila and its constituents in determining the green

spaces utilization and management of the local government of Manila for the city's urban development. Through this theory the relationship between socio-spatial spaces and forms of organization such as the local government was also depicted through the variable of 'Governance in the Urban Planning Process'. Thus, this explained the connection towards the environmental dynamics of the variable 'Urban Development and Environmental Degradation' in which the researchers examined through the series of development of infrastructures in the City of Manila through the projects implemented by the previous terms of Manila Mayors Lito Atienza, Alfredo Lim, Joseph Estrada, and the current administration of Isko Moreno. Lastly, Urban Political Ecology also stresses on the democratic aspect of socio environmental construction. Thus, the relationship between the city and the environment as mentioned by the previous variables is also connected to the society through the variable of 'Green Spaces and Public Health'. In sum, the relationship between the city, urban nature, and the society clearly results in Urban Political Ecology. Hence, a political-ecological examination of how green spaces were developed is necessary as the study seeks to provide a solution towards a sustainable and healthy urban living.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The primary data gathering technique used in this study is a Key Informant Interview (KII) with a representative from the Manila LGU and involved

Environmental NGOs. The Key Informant Interview is utilized in this study to provide an in-depth account of what occurs in the community as well as the relationship of the stakeholders of Manila through their partnership and collaboration in the development and management of green spaces in the city. The government officials and the representative/s of partner NGOs were the main respondents of this research as they have firsthand knowledge and experience with the area; thus, making their input as professionals and community leaders valuable for this study.

Specifically, the key informants in this study include an Assistant City Engineer from the Manila Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW), with 38 years of experience in the department given that he served as a City Engineer from the administration of Mayor Ramon Bagatsing in 1984 up to the administration of Mayor Isko Moreno Domagoso in 2022. Another key informant is an urban planning expert and architect with experience as the Project Lead of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)'s Local Government Support Fund – Assistance to Cities or Green Green Green Program from 2018-2020. Lastly, Presidents of environmental NGOs were interviewed, particularly the Wildbird Club of the Philippines and the Winner Foundation that have both partnered and conducted activities with green space management and development in Manila.

Cross-case analysis was conducted by using the qualitative data obtained from

the transcripts of online interviews with key informants. The researchers then used Thematic Analysis to identify any recurring themes or ideas. These, in turn, were organized into basic themes, organized into codes through categorical themes, and presented through a form of discussion or figures. Additionally, documents from the Local Government of Manila such as local ordinances underwent document analysis. With this additional data, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon was acquired as different perspectives and methods are aligned for the study. Therefore, the individual experiences from the online interview verify whether the urban greenspaces are accessible, safe, and if the local government unit of the city of Manila is effective in the promotion of green spaces by providing or conducting programs for these spaces (Salkind, 2010).

The interview questions utilized for the data gathering revolve around three main themes such as 1.) Public Green Spaces during the Past and Present Administration, 2.) Implementation of Environmental efforts and programs towards Health and Sustainability, and 3.) Partnership and Relationship between Stakeholders towards Public Health. These three themes were used to provide a better understanding towards the interaction and relationship between the residents and LGU of Manila, and the crucial role of the presence of green spaces in a highly urbanized city. Thus, the gathered data provided a deeper analysis in understanding the relationship of the local government

units and programs, NGOs, its residents, and how other policies affected the mode of public health governance and green space management in the City of Manila.

The gathered data that was utilized by the researchers in this study was mainly based on understanding the practices of the past and current administration of the City of Manila regarding the utilization of public green spaces and the environmental efforts or programs of the LGU and NGOs. This draws the impact of the relationship between the local government and NGOs towards the transformation and condition of the public spaces in the city.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the data gathering shows that the local government plays a significant role in the promotion and implementation of green spaces in Manila. The data gathered are obtained from interviews with Key Informants, specifically an Assistant City Engineer from the local government's Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW), as well as presidents of non-government organizations – specifically Winner Foundation and Wild Bird Club of the Philippines – that have conducted programs and activities with a specific green space in Manila. The thematic and content analysis presented are derived from primary and secondary data such as local ordinances.

Findings about Green Spaces

TRANSFORMATION OF GREEN SPACES	EFFECTS OF GREEN SPACES	MANAGEMENT OF GREEN SPACES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Twenty years ago, Manila had a great chunk of green spaces, all with grasslands. There are a lot of living creatures like birds before the construction of infrastructures like malls”• “Arroceros Park is a green space in Manila that started as an empty abandoned area. A project was started	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Greenspaces create anatural environment for the awareness of individuals such as bird lectures, identification of trees, and the process of the ecosystem”• “Greenspaces allow the formation of healthy activities: going to mountains, enforcing walking, hours of enjoying natural scenery,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Plant more tress to sustain green spaces”• “Preserve the setting through cleaner water and grassland”• “Prohibit animal catching”

<p>from just debris and built into a forest; planting thousands of trees, and fences to protect the area.”</p>	<p>hiking, climbing up land areas.”</p>
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Table 1. Findings about Green Spaces based on Key Informants

To provide a background on the city's green spaces, the table shown above primarily discusses the data of the research concerning the Transformation of Green Spaces, Effect of Green Spaces and Management of Green Spaces in the City of Manila. In terms of how the City's Green Spaces transformed through every phase in the City, the data showed how the transformation of land spaces have started from the past years up to the present era. This highlights the transformation of green spaces considering the development of empty land spaces in the City of Manila into green spaces like the Arroceros Park, development of city infrastructures in the City into establishments, and the changes of the ecosystem in Manila over the past years.

Through the data manifesting the Effects of Green Spaces in the City of Manila, green spaces are an important factor for the individuals to perform health related activities and to further understand the essence of the natural ecosystem. Thus, the existence of Green Spaces in the city allows a natural environment which affects the community and the city's ecosystem into a healthy and better environment. Lastly, green spaces in Manila were managed through processes that boost environment efficiency such as tree planting in selected land spaces, preservation of natural resources under the city's LGU provisions, awareness of unnecessary actions regarding the utilization of green spaces in the city, and implementing city ordinances to sustain the development of green spaces.

Government Programs

ADMINISTRATION	PROGRAMS
Lim	Tree Planting in Arroceros Forest Park
Atienza	Pedestrianization Scheme, Manila Baywalk, Pandacan Linear Park, Improvements in Plaza Miranda, and Bonifacio Monument
Estrada	Public Markets
Moreno	Rehabilitation of Andres Bonifacio Shrine (Liwasang Bonifacio), Plaza Carriedo, and Manila Zoo

Table 2. Green Open Sapce Programs of the City of Manila

The table presents the various urban open space programs conducted by the Manila LGU. According to the President of Winner Foundation, Mayor Alfredo Lim strongly backed the planting of trees in Arroceros Forest Park in 1995, resulting in the park's acquisition. When Mayor Lim handed Arroceros Forest Park to Winner Foundation, the park's management became a private effort. Thus, it is evident from the data that Mayor Lim has made a significant contribution to the implementation of green space projects for the city's development. During his mayorship, Lim also built 6 district hospitals, established the Universidad de Manila, as well as the Old Philippine National Bank in Escolta. His priorities do not lie on the formation of green spaces, however, since his administration focused on peace and order.

Moreover, according to Manila's City Engineer, Mayor Lito Atienza established the pedestrianization concept that was first implemented in Escolta and Santa Cruz, Manila during his administration. In this concept, the streets were transformed into walkways to maintain the health and balance among the city's business and transportation groups. The goal was to build a healthy environment that would go hand in hand with the enhanced economic agenda and would improve the lives and health of municipal infrastructures. Furthermore, during Mayor Joseph Estrada's administration, the city's public markets were improved even further. On the other hand, Mayor Isko Moreno's administration has come

up with plans for numerous initiatives throughout the city in order to make green spaces more accessible. According to the City Engineer, one of the myriad programs enacted by Mayor Isko is the clean up drive in Manila which fixed public holes in order for individuals to pass. The Liwasang Bonifacio near the City Hall and the Plaza Carriedo are also some of Mayor Isko's notable programs. Moreover, according to the Urban Planning Expert, some recent projects implemented during the time of Mayor Isko are also the development of the Quiapo area as well as several plazas that are being redeveloped within Manila. The Manila Zoo was also redeveloped and utilized as a vaccination site for children. Both the City Engineer and the Urban Planning Expert recognize the current administration's priority and commitment towards the development of green spaces in the City of Manila.

NGO Programs

In examining the setting of public green spaces during the past and present administrations in Manila, it was discovered how non-government organizations began to develop in the city. Based on the President of the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, the organization started 18 years ago, when they were looking for green spaces in the city to go and where they can find birds. Arroceros Forest Park was one of the few green public spaces that the organization has found in Metro Manila and got connected with the Winner Foundation. The Arroceros Forest Park

is managed by Winner Foundation, which collaborates with the Wild Bird Club of The Philippines. In terms of support for the development of the park, Wild Bird Club of the Philippines supplies data on bird sightings in the park, and also earth day activities. The organization participates by setting up a booth and conducting educational activities for children. It is run by volunteers because the organization keeps financial costs as minimal as possible.

Every year, the organization conducts a bird festival, and for the promotion of the event, the bird festival gets sponsors to gather financial funding for the implementation of their programs. Moreover, in terms of the organization's collaboration with the national government, the organization has worked with the DENR by helping them with their water bird census. They have also worked with the DOT on a pool of projects to promote bird watching in the Philippines. Moreover, in terms of programs centered on Arroceros in Manila, the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines have also partnered with DePED Manila to conduct three environmental programs. Such programs involve health and environmental related activities for birdwatching, tree walk, and for environmental lectures.

Furthermore, the Winner Foundation is a group of women that decided to conduct environmental projects for the City of Manila from as early as 1995, specifically under the administration of Mayor Lim. Based on the President of

the Winner Foundation, the Arroceros Park was previously an empty and abandoned place before it started being developed as a forest park. Historically, the development of the Arroceros Park firstly started with the help of accumulated financial funds based on fundraising events from the Philippine government during the time of President Fidel Ramos. With the existence of the Winner Foundation, the organization planted 3000 trees in the area and was also able to build fences for the park's security. In terms of sustainability, the organization's programs have been ongoing for the past 25 years. Specifically, the programs include conducting fundraising projects every year to gather financial funds for the park's management since its main goal is to create a forest park in the city so that it could serve as a place for citizens to breathe fresh air and create a healthy environment for everyone.

Along with the Winner Foundation and Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, other NGOs or environmental advocates managing green spaces in Manila are also members of the Save Arroceros Movement (SAM) such as Philippine Native Plants Conservation Society, Pamanlahi, Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development, Philippine Parks and Biodiversity, Earth Land Institute Asia Pacific, and Climate Reality Project Philippines. Civil society groups, youth leaders and student organizations such as the Saribuhay UP Manila and UP Manila Biology Majors Association also play a part in the environmental coalition. The goal of the Save Arroceros Movement is to coordinate with regards

to the Arroceros Urban Forest Park Redevelopment Project and request a revised urban design and construction approach that will minimize severe destruction of the forest area and to further contribute towards the restoration of the forest environment inside the forest park, by also consulting other environmental partners and the civil society. Furthermore, Renacimiento Manila, a heritage group dedicated to producing art and promoting Manila's cultural rebirth, as well as Save Soil are also frequently involved in conducting activities within Arroceros Forest Park.

Challenges in the Implementation of Green Space Programs

One of the main findings of the study is the challenges encountered by the local government in the implementation of green spaces. According to the City Engineer, funding remains to be a primary concern as the budget needs to be considered in formulating or coming up with good open space projects and developments. The Finance Committee is responsible for investigating possible sources of income especially since the Income Plan balances the generated income for every government agency. On the other hand, the past and present administrations of the local government aid in translating the NGO's advocacies into policies. Aside from raising awareness with regards to local and migratory birds, the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines greatly advocates for green spaces as it serves as 'sites' in conducting their activities. However, the organization was faced with ecological problems as the birds cannot

be found in a concrete jungle such as Metro Manila, which has a dearth of green spaces. The President of the organization stated that there should be more green spaces in the city in order for the local and migratory birds to have a place to live. As Metro Manila advanced towards urbanization, buildings and other infrastructures started to emerge, resulting in the destruction of the organization's sites to conduct their bird-watching activities.

The differences in the administration's priorities are also a key feature in the implementation of green space programs. Based on the results, the President of Winner Foundation stated that their ownership and vision for the park changes through each administration; whereas Mayor Lim helped them in attaining and implementing their projects for the park, Mayor Atienza destroyed most of the park by having one third of the area paved, and Mayor Estrada intended to establish a gym within the park in a span of one month.

However, despite Mayor Domagoso's support in ensuring that the Arroceros Forest Park is maintained, the Save Arroceros Movement coalition gathered once again in November 2021 and called for the Manila LGU to halt the redevelopment of the Arroceros Forest Park given that the project worsened its state. According to the President of Winner Foundation, the park's redevelopment began in September 2021 without prior consultation to the coalition's environmental groups and partners. The redevelopment added

amenities such as playground areas, kiosks, and water fountains. Several trees were also removed without a permit from the DENR and most of the park's areas are cemented. Ornamental and exotic plants were added without their knowledge, making the Arroceros Forest Park a mere park and no longer a forest. No Park Management Team was also established as agreed on in the ordinance. As of November 23, 2022, the matter was once again resolved and a dialogue occurred between the Manila LGU and the Save Arroceros Movement. The coalition, along with Mayor Isko Moreno, devised a plan to bring back the park's biodiversity. The newly planted non-native plants and trees will be removed and the Manila Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW) will be in constant communication with the group regarding the said changes. Mayor Isko Moreno also specified that the Arroceros Forest Park Governing Committee be immediately established.

Accessibility and Sustainability of Green Space Programs

The researchers found out that the green spaces in Manila have become increasingly accessible under Mayor Domagoso's administration. Based on a statement of the City Engineer, the Mayor has developed green space projects and that there are more projects in the pipeline. This is evident in the launching of new green space projects such as the establishment of a coffee shop in the "Hidden Garden", which is situated in Lawton. The current

administration aims to create more green and open air spaces in Manila.

Another notable effort is the MayniLOVE program in Mehan Garden which was launched in February 2021 to promote small local businesses and to help them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (City of Manila, 2021). This is aligned with the City Engineer's statement that Mayor Domagoso aims to utilize urban open spaces in the vicinity of the city in light of the pandemic, specifically the establishment of quarantine facilities in Luneta.

On the other hand, non-government organizations ensure the sustainability of their programs through financial and human resources, particularly volunteers and fund-raising projects.

Partnership with Private Sectors

The City's partnership with the private sector is highlighted since according to the City Engineer, Mayor Domagoso is working hand in hand with other stakeholders, specifically the Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF)'s Centre for Sustainable, Healthy, and Learning Cities and Neighborhoods which intends to make the city more sustainable and healthy. The SHLC aims to address global challenges in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The international consortium comprises nine research partners from different Universities around the globe. Their main aim is to investigate the interconnectedness of urban, health, and education challenges

in order to create a sustainable neighborhood. SHLC believes that rapid urbanization is linked with inequality; thereby leading to poverty, crime, environmental risks, and poor access to health and education. With this, the team consists of multi-disciplinary experts dedicated to conduct interdisciplinary research and capacity-strengthening activities in cities.

In 2019, the SHLC's research team met with Mayor Domagoso to discuss opportunities in Manila as well to present the progress of their research from 2017-2018. The mayor is in agreement with the efforts of the research team and shared his ideas and plans that are in line with the goals of the project; which is primarily to return the streets to its rightful owners – the public – by creating sustainable and accessible open areas and green parks. Through this, the mayor aspires to restore the vibrance of Manila and to bring the city back to its old glory.

The private sector and other government agencies are also encouraged to help the city through local programs and services especially in terms of the agenda of the sustainability program; particularly economy and infrastructure. However, upon consultation with the office of Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW), the researchers gathered that the City lack partnerships with NGOs at present. Primarily, the National Agencies and the City itself remain responsible for the maintenance of green spaces. Despite this, they are in

constant partnership with the Save Arroceros Movement.

Content Analysis

It was discovered that despite the various efforts and programs conducted by the LGU and NGOs respectively, there is still a considerable absence of green spaces. Based on the map of the Comprehensive Land use Plan and Zoning Ordinance (MCLUPZO), the researchers found out that a small portion of the city is allotted as a 'General Public Open Space Zone' which, according to Ordinance No. 8119, consists of parks, plazas, playgrounds, and sports field or recreation zones.

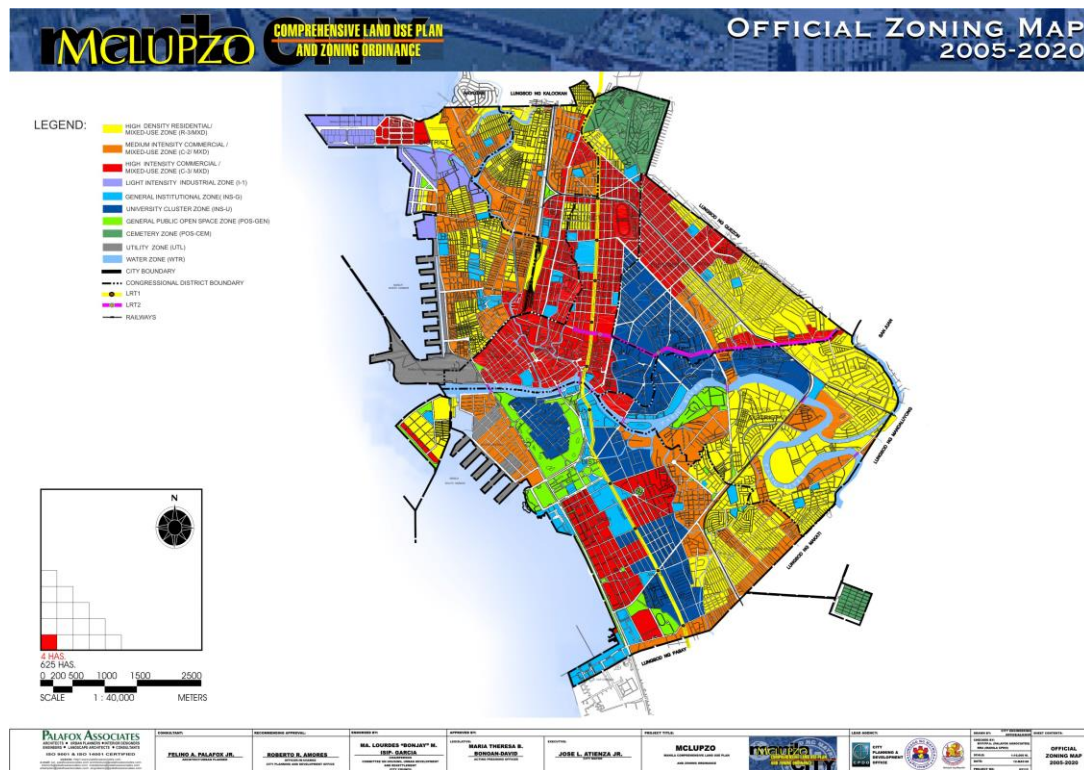


Figure 2. Map of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance

ORDINANCE NO. 8119 - AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE MANILA COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE AND ZONING REGULATIONS OF 2006 AND PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION, ENFORCEMENT, AND AMENDMENT THERETO.

Section 2 of the Ordinance states that the Land Use and Zoning Regulations are enacted according to the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991, otherwise known as Republic Act 7610. It authorizes the Sangguniang Panglunsod to adopt the Zoning Ordinance. Furthermore, according to Section 3, the ordinance is enacted to regulate growth and development following Land Use and Structure Plans, as well as to protect the stability and

character of residential, commercial, industrial areas, and urban open spaces. In addition, the ordinance aims to promote the general welfare of the inhabitants of the city in terms of public health, safety, and convenience. Section 18 is also relevant in the study as it states the regulations pertaining to the use of the General Public Open Space Zone, specifically for 'diversion, amusement, and the maintenance of ecological balance in the community'. The document then cites places that fall under the POS-GEN Zone. It is stated that General Public Open Space such as parks, plazas, playgrounds, and sports fields should have a Percentage Land Occupancy (PLO) of 0.25 and Building Height Limit (BHL) of 10 meters.

In line with the provisions laid by the local government of Manila in ensuring the allocation of urban open spaces in the City, the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders in making green space programs possible is underscored by Gamboa, Rivera, and Reyes (2019)'s study, stating that comprehensive reforms must be enacted to encourage participative planning. The study also reflects the findings that local government units often fail to institutionalize participatory processes, as exemplified by the absence of NGO partnerships with Manila at present. Ancheta et. al (2017) posits a similar view with the researchers, however, as the focal point of their study states that the local government's collaboration with interest groups must be strengthened. A concrete example of such partnerships being a success is Mayor Domagoso's declaration that the Arroceros Forest Park must be considered as a permanent forest park.

ORDINANCE NO. 8607- AN ORDINANCE DECLARING A PARCEL OF LAND, KNOWN THEN AS DECS PROPERTY, LOCATED AT ARROCEROS STREET, MANILA, ACROSS THE STREET FROM METROPOLITAN THEATER AND THE MEHAN GARDEN AND BESIDE THE PASIG RIVER, AS PERMANENT FOREST PARK PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 5752, TO BE KNOWN AS THE "ARROCEROS FOREST PARK" AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

City Ordinance 8607 is significant for preserving green spaces as it established

Arroceros Forest Park as a permanent forest park. Section 5 of the ordinance specifies that the park will be under consultation with the residents of the City, civil society, and stakeholders along with the partners in management. According to the Ordinance, the use and enjoyment of the Arroceros Forest Park must be consistent along with the principles of sustainable development and towards the right of the citizens to a balanced and healthful ecology. Additionally, cutting of trees, illegal waste dumping of any variants, and other related activities are prohibited and contain corresponding fines for such violators.

ORDINANCE NO. 8654 - ADOPTING CERTAIN ZONING REGULATIONS RESPONSIVE TO THE "NEW NORMAL" AND PROVIDING FOR ITS ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT THEREBY AMENDING THE CITY ORDINANCE NO. 8119, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MANILA COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE AND ZONING ORDINANCE OF 2006.

In relation to the new normal, City Ordinance 8654 highlights the implementation of policies and programs pertaining to the purposes of Manila as a highly urbanized city that caters to areas of trading, services, culture, and education. The ordinance further offers more resilient, responsive, and effective governance towards urban challenges in the City of Manila. Section 15 implies regulations on industrial zones and processing establishments of Non-Pollutive/Non-Hazardous

industries and Residential Projects for health centers, clinics, gyms, and utility installation for zone/lot occupants. Moreover, the ordinance provides implementation and management functions that are subjected to the local development and sustainability of land spaces in the City of Manila.

Reports

Based on publicly available data, Mayor Isko Moreno laid out his plans regarding 'The Green City Project' in July 2019. Among the phases of this plan include a) withdrawing a portion of Arroceros Street situated in the corner of the Metropolitan Theater and Quezon Bridge footbridge and to convert it into a green space in for public use, b) the extension of Arroceros Park, c) Creating an esplanade at the back of the Arroceros Park, d) demolition of the park's gates to make it available for public use, e) plant trees in place of the pavement near the Andres Bonifacio Monument, and ultimately, to f) make the rest of Manila's 46 parks and institutional buildings owned by the Manila LGU as part of the greening project.

Moreover, in line with the statements from the City Engineer, Mayor Moreno's infrastructure projects are impressive in their quantity and scale, which was achieved in a three-year mayoral term and during a pandemic. Moreover, the report shows how the present administration's infrastructure projects imply gradual leadership that has also attracted many sectors towards the city's development.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to establish how partnerships between the Manila LGU and various NGOs affect the implementation of green space programs in the city. The following discussion is based on the Thematic Analysis on the narratives and statements collected from Key Informants. The findings of this study are then categorized into the main themes and cross referenced with documents from local ordinances that underwent Content Analysis as well as related literature.

Land Use and Institutional Factors

Based on one of the core findings of this study, the implementation of a zoning ordinance in 2006 is crucial in setting the guidelines for the regulation of green spaces as well as in governing the vision, goals, and objectives of Manila when it comes to planning. Although the allocation of land intended for the use of open spaces is stated in the ordinance, upon closer investigation of the document, it was found out by the researchers that the central focus of urban development in Manila is primarily the provision of land for residential, industrial, and commercial use areas. Hence, green space development is falling behind in Manila although its implementation is gaining traction in the current administration. Moreover, the findings are aligned to that of the study of Wang and Chan (2018), specifically stating that one of the factors that affect the government's decision making in terms of land use

planning is most often influenced by institutional factors such as property rights. The provision of urban green space mostly pertains to the transfer of land ownership into the public sector and vice versa; and it is the local governments' responsibility to be the primary providers of public urban green spaces. In this case, the President of Winner Foundation echoes how issues on ownership could potentially hinder the creation of urban green spaces. Throughout the administrations in the city, it was indicated in the results that there was a conflict in the acquisition of the rights to Arroceros Forest Park, being contested between the administrations of Mayor Atienza and Mayor Lim.

Another factor as to why there is an imbalance of land for urban green spaces is the lack of financial feasibility. Hence, this is in line with a statement from the City Engineer, to which there is a certain percentage allotted for the development of open spaces. 5-10% of the local government's funds are allocated towards the improvement of parks and forests. If there is a sufficient budget, not only will the government be capable of developing parks, but other areas will also be open for development. A concrete example would be the improvements in the boardwalk system, walkways, and sidewalks during the administration of Mayor Atienza.

Relationship between the Local Government and NGOs

When it comes to green space programs conducted by NGOs, the LGU is

involved through the participation of local government personnel in selected events and programs created by the NGOs. The LGU provides assistance towards the setting of the green space projects, security management for the programs and projects, and the dissemination of project information for individuals participating to such programs conducted by the NGO. This kind of collaboration between the local government and NGOs has been evident in terms of green space management in the City of Manila, however such cases are only minimal in numbers and therefore the connection between the local government and NGOs are not consistently established in every green space programs conducted in the city.

According to Ordinance No. 8119, the maintenance of green spaces such as parks must be undertaken either by the Barangay, the PRB or the Public Recreations Bureau, and the Parks Development Office (PDO). However, upon consultation with the PDO, the researchers discovered that the maintenance of parks are solely performed by the aforementioned city government office as they are currently not in partnership with any NGO. This applies to the DEPW as well. Hence, it is established that there is an insufficiency of coordination between the LGU and NGO at present; and although the City recognizes the importance of involving other stakeholders such as the private sector in green space programs and projects, limited partnerships with NGOs are fostered.

Power Relations in Accordance with the framework of Urban Political Ecology

Given that this study is framed according to the theory of Urban Political Ecology, Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) explicates that the formation of urban environments consists of a constant shift between groups of actors and these relations are power-laden. Thus, the power relations present between the local government and the non-government organizations are exemplified through the programs of each administration and the changes it has brought that transformed the landscape of Manila.

First, the power of the LGU in the implementation and transformation of urban green spaces stems from the process of devolution or the Local Government Code of 1991, giving the local government authority to structure its land use as it deems fit. According to City Ordinance No. 8119, the City of Manila is mandated to 'create new opportunities for growth and change to improve the economic well being and quality of life in the City'. The ordinance pertaining to Land Use is utilized to maximize opportunities with regards to innovation and development. Moreover, this is supported by a statement from an interview with the Assistant City Engineer which also emphasizes the development of infrastructure throughout the past and present administrations as it aids in the economic growth of the City. This is further reflected in the programs implemented by the Manila LGU that aims to boost the city's economy; such

as Mayor Atienza's focus on the pedestrianization scheme, and Mayor Estrada's program centered on the creation of public markets. Thus, in line with Urban Political Ecology, the interrelatedness of social, political, and economic processes often result in uneven geographical development. This is in parallel with Munarriz, Perez, and Caguimbal (2015)'s study that the city's deteriorating parks in the year 2003 underwent beautification and that the open spaces like the Baywalk were enhanced to promote local and foreign tourism. Meanwhile, Ancheta (2017)'s study emphasized on the depletion of urban forest parks due to infrastructural development, change in land use, and political priorities of the governing LGU.

Furthermore, the power of the LGU extends over the non-government organizations as it is evident from the data how the administration's priorities could influence or hinder the aforementioned organizations' advocacies and programs pertaining to green spaces. According to the President of Winner Foundation, the organization also mentioned how their programs developed throughout the past 25 years. Their programs gained support particularly from Mayor Lim and Domagoso and their organization encountered a setback during the administration of Mayor Atienza and Estrada as both mayors attempted to turn some areas of the park into concrete. Thus, without proper attention in creating more green spaces, the constituents' health are at risk due to the

politics involving the maintenance of these spaces.

In addition, the socio-material nature of Urban Political Ecology is manifested in how the residents of Manila utilize the public green spaces for leisure. Manila City Ordinance No. 8119, includes parks as places of recreation. Thus, the relationship between people and the material world are exemplified in the contrasting environments of green spaces such as parks and other urban infrastructures. This grounds how material arrangements such as performing programs or other activities in public open spaces for the sake of leisure are socially constructed (Saloma et. al, 2021). This is reflected in the statement of the President of the Wildbird Club that previously mentioned how the organization is centered on the hobby of identifying and raising awareness for local and migratory birds, and how green spaces are essential in

In sum, the economy remains to be the primary driver of Manila to build infrastructure. However, in this quest for development, the importance of green spaces is often overlooked if the calls from members of the civil society are disregarded in promoting green spaces.

Overcoming Challenges through a more Inclusive and Participatory Planning

To synthesize and through analyzing the data that the researchers have gathered, resources, partnership, and

collaboration are found as crucial factors in the success of every green space program and projects that are provided by the local government and also in connection with programs created by non-government organizations. Thus, looking into the financial, technical, and project delivery of every green space program are significant towards the process of the program's development stage and planning. In further improving the projects of the local government units, the necessity for experts in the field are also vital. Collaboration of NGOs, as well as the individuals' strong commitment to the process of implementation of the project is seen as a necessity for the development of each program. In terms of the technical mobility, the supplementation of laws and applicable policies such as local ordinances are also crucial in the development of green space programs. Local ordinances played a vital role in widening the scope of green space programs and its significance to the political visions of the society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the results of the data presented, the research showed that the local government of Manila interacts with various stakeholders in the implementation of green spaces. The relationship of the local government to the civil society dates back to the previous administrations, thereby witnessing the transformation of green spaces in Manila. The development of open spaces can be seen through

Atienza's pedestrianization scheme and the Arroceros Park, to Estrada's development of public markets and Moreno's open space development, development of historical sites, and support for the NGOs greenspace development programs. Through the data gathered, it is evident that there is an inconsistency in the past and present administrations' support for the NGOs' programs and vice versa. Moreover, the current programs enacted by the City of Manila are centered on more open spaces to ensure sustainability. Open spaces are also used as quarantine facilities in light of the current pandemic. Lastly, the role of green spaces and the partnerships underlying it is given emphasis during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NGOs provide their expertise and aids in managing the green space without utilizing government funds. However, an obstacle to be taken into consideration is that all stakeholders face limitations in finance as well as differences among administrations.

In terms of programs, the study also showed that there are a lot of challenges that the local government units and non-government organizations have faced in terms of the utilization and implementation of public green spaces. Funding was seen as the main obstacle in coming up with green space development and implementation of projects for both government agencies and non-government organizations, which includes budget allocation and source of budget for developing green space projects. Another factor of lack of green space development was also

caused by natural and ecological problems, which allows imbalances in green space areas that can be utilized by the local government units and the non-government organizations.

Administration differences were also a crucial issue in terms of sustaining the establishment of green space projects of the past and present administration which creates development inconsistency in the long run. This factor causes several projects to be discontinued and also changes the system of outcome for every project. These challenges were considered as a significant factor in utilizing environmental programs towards the creation of green spaces.

This study identified the range of areas for attention in relation to the development and management of green spaces in the City of Manila. Due to the lack of partnerships between the local government of Manila and environmental NGOs, the local government must consider fostering partnerships with NGOs in order to sustain operative allocation of funds for projects towards utilization of green spaces. Apart from maintaining the cleanliness and sanitation of public green spaces, another aspect that the researchers recommend is to improve the city infrastructures to allow healthy activities for the promotion of health and welfare of the residents. Moreover, environmental programs towards green spaces are a significant step in the LGUs action towards sustainability. Thus, the collaboration of the Manila LGU and NGO is pivotal in empowering people

and communities through a strengthened capacity for environmental governance.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years highlighted the need for more urban green open space as is evident in the crowding of parks such as Quezon City Memorial Circle and Luneta Park when lockdowns eased and Alert Levels decreased. However, the public sector cannot fulfill this mandate by itself. Thus, the researchers seek to advance the following recommendations.

First, as indicated by the data, it is important to consider that the development of green spaces is mainly based on the discretion of LGUs. Although there are various efforts implemented by the National Government in assisting local governments to implement green spaces, there is still a need for local governments to understand its real value, not only to the environment but also to their constituents. An LGU will only allocate funding for the development of green spaces if it is viewed as essential by the LGU; and in most cases, the development of green spaces is often overshadowed by the provision of services deemed 'more essential' such as health services given the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as education. Thus, in order to aid LGUs realize the value of green spaces, especially since it is currently dwindling all over the Metro, capacity building will prove to be instrumental in propagating knowledge towards green space development

alongside technical assistance and funding.

Furthermore, although it is evident that programs addressing urban green spaces mostly stem from the National Government – such as the 2018 Green Green Program, there is still a considerable need for specific programs dedicated for green space development at the local level. The City of Manila is commendable in implementing its Urban Redevelopment Program. However, the current plan as well as openness to partner with NGOs must be institutionalized to ensure the open spaces' sustainability.

Second, for the local government units and non-government organizations to further maintain local green spaces and improve green space programs in the city, encouragement of local groups and organizations' participation in the building process is suggested in being able to naturally create a sense of community that is responsible for ensuring public spaces' safety and maintenance. Partnership with private entities and local communities in improving green spaces are also crucial in creating coalitions of stakeholders, urban experts and institutions that preserve, create and improve areas of green spaces. Advocacy for local funding and support for green spaces programs from private sectors and the local government is also suggested in order to provide highly regulated infrastructures, accessible green spaces and integrated strategies towards the development of green spaces in the city.

Lastly, the researchers further suggest the need for a Private-Public partnership of local government units and non-government organizations in the development of green spaces programs in the city that recognizes prominent methods in delivering public services transparently and in line with institutional processes. Setting for Private-Public partnerships can be maintained through the creation of a government approach that ensures transparency, accountable commitments, and financial liabilities that are necessary for sustainable practices and procedures with Private-Public partnership contracts. Moreover, this type of partnership can be further developed by ensuring public awareness of the relative costs, benefits, and risks of green space programs and policies. Thus, a deep understanding of Public-Private partnerships also requires active participation and engagement with stakeholders of the city in upholding public service quality. Therefore, it requires institutional roles and management of green space programs, fiscal budgeting, and infrastructure planning that must be maintained throughout the partnership planning and processes.

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