Participation as Subscriptions: Re-examining participatory development practices

Karl Arvin F. Hapal

Participation is one of the most ubiquitous terms in the field of development. Yet, despite of its inspiring and effervescent effect, its attainment has remained elusive and tenuous. This article argues that the concept of participation must be appreciated as an ideology – a prescription or a vision of what society ought to be rather than acute description of social relationships and dynamics. This article instead proposes the concepts of subscription, congruence and buying-in as alternative concepts that may account for discrepant realities. These concepts were gleaned from the experience of community organizing in Bagong Silang and member-organization dynamics of the Workers Cooperative in Caloocan.

Key words: participation, community organizing, participatory development

Defining Participation

Participation, along with peace and empowerment, is one of the most ubiquitous terms in the field of development. Its ubiquity lies not only in its robustness as an ideal, but also in its ability to affect inspiration and effervescence. It is a buzzword which perfectly encapsulates what ought to be in a democratic society. As White (1996) observes, "participation as a 'Hurrah' word [brings] a warm glow to its users and hearers." Development programs by both state and non-state actors claiming to promote or enhance participation often bear a veneer of legitimacy or approval. Yet, despite its effervescent effect, explaining participation in theory and achieving it in practice have proven to be rather difficult, if not, elusive. It can be everything while, at the same time, mean nothing at all (van Deth, 2001).

The elastic, if not problematic, nature of participation has yielded persistent and sustained attempts by academics, administrators and practitioners to unpack and achieve it. Sherry Arnstein's (1969) article, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," is perhaps one of the more popular descriptions and explanations of the concept. Contemporary attempts include the articles of White (1996) and Cornwall (2008). Both attempted to re-examine the concept in order to, using Cornwall's words, "realize its democratizing promise." In the Philippines, the concept of participation remains central in community organizing and mobilization (Manalili, 1990; Francisco, 1997) as well as in promoting people-centered governance models.

Notwithstanding the plethora of attempts to unpack the concept, it appears that participation continues to be promoted for its instrumental, and more importantly, transformative and empowering potentials. The enduring relevance of participation stems from its idealized and normative formulation; that is, (genuine) participation is often considered as "desirable" or "good" for the government, society and its citizens (Cleaver, 2001). The idealization of participation emerged from a critical reaction against centrally planned and technocratic administration of development. As a critical reaction, it called for increasing people's influence and control over matters that directly affect their lives (World Bank, 1996). By increasing influence and control, people escape from being mere objects of development and instead become active agents in shaping their own destinies.

The concept of participation suggests an ideal or aspiration for modern democratic societies. It harkens to models of direct democracy where "good citizens" are actively involved with the affairs of their community and their actions are guided by the common good. Scholars, confronted with the complexities of empirical reality, have provided nuanced explanations, models or typologies (Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996; Cornwall, 2008). Yet, they remain committed to this idealized form either by adopting a perspective where participation is as transformative, empowering and intrinsically good or, as an ideal-type – a conceptual yardstick to distinguish what is, from what is not. However, this commitment to an idealized concept of participation is not entirely unproblematic.

The problem of this idealization lies in the privileging of *what ought to be*. The achievement of this rather utopic idealization,

however, has proven to be difficult or, to borrow from Cleaver (2001), "partial, tenuous and reliant on assertions of [its] rightness… rather than convincing evidence." This has led some actors to either blindly rejoice in the supposed benefits of participation only to become deeply skeptical, if not frustrated, in the process, especially in the face of defeat. The limits of this idealization are further pushed when confronted with peculiar situations such as when actors teeter between the metaphorical "ladder steps" of Arnstein (1969) or when contentious and patronage politics appear to be "co-constitutive" (Auyero, Lapegna, & Poma, 2009)[1]. Hence, measuring up against this idealized concept does not only set elusive goals, but also lacks the robustness to explain the "heterotopia" of participation in real life (Chatterjee, 2004).

I argue that part of the problem with the concept of participation lies in the implicit and often ignored assumption that it represents an ideology rather than an acute representation of social life. Schwarzmantel (2008) broadly defines ideology as a "totalistic" perspective which "cover the central aspects of how society should be organized… it offers answers to the question of what kind of society is desirable." Participation is predicated on a fundamental belief that "the people" must be enjoined in the process towards their development. As Manalili (1984) has incessantly preached throughout the years, development must be "*mula sa tao, para sa tao.*" As an ideology, this assertion is viewed intrinsically desirable. Yet, this is insufficient in providing us with robust explanations of social life and processes. Instead it provides us with a *pangarap* (dream) and systems of belief.

The belief in this *pangarap* constitutes a subscription to the ideology. The process of subscription to these "dreams" or ideologies is the foundation of transformation and change. It serves as the *pinagkakapitan* (moral handles) of "the people" and developmental agents alike. The subscription of this "dream" informs belief, practices and, subsequently contestations among other ideological "competitors." When "the people" subscribe to a participatory developmental configuration, they share this *pangarap*. This shared belief may be motivated or hampered by different factors—personal projects, altruistic beliefs, socio-political contexts. However, the subscription to this *pangarap* tends to teeter, if not appears to be

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1 See Karaos (2006)

tenuous and, its transformative trajectories become difficult to predict. The teetering motions surrounding people's participation, I argue, are reflective of relationships characterized by exchange or reciprocal relations between particular and contextual actors and, more importantly, the congruence between their perceptions of development.

This article is an attempt to re-examine the concept of participation and, in the process, present a robust re-interpretation of it. This attempt somehow answers Cornwall's (2008) call for "clarity through specificity" – that is, "spelling out what exactly people are being enjoined to participate in, for what purpose, who is involved and who is absent." The article shall realize this attempt by examining the experience of community organizing in Bagong Silang and the case of the Workers Cooperative of Caloocan (WCC). Using these experiences as a platform, the article shall then attempt to provide a re-interpretation of the concept of participation. This re-interpretation represents an incipient theory which, hopefully, possesses the foundation for a robust and dynamic explanation of participation. The article shall end by outlining some implications to community organizing and development work in general.

It must be declared that this attempt requires the suspension of the idealized notions and normative ascriptions loaded within the concept of participation. This is to avoid conceptual traps characterized by elusive moral and normative categories (i.e. its desirability, rightness and essentiality) which partly define the concept of participation. These ascriptions to the concept of participation are reflective of a particular political position, an ideology or to borrow from Cleaver (2001), an "act of faith" which confuses any sober attempt to examine the concept.

For this article, I shall use the case of community organizing in Bagong Silang, Caloocan during the late 1980s until the early 1990s and the contemporary attempts by the Workers Cooperative of Caloocan (WCC) as a platform to interrogate the concept of participation. Data for the case draws from interviews with former and current community organizers in Bagong Silang, representatives of political organizations and local politicians. These interviews were undertaken for my master's thesis. The data for the case of WCC on the other hand

was borne out of my role as a faculty supervisor for the Department of Community Development's (DCD) Field Instruction Program (FIP)[2]. This role has led me to assume, among other things, a participant-observer position in relation to the organizational dynamics of the cooperative.

To the reader, what lies ahead might be a polemical re-interpretation of participation. If it is any consolation, this attempt is not without agony nor is it a denial of the transformative and empowering potentials of the idealized concept of participation. Despite the seeming deep-seated skepticism surrounding the article, I continue to believe in the "intrinsic goodness" of participation. It has served as my conceptual and political handle throughout my career as a development worker and in everyday life. Yet, this reaction stems from unsettling moments when neat and idealized categories do not fit with presenting realities. Hence, this is part of my own search for alternative explanations through conscientious reflection and incessant problematization.

The Case of Community Organizing in Bagong Silang

In August 1982, informal settlers along then Don Mariano Marcos Avenue[3] in Quezon City had their shacks demolished and were then loaded in trucks en route to Bagong Silang, a resettlement site located near the northern border of the city of Caloocan. The demolition was part of the Marcos administration's "last campaign" to rid Metro Manila of its so-called eyesores—the squatters (Karaos, 1993; Van Naerssen, 1993). Soon after, other informal settlers in Tatalon, Quezon City and Tondo, Manila had their shanties demolished and were subsequently transported to what was supposed to be a new birth ("bagong silang") or beginning for them. Instead, the relocatees were dumbfounded as they saw stretches of land dotted, not with houses, but with toilets. Without any basic services, many of the relocatees struggled for survival while others simply left Bagong Silang only to return to the precarious life in the city as informal settlers.

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2   The Field Instruction Program (FIP) is considered the cornerstone of the undergraduate Community Development (CD) curricula. It was designed to complement theoretical knowledge and skills taught in the classroom by providing opportunities for students to apply basic CD concepts, principles, approaches, strategies and techniques in real-life situations.
3   Now known as Commonwealth Avenue.

Deplorable living conditions and the lack of basic services made Bagong Silang a fertile ground for the politicization of the *masa* and community organizing. Community organizers, who were relocatees themselves, began to arouse[4], organize and mobilize people in Bagong Silang. Educational discussions (EDs), which exposed local problems and linked these with national issues, were vigorously conducted. Protests were mounted against the National Housing Authority (NHA) and other government agencies to demand for humane housing units and basic services. Demonstrations were likewise staged against then President Ferdinand Marcos together with other basic sectors[5]. Parallel to these mobilizations against the government were socio-economic projects and political education for the people of Bagong Silang. At the turn of the 1990s, people's organizations (POs) in Bagong Silang attained some degree of autonomy and self-reliance. This was evident in their ability to control or provide some basic services for the residents of Bagong Silang such as healthcare, water, and access to credit.

The post-EDSA Revolution context, however, seems to have marked the apex of community organizing in Bagong Silang. By the mid-1990s, community organizing in the resettlement site was remarkably different from its incarnation during the late 1980s until the early 1990s. When asked to describe this change Arnel, a community organizer in Bagong Silang, said "...before, if you go to your masa, they will voluntarily give you money for your transportation... it was more *madulas* (smooth) before... [during rallies] we could fill two mini-buses." The relative smoothness of community organizing was reflected in the palpability of support from the masses and the massive demonstrations staged by their group. However, Arnel, commenting on the transformation of community organizing in Bagong Silang remarked, "for the longest time we have been fighting. They sometimes think, 'here we go again'. The issues we are facing... it does not go away. That is why when we call for a meeting, it is very *makunat* (tough). Only a few attend."

What led to this change in community organizing? Some community organizers cited two main observations. First, there

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4 The word arouse relates to the process of raising awareness and deepening critical consciousness.

5 Community organizers claim that back then, despite the inherent dangers in participating in such activities, they mobilized people by the thousands.

appeared to be a palpable lack or stark departure from the conduct of *basic mass work*[6]. In Bagong Silang, basic mass work took the form of agitating relocatees which, in turn, would lead to people's participation in demand-making activities, mobilizations and becoming part of a political organization. Basic mass work required intensive integration in communities and with the people. The departure from undertaking basic mass work was partly due to disruptive controversies faced by some POs such as accusations of particularism, mismanagement of resources and, intense debates on succession. These contributed to the thinning of some POs' membership base, fragmentation of old alliances and loss of support from donors. The "split" within the Philippine Left also had an impact. According to some community organizers, the "split" divided and planted mistrust and resentment among the mass base.

Second, some of the POs' members simply chose to focus on their respective *ekonomiya* or livelihood rather than attend various associational activities[7]. When some people participate, especially in political activities, Lando lamented, "sometimes, our community leaders go to where the resources are." The move to prioritize one's *ekonomiya* over political organizational activities was not limited to members of POs in Bagong Silang. For instance, some community organizers also adopted a rather "practical" approach given the increasing difficulties[8] of community organizing and the demands of their personal lives. Take Ronald for example. He and his wife shared how they distributed money for an aspiring politician during the 2013 elections. According to Ronald, "we had sacks full of money... people lined up in front of our house and we gave it all to them". Ronald maintains that he is still an activist but justifies his involvement with politicians to survive. The move by both members and community

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6 See Manalili (1990)

7 It is interesting to note (randomly selected) respondents interviewed for a *victimization survey* in 2010 suggested that they face considerable difficulties participating in community or political activities as compared to economic and family-based activities. See Jensen, Hapal & Modvig (2013).

8 The difficulties of community organizing in Bagong Silang are many. Most of the community organizers interviewed began their work when they were in their 20s. This allowed them to lay their life "*para sa bayan* (for the nation)." Yet, as they began to age and have their own families, having a livelihood became a priority. For some, physical ailments have taken their toll. Those who continue to work as community organizers also face threats from the state or political rivals.

organizers to prioritize their *ekonomiya* is particularly interesting given the rich experience of community organizing in Bagong Silang--a historied past shared by people who, at some point in their lives, have attended intensive EDs, staged rallies against the NHA, and, fought alongside other basic sectors to end authoritarian rule in the Philippines.

While the description of some community organizers depicted a seeming decline of community organizing from *madulas* to *makunat*, others saw the change as a form of reconfiguration or a shift in terms of perspective and strategy (Hapal, 2017). According to some community organizers, democratization paved the way for the emergence of transformative and non-combative, albeit no less critical, engagements with the state. This discursive shift moved the attention away from community organizing geared towards self-reliance and autonomy and, instead focused on promoting democratic mechanisms and making governance structures work. According to Vicky, a community organizer, "Before, we were trying to make people angry. Now, it is different. Instead of keeping on hitting (*bira ng bira*), it is better to participate. That is my brand of organizing. That is how I raise their awareness (conscientization). I do not organize people so I could use them because I have a particular agenda. To understand the full extent of the problem you need to understand its inner workings (*kailangan mong pumasok*)." Democratization resulted in the widening of "political opportunity structures" (Tarrow, 1994) which consequently led to the "diffusion of organizing trajectories" (Hapal, 2017)[9]. The move to participate was further reinforced with the passage of Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991 which reinvigorated the role of barangay and city governments. This, together with the shifting priorities of donor agencies, supported the changing tide of development discourse and practice. Making government work and getting people to work with it was in vogue while support for community organizing from donor agencies became scarce (Hapal, 2017).

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9 The diffusion of organizing trajectories has led to some peculiar situations (i.e. community organizers as political operators of some politicians while, simultaneously, claiming to represent the interest of communities).

The Case of the Workers Cooperative of Caloocan

The Workers Cooperative of Caloocan (WCC) began in 2009 with five founding members. These were all mothers who wanted to escape from being dependent on local loan sharks, commonly known as "five-six."[10] WCC also had a nucleus of community organizers who had decades of experience working with various urban poor communities. They began by initiating a system of *impokan* (savings) and lending it to needy individuals for one percent interest. The founding members began with a capital of PhP 5,000.00. After a year, the five founding members managed to recruit 50 members to their impokan and raise PhP 75,000.00. Expansion continued in the following years until, in 2012, the members of the *impokan* formalized their organization by establishing a (credit) cooperative. Soon after, the WCC launched other livelihood programs for its members which included a garments business, a *bigasan* (rice retailing business), and a school service for its members. In 2015, the cooperative launched a "housing program" for its members by attempting to access government services (i.e. the Community Mortgage Program or CMP). In 2016, the WCC claimed to have a net worth of around PhP 1 million and 500 members (mostly from the urban poor sector) in Caloocan City and in nearby cities.

The meteoric rise of WCC demonstrated the potential of a non-mainstream and solidarity-based means of generating wealth. However, despite the cooperative's remarkable experience, its organizational dynamics were not entirely unproblematic, especially regarding its members. A closer examination of the cooperative revealed a strong and decisive core of active members (Orlino, Hayashi, Abis, & Rico, 2017). These were members who actively engaged in the cooperative's programs (i.e., patronizing their products, depositing share capital, or loaning money) and participated in decision-making processes (Limbaga, Abis, Cimafranca, & Orlino, 2016). Outside of the core, however, the majority of WCC's members were perceived as inactive.

The inactivity of most of WCC's members was due to several factors: the geographical distance between its members and WCC, making it difficult for some to participate; the cooperative's

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10 "Five-six" is an informal micro-lending system in the Philippines. In exchange for money or goods, creditors impose a 20 percent interest over the principal amount borrowed.

committees being non-functional; the centralization of activities; and the lack of local leaders in communities where members were present. In response, WCC attempted to decentralize the activities, instill the value of volunteerism, and continually engage its members through various educational discussions. Despite these measures, the degrees of participation by WCC's members remained varied.

The differing, if not fluctuating, degrees of "participation" by WCC's members became more evident in its "housing program." The cooperative's program, launched in 2015, sought to access a government housing program for poor and informal settlers living along danger zones[11]. The idea was for WCC to assume the role of a community facilitator to enable its members to access the government's housing program. Mass orientations were held among WCC's members and interested individuals. The membership base of the cooperative swelled thereafter. While WCC claimed that their role was simply to facilitate, many of the members were encouraged to participate because of the "promise" of eventually becoming homeowners.

The rather aggressive recruitment process for WCC's housing program was allegedly part of a larger attempt to broaden the constituency of its mother political organization. This, to say the least, was not well received by some people. A community leader remarked, "*Ayaw namin magamit sa rally* (we do not want to be used in rallies)." This remark was borne out of the militant tendencies of WCC's mother political group[12] and some people's experience in the past where they were "encouraged" to join rallies as part of their broader participation in a development program. Despite these reservations, many expressed their desire to join WCC's housing program and began to pay monthly dues.

Resentment and frustration soon crept in as the housing program of WCC did not deliver tangible results. Some members asked, "*Nasaan na ang bahay? Hindi na ako nagbabayad dahil wala naman pinatunguhan* (Where are the houses? I stopped paying because there were no results)." This led many members to become inactive. However, several opportunities were opened as the Duterte

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11 See NHA (2015)
12 In some instances, WCC and its affiliate political organization was perceived to be associated with other militant or left-leaning groups.

administration rolled out its own housing program for the poor. WCC also took the initiative to further study the government's housing program in the wake of the failures of its past attempt. In 2017, contact was re-established, re-orientations were conducted, and community profiling activities were undertaken. This reinvigorated the interest of old, albeit inactive, members and encouraged other individuals to become members of the cooperative. This led some inactive members to renew their participation in WCC's *impokan* and explore means to effectively participate in its activities.

Meanwhile, WCC's core group which had, in the past, steered the cooperative's organizational trajectory continue to face several challenges. A number of core group members have left the cooperative for various reasons--interpersonal conflict within the cooperative, better employment opportunities elsewhere in the Philippines or overseas, disillusionment with the management, etc.--leaving the WCC with only a handful of active members. Those who have remained remark that they continue to participate because they consider WCC their second home or family. This is not simply a romanticized remark, as most of the core group members of WCC belong to one or two families--a fact that some members and affiliate organizations have pointed out as a criticism about the cooperative.

Framing the Bagong Silang and WCC Experience

Thus far, I have presented, albeit briefly, the case of Bagong Silang and WCC. These cases point to different historical moments and reflect different developmental or organizational issues. A keen reader might also notice that the issue of participation was not the main problematique during the process of inquiry and, subsequently, the "re-construction" of Bagong Silang and WCC's narrative (Etherington, 2013). For instance, the case of Bagong Silang discusses the transformation of community organizing and political activism. WCC's experience, on the other hand, demonstrates cooperative-member dynamics and broader organizational issues. Notwithstanding the seeming tangential relationship of these cases (in terms of the initial objective of inquiry) with the concept of participation, it still raises some interesting questions. For example, both cases illustrate people actively engaging in alternative political or developmental configurations. Yet, both cases also show the inherent difficulties and dilemmas surrounding participatory processes. Both also illustrate

various motivations which informed people's participation-–ranging from political activism, familial ties to rational self-interest.

In general, the Bagong Silang and WCC experience reflect a less straightforward path towards a vision of change and the variegated trajectories of participatory processes. These processes are subject, not only to socio-political developments or discursive shifts, but are also based on perceptions, personal contexts and social relationships (Cornwall, 2008; de Sardan, 2005). Reading the experience might yield questions pertaining to the participatory techniques used, the existence of platforms for engagement, the quality of the conscientization process, and even the integrity of the actors. These are all legitimate questions. However, these questions only serve the purpose of measuring these cases against an idealized version of participation, participatory processes and constituent principles. Treading this track leaves few insights for exploring the nuances of the concept of participation. How then do we make sense of this less straightforward and, to some extent, messy trajectory of developmental processes as illustrated in the cases above?

To answer this question, I draw inspiration from de Sardan's (2005) "Entangled Social Logic Approach." The approach, according to de Sardan is "centered on the analysis of the embeddedness of social logic." It departs from the populist or essentializing (ideological) tendencies of some development theories and, instead, adopts a social interactionist perspective (de Sardan, 2005). The approach aims to study "social groups and their interactions in the context of development" (Ervin, 2016) which may be useful in juxtaposing concrete and practice-based reality with broad developmental discourses. This perspective also departs from viewing "the people" as inhabiting the domain of normative political theory (citizens) and functionalist policy (populations) (Chatterjee, 2004). Instead, it views "the people" populating participatory processes in non-normative or idealized terms. From this perspective the case of Bagong Silang and WCC do not reflect the process of climbing the metaphorical ladder or the gradual attainment of citizen power. Instead, their experiences and participatory outcomes reflect a diachronic process "[developed] via discreet passageways, relays, extended or restricted networks of transmission, interfaces [that] proceeds through a wide range of multiple, embedded, overlapping, intertwined mediations" (de Sardan, 2005). Off hand, this process seems to yield a "rhizomatic" unraveling

of participatory trajectories-–a seemingly teetering or variegated motion between different typologies of participation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Drawing inspiration from the "Entangled Social Logic Approach," I introduce congruence, buying-in and subscriptions as non-normative and interactionist concepts or analytical tools to examine people's participation. These concepts depart from idealized and often linear notions of participation and participatory processes. Instead, they reflect the seemingly wavering motions or tenuous relationships between "social logics" of actors. Again, while these concepts were formulated and inspired by community-based practices, I must declare that these are a product of generalizations and re-interpretations of situated experiences. These interpretations reflect an incipient attempt to theorize and to characterize social interactions. As such, the cases presented merely serve as platforms to illustrate these concepts and further research is necessary to examine the potency and limits of these concepts.

Congruence, Buying-in and Subscriptions[13]

What accounts for this seeming "rhizomatic" unraveling of participatory processes? To unpack this "puzzle," I propose that we examine the interaction between actors and the implicit meanings surrounding participatory processes. Both cases illustrate moments of robustness and lethargy in terms of people's participation. I argue that the relative robustness or lethargy of people's participation is founded on the congruence between so-called development agents and *mga tao* (the people) or *masa* (masses). Achieving congruence relies on the viability of the perspectives and strategies development actors have to offer. More importantly, however, from the perspective of the people, congruence relies on their appreciation of their context; that is, their assessment of their socio-politico-economic situation and probable solutions to it. In other words, the congruence of perspectives relies on the relative compatibility of development configurations with pre-existing "social logics." The term "social logics" was defined by Glynos & Howarth (2007) as "the 'patterning' of social practices, where such practices are understood in this regard as a function of the contextualized self-interpretation of key subjects."

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13 These concepts were partially developed and articulated in the analysis section of my masteral thesis.

Yet, the congruence of perspective and strategies between development agents and the people does not necessarily prompt participation or non-participation. Participation is prompted as a result of the process of "brokerage" or "intermediation" by development actors, the promotion of alternative perspectives and practices (de Sardan, 2005). The process of brokerage is consummated when there is a "suspension of disbelief" on the part of the people; that is, they must buy-in and assume that the alternatives offered by development actors are viable and realistic. The suspension of disbelief is "contingent on a process of appraisal or rationalization where pragmatic, personal, social and even altruistic motivations simultaneously converge" (Hapal, 2017). The process of buying-in, predicated on the congruence of perspectives, "may be likened to a **negotiated exchange**... 'successful' negotiated exchange between the two results in a **subscription** – a form of social contract... characterized by a reciprocal relationship between [the people] and developmental agents" (Hapal, 2017). The integrity and quality of the reciprocal relationship between "the people" and development agents rests on the participation of the former and the viability of the latter's developmental configuration.

In the case of Bagong Silang, the congruence between development actors (i.e., community organizers) and the relocatees was somewhat achieved when lived experiences of destitution and neglect resonated with the social analysis which reflected the themes of inequality, oppression and injustice. On the other hand, the resonance between WCC and its members relied on the common desire to seek alternative opportunities to save and, in the process, generate wealth. In Bagong Silang's case, buy-in was achieved due to the viability and palpability of the alternatives provided by the development actors and their respective organizations. These alternatives took the form of a comprehensive strategy to address their destitute situation, housing support, welfare services and, access to other forms of resources. The relocatees' subscription to these alternatives paved the way for engagements to a wider arena of struggle. In the case of WCC, the cooperative's meteoric success or "track record" became the foundation for prospective members to buy-in and register as members. Furthermore, WCC's benefits and, more importantly its perceived "promise" to facilitate the acquisition of homes/dwellings

through the government's housing program, proved to be a significant motivation to join the cooperative or eventually disengage.

However, one must not mistake the concepts of congruence, buying-in and subscriptions as characterizing a linear process. The congruence of the perspectives by development actors and "the people" is contingent on the fluidity of the socio-politico-economic context. In other words, its relative strength or weakness is contingent on the interwoven nature of social realities, perspectives and practices. An individual's milieu influences his or her assessment and subsequent actions. These shifts either reinforce or compromise pre-existing subscriptions which may lead to the impression that participatory processes surrounding any developmental configuration are fleeting, or at times, tenuous. Furthermore, such oscillation is due to its synchronic characteristic; that is, subscriptions are non-exclusive social contracts--several subscriptions may be at play at any given point in time (Hapal, 2017). This is readily apparent in peculiar situations where patronage and contentious politics appear to have a recursive relationship; both may occupy the same space and may be performed simultaneously (Auyero, Lapegna, & Poma, 2009).

The teetering motions surrounding the concepts of congruence, buying-in and subscriptions draw from the assumption that "the people" are discerning and calculating agents; that is, they constantly appraise their context and appropriate possible alternatives. This assumption departs from the homogenizing tendency of some theories on participation which views groups of people as aggregates (i.e., class, *mga tao* or *masa*). This tendency is often guilty of pre-determining their attitudes and interests instead of interrogating interactions and meanings surrounding them. From this perspective, subscriptions are deliberate and calculated acts. As result, the motivations to participate vary depending on one's assessment, and the subsequent economy of actions rests on the perceived viability of the developmental configuration. Subscriptions, therefore, may be seen as founded on the constant process of appraisal (*pagtantya*), opportunity-seeking (*diskarte*) and allocation of efforts (*pagtaya*) inasmuch as it is an outcome of participatory processes and techniques.

The variegated characteristic of people's subscription to any developmental configuration is apparent when the case of WCC, in

particular its active and inactive members, is examined further. Active members continue to engage in WCC's activities for several reasons. For example, while most active members continue to participate because of the perceived benefits, other members, especially some women, see their engagement as an opportunity for self-development or, in some cases, a means to become less dependent on their husbands. This example is very simplistic and tends to generalize the complexities of the case. The point however, is that each member appraises their engagement differently. The result of this appraisal may consist of a set of intertwined beliefs or justifications which, in turn, reinforce their continued engagement with the cooperative. However, these beliefs or justifications may be reinforced or challenged depending on relative successes or failures of WCC. The cooperative's failure to facilitate the process of acquiring houses from the government by some of its members appears to be an example of this. While the disengagement of some members may be viewed as the outcome of WCC's failures or as manifestations of fence-sitting attitudes, it may also be appreciated as an attempt to lay one's energies where it would matter. As in the case of the relocatees of Bagong Silang who eventually disengaged from organizational activities, the inactive members of WCC might as well have applied their energies to their respective livelihoods or to other activities which could grant them other opportunities. Yet, their disengagement does not seem to be equated to the severance of their subscription to WCC's programs. Rather, their engagement is simply suspended-–only to be reinvigorated when new and appealing opportunities come.

Notwithstanding the wavering tendencies of subscriptions, these may be maintained or deepened thereby giving them an enduring characteristic. Apart from the viability of developmental configurations, subscriptions may be reinforced or challenged by social relationships and histories such as kinship ties, *utang na loob, pinagsamahan* and, *pakikisama* (Jensen & Hapal, 2015). The maintenance and deepening of subscriptions may also be achieved through political education or conscientization. This may result in higher levels of political commitment or "elevated" forms of action. The maintenance or deepening of subscriptions also reveals an important point about their "transformative" (albeit non-normative) potentials. While subscriptions are influenced by people's appraisal of their context, it also assumes a structuring function by challenging prevailing perspectives and practices. Its structuring function lies on

the contestations within the reciprocal relationships in any given form of subscription. The congruence of perspectives and practices does not equate to agreeability; rather, it simply suggests the potentiality of people buying-in and subscribing to a developmental configuration. The relationships borne out of subscriptions constitute a gradual process of reinforcing or challenging perspectives and practices. The results of this process, depending on one's political position and principles, may reflect positive change or its opposite. In any case, the ever-changing socio-politico-economic context and constant appraisal of individuals makes the task of maintaining subscriptions an imperative, especially for political, ideological or developmental agendas requiring a broad constituency.

Subscriptions and Development Work: Tentative Implications

At this point, I have briefly discussed the concepts of subscription, congruence and buying-in. These concepts, I argue, provide a robust and situated re-interpretation of people's participation compared to its idealized counterpart. I have argued earlier, that these idealizations must be appreciated as ideologies or prescriptions of what society ought to be, rather than an accurate representation of social reality. The inherent limitation of the idealized concept of participation to represent social reality is the locus of this attempt to provide a critical reaction and, subsequently, a re-interpretation of the concept. Yet, despite this critique and re-interpretation, one may legitimately ask: What are the implications of these concepts to community organizing and development work in general? What I offer below are tentative answers to a question regarding an incipient theory.

Perhaps the most basic implication of these concepts is directed to one's perspective about "the people," the *masa* or *tao*. The concept of subscriptions, congruence and buying-in underscores an implicit rejection of viewing people as aggregates or, as I have mentioned earlier, "the people" as inhabiting the domain of normative political theory (citizens) and functionalist policy (populations) (Chatterjee, 2004). Instead, it adopts an agent-centric perspective where "the people" are rational, appraising or calculating actors. Moreover, these concepts suggest that "the people" are not mere objects of conscientized education, but are appropriating agents-–that is, the appropriation of developmental configurations is contingent on their perceptions, social milieu, personal histories, relationships benefits, disadvantages,

etc. The concepts also imply that the people are multi-dimensional, ever-shifting and not monolithic entities. Their subscriptions, which involve the process of appraisal (*pagtantya*), opportunity-seeking (*diskarte*) and allocation of efforts (*pagtaya*), reflect a dynamic process reminiscent of Goffman's (1959) co-constitutive, interactive and shifting "frontstage" and "backstage" behavior.

This rather dynamic re-interpretation of the characteristic of "the people" has some impact to alternative development configurations and, up to some extent, political strategy. The concept of subscriptions does not only imply a congruence between "the people" and alternative development configurations; more importantly, it underscores an exchange and reciprocal relationships.[14] For this exchange to be consummated, from the perspective of "the people," it must pass the metaphorical test of confidence or their appraisal. On the other hand, developmental configurations must ensure that what they have to offer are timely, relevant, beneficial and congruent with prevailing belief systems. This suggests the adoption of a seemingly entrepreneurial attitude on the part of development agents; that is, ensuring that alternative development models remain relevant and, for a lack of a better term, appealing.[15] This requires the constant re-construction or re-imagining of development systems and models to suit the rapidly changing socio-politico-economic landscape. In many ways, these concepts ultimately imply that the elegance of any given developmental configuration or political ideology matters only as much as people's appraisal of it, the breadth of its subscribers, the depth of their buy-in, and the actions that it may entail. [16]

The implications discussed thus far seem to reflect a rather instrumentalist or pragmatic perspective about people's participation.

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14 The consummation of these exchanges has a different dynamic when coercion, violence or the threat of violence is involved. Elsewhere however, we have described these reciprocal relationships and subscription to informal bureaucratic practices in operation between the police and residents of an urban poor community where violence or the threat of it was clearly a currency which informed the exchange. See Hapal & Jensen (2017)

15 The remark about development agents adopting a seemingly entrepreneurial attitude was inspired by Prof. Maureen Pagaduan's observation that community development and community organizing is in the "business ng *pagbebenta ng pag-asa (business of selling hope)."*

16 While this might reflect populistic undertones, recent political events in the Philippines and the rest of the world (i.e., the rise of populist regimes with authoritarian tendencies) arguably lend some credence to this assertion.

But what about participation as an ideology or a prescription of "what ought to be" in society? Earlier, I mentioned that this article must not be mistaken as an attempt to undermine or dismiss the idealized concept of participation. Furthermore, I continue to maintain that the idealization of participation is not necessarily incompatible with the concepts of congruence, buying-in and subscription. Given these, the concepts of subscription, congruence and buying-in must be appreciated, not as prescribing normative standards, but rather as analytical tools to interpret social relationships and dynamics between and among actors. However, as Manalili (1984) argued, an acute reading of society without an inherent bias, especially for the poor, oppressed and marginalized, is *baog* (impotent). The implicit ideology in the idealization of participation therefore sets the "what society ought to be" that the concepts of subscription, congruence and buying-in could not possibly provide.

Conclusion

I end this article, not by providing a synthesis, but through a reflection inspired by the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari. In their book, A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze & Guattari (1987) developed the concept of the "tree" and "rhizome." In simple terms, the authors used the tree as a metaphor for "centered systems" or "hierarchical structures" which "plots a point, fixes an order (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)." The rhizome, however, stands in contrast to the "ordered" nature of the tree. As they write

> a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo… unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point… it brings into play very different regimes… it constitutes multiple multiplicities (p.21)

One may ask, why end this article by alluding to "trees" and "rhizomes"? The purpose of this allusion is to point out that perhaps, when we think of participation we frame it in the image of a tree. Just like the gradual unraveling of a tree's structure, we look for patterns of the organic growth of people's participation akin to that of a plant. We look for neat definitions, hierarchies in terms of typologies, indicators or a semblance of precision in theory and in techniques. However, these are challenged when we find that social life is complex, messy and, at times, incomprehensible. This is perhaps

the rhizomatic manifestation of the processes of participation and life, in general; a manifestation that is not structured, dualistic and causal but spontaneous and complex. Perhaps another point, however, is to look beyond the duality of "trees" and "rhizomes" and view both as co-constitutive. As Deleuze & Guattari (1987) point out, "the root-tree and canal-rhizomes are not two opposed models." The idealization of participation and the concept of subscriptions answer different questions and may serve different purposes. However, both concepts are crucial in attempts to de-construct and, more importantly, re-construct participatory processes.

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Reflections on community-engaged feminist scholarship from experiences in the DWDS Field Instruction Program

Teresita Villamor-Barrameda, DSD

This paper argues that applied social science disciplines like the Women and Development Studies program should develop their own parameters in defining what constitutes a community-engaged scholarship. Using the parameters of transformative, feminist and excellence-oriented community-engaged scholarship, this paper examines the Field Instruction Program (FIP) of the University of the Philippines' Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS) as a community-engaged feminist scholarship. At the same time, it serves as an experience paper that synthesizes the FIP experience of the DWDS based on a document review of FIP assessment reports, fieldwork sharing documents, students' integrated papers and personal journals, complemented by interviews with past graduates and current agency partners. It highlights that community engagement through the FIP partnership provides mutual benefits to both the academic institution and the partner agencies/community organizations. The paper concludes that the FIP is a form of community-engaged feminist scholarship that is transformative in the sense that it creates life-changing conditions for the community of women and other marginalized groups, as well as life-changing experiences for the students. On the part of the academic institution, the FIP provides venues for faculty supervisors to render services and to produce knowledge products for curricular enhancement, dissemination and popularization. It also provides a venue for both the students and faculty to put feminist processes, principles, values and ethics into practice. While being transformative and feminist in practice, the FIP also reflects a scholarship of excellence anchored to academic rigor, accountability, relevance and commitment to genuine public service.

Key words: field instruction, community-engaged scholarship, , feminist scholarship

Introduction

The Field Instruction Program (FIP), a core component of the graduate course of the Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS) links teaching, extension and research for both faculty and students while responding to the needs of women in communities where field work courses take place. It reflects the brand of scholarship – transformative and excellence-oriented – that is espoused by the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) to which the DWDS belongs.

The aim of the paper is to examine the FIP as a community-engaged scholarship using the parameters of being transformative, feminist and excellence-oriented. Data for this paper were culled from a review of existing documents[1] – FIP assessment reports, fieldwork-sharing documents, students' integrated papers and personal journals – and complemented by interviews with past graduates and current agency partners. The paper has four parts: the first part explores the meanings and processes of a community-engaged scholarship; the second part describes the parameters of a community-engaged feminist scholarship; the third part discusses the theory and practice of the FIP; and the fourth part examines the FIP in light of the community-engaged feminist scholarship.

Community-engaged scholarship and the CSWCD's tradition of scholarship

The term community-engaged scholarship came into being with Ernest Boyer's (1991) landmark report entitled, "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate". Boyer's notion of scholarship of discovery, integration, application and teaching as applied in community engagement provides a new take on the meaning of scholarship. It defines scholarship of engagement as linking the university's expertise to respond to community problems, not only through more programs but more so in pursuit of a larger purpose or

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1 Existing documents reviewed include the following: FIP assessment reports – annual reports culled from assessments of the FIP from the perspectives of both the students and the faculty members of the DWDS; field-work sharing documents culled from the students' reports during the mid- and end-term sharing activities; integrated papers or synthesis papers based on the students' actual fieldwork experiences and their personal journals containing their reflections and insights on their FIP experiences.

as a mission (Boyer, 1991). Forms of community-engaged scholarship may range from community-based teaching to research, and to services.

Inspired by Boyer's expanded framework for scholarship, many academic institutions came up with their own notions of scholarship within the context of their disciplines. For instance, in defining scholarship for the discipline of nursing, Peterson & Stevens (2012) adopted Boyer's four dimensions of scholarship. The first – was the scholarship of **discovery** or the search towards disciplinal knowledge production. The second was the scholarship of **teaching** or the transfer of knowledge production from the teacher to the students. The third was the scholarship of **integration** or the creation of knowledge products towards the development of new knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge and products. And the fourth was the scholarship of **application** or the creation of products that provide opportunity for practice application and giving value to university-community partnership.

Likewise, Gelmon, Seifer, Kauper-Brown and Mikkelsen (2005) define community-engaged scholarship as:

> teaching, discovery, integration, application and engagement that involves the faculty member in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and has the following characteristics: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, reflective critique, rigor and peer-review. (p.1)

However, Gelmon et al (2005) note that while "community service, service-learning, community-based participatory research, training and technical assistance, capacity-building, and economic development" (p.1) are methods of community engagement that can only be considered scholarly when they include elements of the aforementioned definition of community-engaged scholarship. Likewise, Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer (2005) question whether all faculty engagement with communities could be considered as scholarship and proposed a framework for assessing community-engaged scholarship for considerations in tenure and promotion. This framework includes process measures – methods of collaboration with communities to

address problems – and product measures that balance community needs and academic requirements – peer-reviewed articles, applied products and community dissemination products.

Aside from defining community-engaged scholarship, there were programs for developing the competencies of academicians in community-engaged scholarship. Jordan et al., (2012) developed a competency-based and multi-disciplinary pilot program at the University of Minnesota to hone faculty members in community-engaged scholarship as well as to promote the concept and its benefits to colleagues within and outside the campus.

Other initiatives include the development of tools and standards for measuring community-engaged scholarship. For instance, Shinnamon, Gelmon, & Holland (1999) developed a measurement tool for faculty involved in community-engaged scholarship. The tool aims to draw out the perspectives and attitudes of faculty members towards their experiences in teaching service-learning courses – that are considered part of the community-engaged scholarship. Areas covered by the tool include: the faculty's view on the impact of service-learning on students, motivation for integrating service-learning into classes, process of teaching service-learning courses, community engagement, and the impact of service on their professional development.

In another initiative, Gelmon, Seifer, Kauper-Brown and Mikkelsen (2005), designed a self-assessment tool for institutions to assess their capacities for community engagement and community-engaged scholarship and to identify areas for action. The tool revolves around six dimensions: definition and vision of community engagement; faculty support for and involvement in community engagement; student support; community support; institutional leadership and support; and community-engaged scholarship. Each dimension has elements that correspond to four stages of institutional best practices in regard to commitment to community engagement and community scholarship. The result of the self-assessment tool enables/allows a particular institution to determine its present level of commitment to community engagement and community-engaged scholarship and areas for future action.

The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (2013) developed a framework of an authentic partnership to guide existing

and newly-formed partnerships. It comprises four elements: 1) guiding principles of partnership; 2) quality processes; 3) meaningful outcomes; and, 4) transformative experiences. Moreover, issues related to community-engaged scholarship are being addressed by institutions. In an evaluation of a faculty development project for community-engaged scholarship, Gelmon, Blanchard, Ryan, & Seifer (2012) identify important elements for academic institutions that include external funding support, on-going support for faculty development and the presence of a set of standard curricular tools.

The aforementioned studies are just a few of the initiatives of academic institutions and scholars to put into practice Boyer's model of community-engaged scholarship. However, over the years, the discourse on what constitutes community-engaged scholarship and what could be considered as scholarship continues to be debated in the halls of academic institutions, both in developed and developing world settings.

The University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman, in particular, held a series of roundtable discussions to refine and institutionalize policies and processes for out-of-classroom academic engagement known as extension. Aside from teaching and research, extension is another important function of UP as part of its public service mandate as the National University. Given this backdrop, the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) continues to enhance and to refine its practice of community-engaged scholarship, given its disciplinal nature as an applied social science in the midst of the socio-economic, political and cultural context of the country. It posits that its scholarship is integrative – equally interweaving the three functions of teaching, research and extension – to strengthen the theory-practice as well as the learning-service connections (CSWCD, 2015):

> Research will not bear fruit if it does not result in action that benefits the people. Extension work gives life to and provides a useful channel for the fruits of research. Research and extension work contribute to the improvement and enrichment of teaching. (p. 19)

Furthermore, the CSWCD's notion of community-engaged scholarship is public service through volunteerism. Being a public service institution and considering the nature of its academic units' disciplines, the College has a strong bias for service learning in poorer communities. Over the years of public service, the slogan "*wagas*

na paglilingkod sa bayan" remains the moving force behind every voluntary initiative of the institution, and also serves as a mantra for both students and faculty in serving the poor and the marginalized sectors of Philippine society.

On the other hand, its notion of scholarship is by nature transformative while at the same time, within the standards of scholarship of excellence (CSWCD, 2015). By transformative, it means having a clear standpoint for the poor, marginalized and disempowered and most importantly, together with the people in poorer communities, taking actions towards positive change. As a measure of relevance, the question of "development for whom and for what?" (p.23) is always a central concern in every community-engagement scholarship that it pursues. From this perspective, the process is valued as equally important as the outcome:

> The process of societal change underscores a transformative and empowering process that takes place in partnership with the community. It involves the faculty and the staff in a mutually beneficial relationship with the community. Both the academics and the community are co-learners in the process of transformation, such that the experience is educational and liberating for both. Central in the change process is the community who are the main actors rather than the objects of change. (CSWCD, 2015:23-24, underscoring mine)

Moreover, this notion of transformative scholarship starts from the individual, extends to the community and, ultimately, impacts the larger society, effecting change not only at the level of the individual in a particular social context but also for the poor and marginalized in society based on social justice (CSWCD, 2015). Likewise, this form of scholarship interweaves with standards of excellence that entail rigor and reflect the core values and ethics of the CSWCD. These core values – transparency and accountability, commitment to human rights, equity of outcomes, commitment to solidarity and respect for diversity, and commitment to environment preservation and ecological sustainability – and the ethics – informed consent and confidentiality – are strictly observed in any community-engaged scholarship pursuits (CSWCD, 2015).

Despite differences in ideas among its departments and units, there is unity in terms of scholarship goals, values and ethics as well

as approaches (CSWCD Research Conference Proceedings, January 28, 2013 cited in CSWCD, 2015:32):

> In terms of goals, the college underscores the transformative intent of scholarship which leads to societal change and empowerment. Moreover, programs and consultancies outside the academe are geared towards knowledge production and dissemination. Our values and ethics ... include: a democratic process; centrality of experience; value struggles (personal is political; practicing what we preach); standpoint for the poor, marginalized and dis-empowered communities; and a nurturing praxis...espous[ing] interdisciplinary and integrative approaches grounded to theorizing, and aiming at both movement building and reflexivity.

In application of the above, its community-engaged scholarship activities may include (CSWCD: 2015):

> information and educational materials in various Philippine languages, public opinion pieces published in local newspapers, training materials of various kinds, documentation of community-based practices for the use of the communities themselves. (p.33)

Aside from the above-mentioned activities, the Field Instruction Program (FIP) of the Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS) is itself a form of community-engaged scholarship because it embodies all the features that constitute a transformative scholarship espoused by the CSWCD, and which is the subject of this paper.

Parameters of a Community-engaged Feminist Scholarship

Scholarship is a contentious concept debated in academic institutions and circles. Despite initiatives to expand its meaning based on Boyer's model (1991), notions of community-engaged scholarship still hinge on academic tenure and promotion. This paper posits that disciplines in the applied social sciences, such as the academic departments of the CSWCD, could formulate their own concepts and parameters that best suit their disciplinal nature and contexts. Initially, taking off from the CSWCD's notion of community-engaged scholarship, a community-engaged feminist scholarship has distinct features.

Feminist Scholarship. In a broader term, feminism is defined as:

a variety of interrelated frameworks used to observe, analyze, and interpret the complex ways in which the social reality of gender inequality is constructed, enforced and manifested from the largest institutional settings to the details of people's daily lives which includes feminist scholarship. (Ali, Coate and Goro, 2000; Barsky, 1992; Bryson, 2002; Johnson, 1995; Ritzer 2000; Segal, 1999; Zalewski 2000 cited in Ngwainmbi, 2004. p.94)

Such definition highlights the essence of scholarship in the theoretical and intellectual aspects of feminism. On the other hand, within the context of community-engaged undertakings, feminist scholarship is about the creation of knowledge and the acquisition of learning through the study and analysis of and interaction with people in communities. Generating knowledge is not for knowledge's sake alone, but for gaining experience in how a body of knowledge is generated and used to respond to the practical needs and strategic interests of women and other marginalized groups in communities.

Moreover, feminist scholarship acquires and develops knowledge through the observance and application of feminist principles, values and ethics in all its community engagement methods and processes – organizing, research, education, counselling, program development, and other activities. Feminist principles and values include the following: democratic/shared decision-making, valuation of women's knowledge and experiences, de/reconstructing power as shared leadership, making the invisible visible, and "personal is political." At the same time, the feminist ethics – confidentiality, informed consent and giving back what is taken from the community – closely guide researches, community education/trainings and other community engagements.

Transformative scholarship. As defined by the CSWCD (2015), its community-engagement scholarship is transformative. Aside from having a "clear stance on the theoretical tradition it seeks to apply" (p.21), it is also a scholarship that is integrative – unifying the three academic domains of teaching, research and extension. And most importantly, its knowledge outcomes lead to action and improvements: development of relevant classroom- and field-based curricula, more

responsive policies and programs that improve lives in communities, innovative and creative approaches that empower women and other marginalized groups – at the individual, organizational and community levels.

In addition, it subscribes to transformational politics that links personal and social issues and concerns. As such, its vision of change covers both personal as well as societal change, while its approaches and strategies serve as models for empowering women and other marginalized groups to make changes in their lives and in their communities (Kravetz, 1986).

Excellence-oriented scholarship. It draws inspiration from the CSWCD's brand of scholarship that "strives for academic excellence based on clear standards of rigor and accountability developed and refined through time" (CSWCD, 2015: 24). Specifically for community-engaged feminist scholarship, its relevance to women and marginalized groups in communities, is one of the most important measures of scholarship of excellence. At the same time, the value of accountability is another key measure. From a feminist standpoint, accountability plays a central concern in a community-engaged feminist scholarship which could be examined at various levels: accountability to women and all marginalized groups; accountability to the partnership between the DWDS and partner organizations; accountability of students and faculty to one another as well as to the DWDS and partner organizations.

Using the above parameters, this paper examines the features of the FIP as to whether it could be considered as a community-engaged feminist scholarship.

The Theory and Practice of the Field Instruction Program

The FIP in Theory. The Field Instruction Program (FIP) – often called the fieldwork program or practicum – is an integral component of the graduate course of the Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS). It was conceptualized as a core component of the graduate course to provide the students with venues for the integration of feminist theories and practice in community settings while working in partnership with women's and mixed organizations.

On the theory side, it was developed based on the belief that "women's studies need to be relevant to the realities of women, especially in poorer urban and rural settings". At the same time, it was designed for the students to have "venues to refine feminist praxis as they work and learn together with grassroots women, while enhancing their knowledge, skills and attitudes for personal and professional development or as advocates of grassroots women's issues" (DWDS Revised Field Instruction Program Manual 2006 cited in Barrameda, 2007, p.25).

Serving as the "practice" side of the graduate program, the FIP enables both the faculty and the students to link classroom learning to field experiences while creating impact on the lives of women and other marginalized groups in the communities. Moreover, the "classroom-fieldwork practice link" experience provided to the students is what sets the DWDS graduate program apart from other women studies programs offered in the country. On the part of the students, the "theory-informs-practice, practice-informs-theory" process provides them with thorough and "cyclical" learning experiences (Barrameda, 2007).

The FIP consists of two courses: Women and Development 280 (WD 280) which is required for students under the thesis track, while students under the comprehensive examination track are required to take both the WD 280 and 281 courses.

The FIP has three components that include: (1) a classroom-based field orientation about the academic requirements, agency and community placements; (2) actual fieldwork; (3) mid-and end-term sharing sessions of field experiences attended by the agency and faculty supervisors, representatives of community women's organizations and other faculty members of the DWDS. The FIP is managed by a Faculty Coordinator, while field activities of students are mutually supervised by the agency and faculty supervisors.

The FIP in Practice. In its initial implementation, the FIP established linkages and partnerships with various women's organizations and women NGOs, especially those coming from the women's movements, where students were involved in various areas of development work: education and training, research, documentation, organizing, counselling and group therapy work, advocacy work, and more.

In 1997, the need to institutionalize these partnerships with women's organizations and NGOs was seen in order to ensure continuity of partnership, to facilitate smoother coordination, and to create better impact. Given these thrusts, institutional partners were identified and pursued based on the following criteria: (1) pro-women standpoint; (2) diversity in areas of concern; (3) experience in feminist development work; (4) with capacity to supervise students in the field; (5) smooth coordination and placement in past FIP partnership; and, (6) expressed interest in institutional partnership with the FIP (DWDS Revised Manual, 2006 cited in Barrameda, 2007).

Over the years, the DWDS has established partnership with four institutional partners: the Center for Women's Resources (CWR), a resource center that provides research support to rural and urban grassroots women's organizations; PaTaMaBa, a nationwide federation of home-based workers; LIKHAAN Center for Women's Health, a non-government organization that provides health education, community organizing and reproductive health services to urban and rural poor women; and MAKALAYA, a women's organization composed of women members of trade unions that provides education and information on gender issues in the workplace.

Moreover, the students enrolled in the FIP were involved in a wide array of issues: violence against women (VAW), reproductive health, adolescent sexuality, globalization, water privatization, migration, contractualization of women, conflict mediation, demolition, land eviction, environment, informalization of women's work, enterprise development, LGBT+, lack of social services and social protection, food security, and safety and security – issues that many of the students went on to embrace as their own personal advocacies even after finishing their graduate studies (FIP Assessment Reports, 2010; 2016).

Problems in the Field. Based on the student and faculty assessments, the following were noted as problems in the field (DWDS Field Assessment Reports (2008; 2016):

- *Limited fieldwork placements*. Openings for students' fieldwork assignments were lacking. In response, the DWDS expanded its engagement with other organizations, some on a short-term basis only. Over the years,

partnership has been extended to grassroots women's organizations, mixed NGOs, feminist organizations, issue-based networks, regional formations, and lately, with local government units and academic-based programs or units within the University. Through the FIP, the students are exposed to and involved in various areas of development work – women organizing, participatory research, gender awareness and consciousness-raising, community training and education, casework and peer counselling, social enterprises, gender mainstreaming in local government units, campaigns and advocacy work, setting up women's desks, and institutional assistance and organizational development.

- *Differing views of students and partner agencies.* Prior to fieldwork, the FIP requires that the students, the faculty and agency supervisors level off on areas of difference so that possible differences in analyses, frameworks, methods of work, and understanding of requirements are threshed out and agreements are firmed up in a memorandum of understanding (MOU). In addition, assessments are conducted with the agency supervisor and a copy of the students' report is required to be approved by the agency prior to the mid- and end-term sharing sessions.

- *Length of the FIP.* Students have differing views about the 250-hour fieldwork requirement. Some find it too long while others find it too short. Since most of the students have full-time professional work, many have difficulty fulfilling this requirement. In response, the faculty supervisors are tasked to ensure that the work committed to the agencies is realistic and achievable within a one-semester time frame; while those who wish to extend their engagements with their respective agencies are advised to work with the agencies on a personal basis outside the requirements of the FIP.

- *Resource support for students.* Students assigned to grassroots women's organizations would often contribute financial resources for community activities due to the latter's limited resources. Such actions are discouraged by the FIP, however, and instead, students are encouraged to mobilize and capacitate organizations for fund-raising (e.g., garage sales, cash and in-kind solicitations, dance contests, etc.), to establish referral systems (e.g., linking up with the Department of Agriculture for training on urban gardening and seed dispersal, access to livelihood trainings from private and government organizations) and to facilitate co-sponsorship of these organizations' activities, such as community for a, with government and private organizations.

Challenges, Lessons Learned and Good Practices. The FIP offers many significant opportunities for students' learning, for community-engaged scholarship activities for faculty members, and for the capability-building of grassroots women's organizations. However, refinement is still needed to address the following concerns: (1) installing support mechanisms for the continuity of the joint development programs/projects developed in the field, (2) optimizing the fieldwork assignments of foreign students to make the best out of their FIP experiences and finding means to transcend language barriers in working with community women, and (3) exploring mechanisms for resource generation to fund field expenses of needy students.

On the other hand, the following lessons and good practices could be drawn out from the FIP experience: (1) the FIP provides avenues for students' personal growth and development; (2) it actualizes a hand-holding relationship with community women's organizations and NGOs; and (3) lessons culled from the field inform curricular development and enhancement.

For the students, the FIP not only provided them a venue for applying knowledge and skills learned in the classroom but, more so, for validating classroom-based theories. The field assignments allowed them to experience working in a collective – with other team members and the community women. The complex realities in the

field enabled them to better understand the realities of poor women -- eventually influencing them and developing their commitment to act on such issues and to work for the betterment of poor women even beyond their graduation.

For partner-agencies and community women's organizations, they experienced feminist practices and ethics as modelled by the students. The principles of participation, collective and consultative processes, the ethics of confidentiality as opposed to being extractive, as well as the feminist tools and processes, taught by the students have influenced these organizations, as reflected in the latter's planning, methods of work and programs. Feedback from some partner organizations included these comments:

> "The students helped us clarify what feminist counselling is. Confidentiality is an important thing taught to us by the students." (Assessment with staff of the Family and Community Healing Center, 2015).

> "Through the students, we were able to integrate gender in our regular planning and their researches helped us in our advocacy for affordable water as well as in the assessment of our work (Assessment with members of PaTaMaBa-Angono, 2015).

At the same time, these partner organizations have influenced the students' analyses of the former's issues and strategies, while the rich experiences of the community women provided inputs to validate the students' theories learned in the classroom. In the process, the students learned from them and affirmed that experiential knowledge of women is legitimate knowledge. In situations of differences, the students, the agency and faculty supervisors and the grassroots women engaged in dialogues to level off on concerns or issues. -- thus allowing the FIP to become a hand-holding partnership among equals.

On the part of the DWDS, the FIP serves to inform curricular content. Supervising students in the field enabled faculty supervisors to assess the students' capacities learned from the classrooms; recognize the gaps in students' knowledge, attitudes and skills in relation to the needs in the fieldwork communities; and identify burning issues confronting communities. These students' gaps and community needs then informed curricular development and review. For instance, the

gap observed in the students' handling of community trainings has led the DWDS to develop feminist pedagogy as an elective course. On the other hand, the issues of the LGBTs (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders) in communities have enabled the DWDS to consider integrating these concerns in all classroom-based courses.

The FIP as a Community-engaged Feminist Scholarship

The FIP of the DWDS espouses the brand of community-engaged scholarship of UP-CSWCD that is transformative and excellence-oriented but nuanced by the disciplinal character of the Department – feminist in perspectives, methods and processes – in which feminist principles, values and ethics are interwoven in the practice and methods of work of both the students and the faculty in fieldwork settings.

The FIP as a Transformative Scholarship. In practice, the FIP moves beyond being an academic requirement but becomes an instrument for transformation for all the stakeholders involved. At the personal level, the stark social reality in the field enabled students to see its connection to the larger societal realities, the lives of grassroots women as mediated by class, gender, age and other inequalities somehow mirroring their own conditions. The constant interactions of women and students through an action-reflection process resulted to heightened students' political consciousness and commitment to change. Such transformation is expressed in these students' reflections:

> "It dawned on us that the realities and complexities, enveloped within women's lives in the community and in the larger society, are connected with our own issues as well. We came to terms with ourselves… and the full realization that we are bounded by the related experiences of systemic oppression and exploitation." (de Guzman & Mendoza, 2005)

> "This action research is not just a simple course requirement to fulfill…but more so, on a personal level, I was enriched by the quality of interactions with ordinary women yet exceptional with the way they live their everyday lives in struggle with power, with poverty…with issues of violence…[their lives] have drawn me the depths and nuances that informed me how I should see them and their struggles and how I should relate with them." (Mercado, 2005)

"Since I had witnessed the hardships of most families...like being able to eat only once a day, I can honestly say it changed me. I now feel I have the obligation not to be wasteful, not to buy things that I do not need, or even as simple as not wasting food." (Daep, 2007)

At the institutional level, the FIP provides a mechanism for improving systems as well as changing policies. Lessons drawn from the FIP were utilized by the DWDS in improving FIP policies and curricular content. On the other hand, the research studies of the students became evidence-based information for the campaigns and advocacies of partner agencies and women's organizations. For instance, the research done on port and water privatization in Tondo resulted in a sustained campaign by people's organizations on these issues; the research on coal dumping, also in Tondo, mobilized the community to stage a continuous campaign that led to the closure of the coal plant; the research on the Gender and Development (GAD) budget utilization in Barangay UP Campus resulted in compliance of the LGU to allocate 5% to GAD concerns; and, the research on water privatization in Angono enabled women to claim their right to clean water and through dialogue with the local government, the community was provided with adequate and affordable potable water.

At the community level, the service learning provided by both the faculty supervisors and the students had helped to heighten community awareness and capacitate grassroots women and their communities to take action, to claim their rights, and to be advocates for social justice as shown in the above examples.

The FIP as a Feminist Scholarship. Practicing feminist principles, values and ethics is the cornerstone of the FIP as a form of community-engaged scholarship. Shared decision-making, valuation of women's knowledge and experiences, de/reconstructing power, "making the invisible visible," and "personal is political" are some of the feminist principles and values put into practice by both the faculty and the students while in the communities.

Shared decision-making in community undertakings enabled those concerned – the DWDS and agency partners, the faculty and the students, the students and the grassroots women – to experience democracy at the micro level. Inviting the women as resource persons

in fora and WD classes did not only acknowledge the value of their knowledge and experiences but legitimatized grassroots women's knowledge as well. Enabling them to name and articulate their issues and experiences in public and from their own perspective is, in a way, "making the invisible visible."

Moreover, through the FIP practice, power as hierarchy is deconstructed and reconstructed. Hierarchy and notions of divides are debunked and negated as students learn to work as teams and grassroots women work in committees in their respective organizations. Consensus-building flourishes as both students and the women work within horizontal structures of leadership and organizational processes.

The "personal is political" is a principle immensely valued by students in their transition from being students to becoming feminists and activists. This is manifested in the field as students assist women to understand that their personal issues and problems are not their own doing (victim-blaming) but rather related to inequalities in all domains of life. Likewise, as students impart their knowledge and skills to grassroots women as personal commitments to social change, it then becomes a political act as it empowers and changes lives, not only for the grassroots women but for the students as well, as captured in this student's insight:

> "UP students have often endearing relations with the non-academic personnel in campus: there is *Tatay*, the regular janitor, whose comforting smile one can always count on to break the early morning rush to classes; there is *Kuya,* the guard and *Manong*, the gardener. There is *Ate,* who mops the ladies room; *Mommy,* who is always generous with extra rice in the canteen. We have our favorite turon and fishballs, too. They are and will remain – part and parcel of our fondest memories of university life. Although, come to think of it, we never get to know who they are or what their lives are outside the corridors of our school. How many among our favorite *Ates* and *Mommies*, I wonder, had also returned after dark to domestic hell? How many among our cherished campus *Manongs* and *Kuyas* were wife beaters and abusers in private? Has the UP community done enough to stop the violence and abuse? Have I? This field experience, however, has been an eye-opener in more ways than one. It has been an inspiring journey as well.

I am humbled by the women's courage and fierce dignity in the face of violence and abuse. Fieldwork – particularly of the feminist kind – in the non-academic underbelly of the university, can be a very disquieting experience." (Feria, 2012)

Moreover, informed consent, confidentiality and giving back are some of the ethics observed in relating and interacting with grassroots women. Particularly in research studies drawn from the field, ethics related to informed consent and confidentiality are given utmost importance. In addition, both the students and the faculty are aware of not being extractive of information but have to give back the benefits of these studies to the communities through actions – referrals, linking them to concerned institutions, barangay resolutions, etc. And most importantly, copies of researches, resource materials and integrated papers for the grassroots women's organizations are translated into Filipino to be more useful to them.

The FIP as an Excellence-Oriented Scholarship. The FIP reflects the disciplinal character of Women and Development Studies as an applied social science. As such, it would be a disservice to the discipline if it were to be measured using the logico-positivist parameters – objective, value-neutral, predictable and generalizable – and/or by people who are not familiar with its disciplinal character. It is fair that disciplines like Women and Development Studies use their own parameters to fully give justice to their disciplinal character. Relevance and accountability are what set it apart from disciplines with other parameters.

The relevance of the FIP is determined by the extent to which it responds to the needs and issues of grassroots women, the LGBTs and other marginalized sectors. The knowledge products and other outputs generated by the FIP – innovative strategies in addressing VAW, capacity-building strategies, researches on various women's issues with policy implications, revitalization and re-orientation of traditional community organizations (e.g., cooperatives, LGBT and women's organizations) – eventually change lives. The relevance of its outputs and knowledge products also contributes in advancing the goals of building women's and social movements. All these FIP outputs count more significantly as a form of scholarship.

Moreover, the FIP continues to be relevant and responsive to changing context. In its current community engagements, the FIP has developed innovations in response to pressing needs of the communities. Some key examples worth noting include: (1) the conceptualization of the eatUP program, a FIP project which is still at the developmental stage that aims to address food insecurity of UP students through the establishment of a cafeteria where needy students can access free meals without stigmatizing them; and (2) the refocusing of an organizing initiative in Barangay UP Campus from consolidation of a women's organization to forging alliances among women's organizations to respond to the safety and security concerns in the barangay, particularly, the rise of extra-judicial killings (EJK). Together with the community women, two FIP students conducted a participatory safety and security audit in the community with the aim of drafting a barangay resolution to address issues of safety and security. Most importantly, the audit shed light on the issue of EJK, leading these women's organizations to agree to get involved and not leave security concerns to police operations, but to take these in the hands and control of the community, especially when the government's approach endangers the lives of innocent people.

Accountability is another measure of scholarship for the FIP. First and foremost, the FIP is accountable to those it professes to serve – grassroots women, LGBTs and other marginalized sectors. At the same time, it is accountable for the safety, security and well-being of the students in the field. Ultimately, accountability is best operationalized in how the FIP practices its feminist values, ethics and standards in the field: women's organizations and partner agencies are well-informed of all FIP undertakings; the safety, security and well-being of all – grassroots women, students, partners and faculty – are strictly guarded; and all knowledge products and outputs are validated by the grassroots women and the benefits are given back to them. Experiencing and adhering to such rigorous processes of accountability is scholarship in itself.

Moreover, the FIP as a scholarship observes rigor and excellence. Before its knowledge products – researches, policy papers and resource manuals – are released for dissemination and popularization, these undergo a process of scrutiny involving validation and critiques by the grassroots women, the partner-agencies, the students, and colleagues at the DWDS. The students, in particular, have generated knowledge

products, research papers and other outcomes at par with those of other students and faculty, as evidenced by a number of these researches being presented in women's fora and conferences, appearing as articles in journals and other publications, and receiving awards for best fieldwork papers. Similarly, the researches of the faculty are not only disseminated in conferences and journals but, more importantly, have been utilized by the Department as references for WD courses as a means of indigenizing references. Further, training manuals, policy papers and other outputs from the FIP are used by women's groups for advocacy and for advancing the goals of the women's and other social movements.

A Concluding Note

The DWDS FIP is a community-engaged feminist scholarship because it embodies all the parameters of scholarship as defined by the CSWCD in general and the DWDS in particular – transformative, feminist and excellence-oriented. First, it is a scholarship that is transformative in intent – empowerment of marginalized sectors for societal transformation. It is a transformative scholarship that benefits poor women, the LGBTs and other marginalized sectors, while it advances the mandates of the University and the CSWCD as institutions of public service. Second, it is a scholarship that is feminist in practice and processes: applies feminist principles, values and ethics to practice in community settings; works with grassroots women, the LGBTs and other marginalized sectors as equals; builds non-hierarchical community structures that practice lateral leadership; and challenges hierarchies and dichotomies in whatever forms and disguises. And third, its outputs and knowledge products produced by both faculty and students mirror a scholarship of excellence that passed through the rigor and scrutiny of the grassroots women, the partner-agencies and colleagues in the academe, while its analytical lens is grounded on theories and from the experiences of the faculty and students in their involvements in women's and other social movements.

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