

“Rise and Sink?”

Rethinking Urbanization through Perspectives from Small Urban Islands in Getafe, Bohol

Jawjaw G. Losenada



Urban Studies Program

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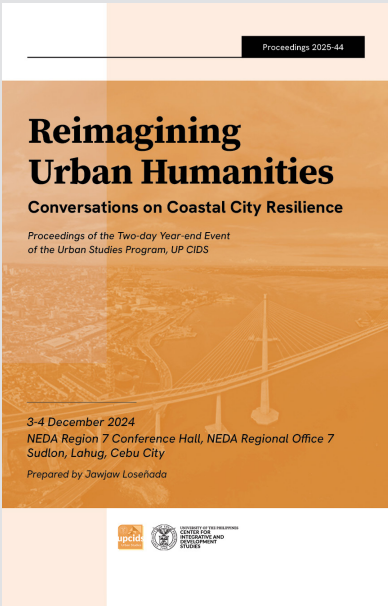
“A portion of Nasingin Island where mixed structures can be seen awash in seawater, sometimes reaching almost knee-deep level during high tide periods.”

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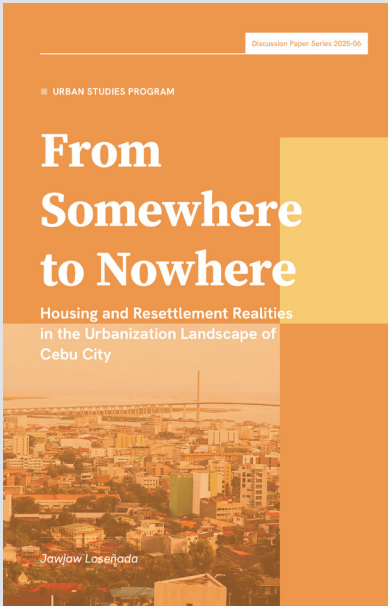
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The cover features a warm orange and white color scheme. At the top right, a black box contains the text 'Proceedings 2025-44'. The main title 'Reimagining Urban Humanities' is in a large, bold, black font, with the subtitle 'Conversations on Coastal City Resilience' below it. Further down, it states 'Proceedings of the Two-day Year-end Event of the Urban Studies Program, UP CIDS'. The date '3-4 December 2024' and the location 'NEDA Region 7 Conference Hall, NEDA Regional Office 7 Sudlon, Lahug, Cebu City' are listed. At the bottom, it says 'Prepared by Jawjaw Losejada'. Logos for 'upcid' and the 'UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES CENTER FOR URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES' are at the bottom left. The background image shows a coastal cityscape with a bridge.

PROCEEDINGS

Reimagining Urban Humanities: Conversations on Coastal City Resilience



The cover has a solid orange background with a white box at the top right containing 'Discussion Paper Series 2025-06'. Below this, it says 'URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM'. The title 'From Somewhere to Nowhere' is in a large, white, sans-serif font. The subtitle 'Housing and Resettlement Realities in the Urbanization Landscape of Cebu City' is in a smaller white font. The author's name 'Jawjaw Losejada' is at the bottom left. The background image shows a dense urban landscape with a bridge.

DISCUSSION PAPER

From Somewhere to Nowhere: Housing and Resettlement Realities in the Urbanization Landscape of Cebu City

“Rise and Sink?”

Rethinking Urbanization through Perspectives from Small Urban Islands in Getafe, Bohol

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Key Takeaways

- Urbanization has become more than just a "development trend" and has transformed to being a consequence of overconcentration and saturation of the metro, resulting to an overspill of urbanization towards neighboring communities and islands beyond the metropolitan.
- Considerable number of urbanization frameworks fail to respond to the situations of these small neighboring islands given their core-centric and Western design, neglecting social inequalities that disadvantage smaller communities, resulting to a haphazard labelling of these communities as when in the first place, the frameworks do not necessarily fit the context of these peripheral areas.
- The misappropriation and misapplication of these core-centric frameworks lead to a structural lack of provided social services to these peripheral areas, tensions among involved stakeholders, and gradual environmental degradation as seen in continuing land subsidence, sea water-level rise, and impacting surrounding environments, among others.
- The case of Nasingin and Banakon islands in Getafe, Bohol, drawn from key informant interviews and focus group discussions reveal an existing discord between technocratic urbanization and community-drawn knowledge, as seen in the complexities of sustaining social services, resources, and livelihood. They also reveal how urbanization exists as a consequence of saturated metropolitan areas—emphasizing how the urbanization in the metro directly affects the "consequential urbanization" of surrounding communities.
- Recommendations include inclusive participation and dialogue between affected stakeholders through creation of a robust and sustainable overseeing collaborative Body that ensures sustainable support to communities in peripheral islands reviewing existing protected area agreements, and as well as a constructive review of existing policies covering frameworks of urbanization that are being implemented in these communities.

Introduction

The concept of urbanization has been more spatial than procedural, wherein urbanized spaces are located within the confines of large metropolitan areas, often cities with rapidly developing economies. Due to this, existing frameworks on what and how sustainable urban development is have been core-centric and develop their prospects on the idea of mainland urban spaces (Huang, 2021; De Falco et al., 2019). However, due to the rapid influx in these mainland urban spaces, as contributed by increased population density, local migration, available spaces for development tends to be limited, and while these urban spaces have adopted vertical development and reclamation initiatives to maximize potential space, the demand tends to outweigh available areas and resources (Vindigni et al., 2021). This, combined with the misappropriation and haphazard implementation of various urban planning frameworks due to contesting political motives and visions or the miscalculation of risks and setbacks, metropolitan areas now face a series of disasters and issues, such as intense flooding, seismic risks, and overpopulation, among others– all brought about by poor urban planning in the metro.

However, recent years have shown that urbanization now tends to escape the boundaries of metropolitan areas, and are now seen in neighboring small communities, particularly in islands that are located in proximity to these highly urbanized spaces. Island urbanization tends to happen wherein smaller island communities, though considered rural, has now been “urbanized” due to the influx of population, and sometimes is a result of the spillovers from core metropolitan spaces (Halim, 2022) , such that due to the lack of available livable and productive space in these core areas, neighboring islands tend to receive what cannot be contained or situated within these developed spaces, especially that while islands have their respective jurisdictions and political boundaries, transactions and economic work tend to go beyond borders. And while some may consider this island urbanization to be a sign of progress, in many cases, the phenomenon of island urbanization raises several concerns particularly on matters such as sustainability, environmental co-existence, and failures in urban planning in core spaces (Afzal et al., 2022). Additionally, because these areas that are subjected to island urbanization are not necessarily mainland areas, such that they are isolated land masses that upon superficial examination, may not necessarily be fit areas for settlements, these areas face considerable risks such as subsidence, stronger effects of typhoons, and the lack of mainstream delivery of essential social services.

This phenomenon contributes to the trend of further core-periphery divide wherein different territorialities adopt either role in the dynamic, where some areas are considered as parts of the core— areas which economic and development progress are often centered at, and the peripheries— areas outside of the core that are not necessarily provided much input, but equally, or in many cases, bear the consequences more of the development that occurs in the core (Ayhan and Wna, 2025; McDowell, 2004). This dynamic is then reinforced by enabling conditions, such as partnerships composed of unequal power structures, creating a false roadmap towards the transformation of the peripheries to future core islands.

The effects of this dominant urban system (core-periphery divide) show in the form of misappropriated framework implementation that are oftentimes highly technical and technocratic— frameworks that were created with the core as case studies and the assumption that what applies to core areas can also be transposed to the peripheries with necessary adjustments (Trundle & Organo, 2022). However, this approach now creates a discord between policy and on-ground application such that initiatives on urbanization, especially vis-a-vis risk mitigation and the provision of social services, come short in the context of the peripheries (Butcher-Gollach, 2018; Burbach et al., 2016). This then creates a ripple effect which leads to further tensions wherein local knowledge that has managed through time is neglected and is considered secondary to technical knowledge—affecting the reception of residents within these peripheral islands.

This is particularly true in several islands in the province of Bohol, specifically Banakon and Nasingin, two densely populated small island communities, located proximate to the cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu, and the mainland area of the municipality of Getafe. While much of existing literature on sustainable urban development have focused on core urban spaces, lesser is known on the on-ground realities that neighboring smaller island communities experience. With growing pressures brought about by increased environmental and ecological risks affecting these areas, this paper aims to understand and help reshift conversations on urbanization and development, not in the goal of exploiting the potentialities of these islands, but to rethink and revisit existing general frameworks of sustainable development vis-a-vis urbanization.

Nasingin and Banakon Islands

The islands of Nasingin and Banakon are located in the municipality of Getafe, Bohol, proximate to the Danajon bank, which is considered as the sole

double barrier reef in the Philippines, and one out of the six, globally. The island of Nasingin spans 1.16 km housing approximately 2,105 individuals, while the island Banacon measures 11.01 hectares of dry populated land with a population of 1,494, deeming both islands as densely populated for its size (Armada et al., 2009; Lowry et al., 2009). Due to their proximity to the Danajon bank, the primary source of livelihood for the residents of both islands is fishing, however, they also endeavor in trading dried fish and eco-tourism, particularly in island hopping as part of various tour packages often offered by neighboring islands, such as the island of Lapu-Lapu City.

From the accounts of the residents in both islands, the earliest settlements date back to the early 60s for the island of Nasingin, wherein the earliest settlements relocated from the nearby island of Cordova, Cebu, and from then, the population has increased reaching its current number. On the other hand, the island of Banacon dates further way back according to its residence. On both islands, concrete infrastructure such as houses, basketball courts, and elementary schools are present, with many having second floors to adapt to the more frequent sea-level rise experienced by both islands annually. Currently, the population of both islands is a combination of residents who grew up there and residents who transferred to either of the islands and are currently working in the province of Cebu and the mainland part of the municipality of Getafe. What separates both islands from other small islands is their geographical nature, wherein both are more considered as island strips that were not necessarily designed to serve as foundation ground for heavy infrastructure and a growing population, as seen in the continuing rise of seawater level in both islands.

The on-ground realities of both islands raise several concerns that reflect the lack of sustainable urban planning and development for both islands, particularly on three (3) aspects: (1) sanitation and solid waste management, (2) availability of essential resources and social services, and (3) adaptability and integration in disaster risk management, especially given its vulnerable nature vis-a-vis disasters.

1. Sanitation and Waste Management

One of the pivotal issues faced by both islands is the issue on sanitation and proper waste management, where it has been observed that there is a lack of sustainable waste collection and disposal facilities in these islands, such that during the hours where sea level rises up to knee-height, several pieces of garbage (food packs, personal utilities, and baby diapers) can

be seen floating along the established roads in the islands. Additionally, while the pieces of garbage float, kids can be seen swimming and residents walking without proper feet equipment or protection. When asked on how they systematize waste management in the islands, the key informants have mentioned that:

"si ex kapitan, naghimo siyag tangke, ug ang chief tanon ang mu kolekta sa mga basura" (The ex-captain created a tank, and they would be the one to collect the garbage)

"naa sad mi dumping site, napuno na pud siya, unya sa lain napuno na pud. Duha ra ka tuig, isa ka purok maghimo na sad mi. Pag bagyong Odette, ang duha kay naguba" (We have a dumping site, but it was already full, and the other dumping site was also full. In just a span of two years, we have created another dumping site in another *purok* [small community]. But during Typhoon Odette, two of those dumping sites were destroyed.)

"maghimo mig sudlanan sa basura, among hallow block-on, magasto gyud dako. Magsigig hallow block, magsigig puno" (We use hollow blocks to contain the garbage, however the cost of making these are quite high, because whenever you add more hollow blocks, the amount of garbage also increases)

In the case of Banacon island, residents have noted that they have septic tanks and dumping sites as well, however they emphasized that the accumulated garbage are not collected, so they have improvised instead, to use the collected garbage to serve as foundation for the island's extension:

"Naa ray septic tank, sa basura naa sad mi dumping site. Dili na sila kuhaon. Ang among basura, amo sad gihimong reclamation, kay sa pagtan aw nako kay murag masudako pa tong lugar namo didto ba. Ig ka level na tong tana, kay human na man sad mi magbutang ug bonbon, ig human... himoon namong lugar sa eskwelahan kay kinahanglan na kanang mga grade 7. Ug puhon mapuno na to, pwede na to namog tukuran"

(We have septic tanks and dumping sites as well, but the garbage is not taken away after collection. Instead, we use them as reclamation which can help expand the island. Once everything is already levelled, we plan to build a school there that can accommodate Grade 7 [Junior High School], once the area has been filled already.)

While the communities have made efforts in order to systematize garbage collection and management, issues on sanitation and most importantly sustainability remain to be addressed. For instance, because there is no formal mechanism in place to facilitate waste collection, sanitation issues, particularly, in dealing with solid waste management is a major concern. Without proper waste facilities, floating garbage and potential disease-possessing bacteria can affect the health of the residents, of whom a considerable portion are young adults and kids. Furthermore, without proper waste facilities for both islands, the health of the island, particularly its water might be compromised.

2. Availability of Sustainable Social Services

Aside from the concern on sanitation and waste management, and in connection with it, is the concern on the availability of sustainable social services such as healthcare facilities, security, and water and electricity. Firstly, both islands see a considerable lack of equipped healthcare facilities that can cater to the health needs of the residents of both islands. When asked about the most common sickness and condition in both islands, residents have highlighted cases of arthritis and tuberculosis, among others. Additionally, when asked on the availability of clinics and healthcare facilities, the residents have noted that:

"Sa isa ka month ika usa, naay midwife. Mag immunize sa mga bata."
(Once every month, there is a midwife that visits and immunizes the kids.)

"dal-on pa namo sa Getafe ig manganak. Kanang muari nga midwife kay check up, magamit sa mga buntis, pero dili diri manganak. Naa sad doctor panagsa, gareseta reseta ra sad." (If they are in labor, we have to bring them to Getafe [mainland], because the midwife that visits here is only for check-ups which can be used by pregnant women, but they don't do labor deliveries. There is also a doctor sometimes, but only to do prescriptions.)

The lack of proper healthcare facilities in both islands raises concerns on the sustainability of health for the residents, wherein crucial health equipment tend to be situated far from their proximity and the travel to the mainland takes time, especially under unfavorable weather conditions, such as high waves or windy days. Moreover, the matter on transporting the residents to the mainland has some issues, as well, due to the limited number of emergency boats, and the personal boats owned by the

residents rarely get accounted for when help from the local unit is being discussed, such was mentioned when the residents were asked whether or not the maintenance of their boats are subsidized or at least provided partial financial assistance, to which they responded that the maintenance is purely costed out from their personal finances.

Aside from the issue of healthcare facilities in both islands, there is also the matter of sustainable resources, particularly in terms of drinking water and electricity. When asked about where they get drinkable water, the residents have mentioned that they have various sources of water:

"ang mineral water, handayan gikuha, atabay." (The mineral water is sourced from nearby wells"

However, such sources of water are not necessarily located within the islands, but are sourced from nearby islands and are bought for varying amounts per container or liter:

"tag beyte (20 pesos) ang container diri ma'am sa atabay, and imnunon kay kinse (15 pesos) ra." (Per container is sold for 20 pesos, while the drinking water is sold for 15 pesos)

"Ang sistema ana sir kay negosyo gyud na nila, kanang sa atbang ba, upat na sila nga business man, everyday gyud na, kay ang gamit nila nindot man pang lung-ag. Pero sa pagkakaran kay naa namiy drinking water, i-filter na, iligo na lang gyud na. Kana gyud dira sila kay 15 gyud pero libre hatod, dala rag sudlanan, nya sila na maglimpyo." (It's business around here. Across the island, there are four businessmen. For now, we have drinking water that is filtered. They sell it for 15 pesos but the delivery is free, so you just have to bring the container and they will clean it for you.)

"ipende gyud sa negosyante. Ang kanang giinom namo karon adto sa lungsod sa Getafe. Daghan man sad negosyante diri, magpalit ug 20php, amo sad baligyaon ug 40-45php. Naa sad miy atabay diri sa amoa pero panghugas ra gyud kay parat." (That depends on the entrepreneur. We get our drinking water from the mainland [Getafe]. There are actually a lot of sellers here who sell water for 20 pesos, while others sell it for 40-45 pesos. We also have wells here, however it is mainly used for washing because the water is salty.)

One key concern that needs to be addressed here is on the arbitrary pricing of drinking water for the residents, wherein as they have mentioned, the price to which drinking water is being sold to depends on the seller, which could actually pose certain risks especially when certain circumstances would come resulting to a scarcity of drinking water from the nearby island which would then potentially tip the scales in terms of how much drinking water is being sold in for both islands.

Similar to their situation with regards to water, their source of electricity remains unstable. When asked how and where they source their electricity from, the residents have mentioned that:

"kuan ra diri amoa, solar. Peor naay coming na BOHECO, na aprobaha na na ni gov. Karon solar pa, ug generator." (We have solar [panels] here, but BOHECO [local energy provider] is coming which was recently approved by the governor. For now, we utilize solar energy and generator sets.)

"naay uban katong light of hope, nangahatag ug solar, mao na na 300 ang monthly, naa sad 500 ang monthly. Ang light of hope kay NGO na siya." (Others were provided by the Light of Hope [NGO], where they pay either Php 300.00 or Php 500.00 monthly.)

Electricity is a crucial resource needed by both islands due to their dense population, as well as for the maintenance of available social services such as elementary schools, communal spaces, and clinics. With the absence of an alternative, continuous, and island-based energy source, residents have to constantly shell out from their personal pockets to sustain energy for their households, as well as their livelihood— this now is another concern especially given how their livelihoods usually just makes ends meet, allowing little to no room for them to shell out bigger finances.

3. Adaptability Mechanisms in Disaster Risk Management

Lastly, it is important to understand how both small island communities respond to recurring patterns of disaster and climate-related concerns, particularly in terms of responding to rising sea-level.

When interviewed, the residents have mentioned that over the past few years, they observed that the level of sea water continues to rise, up to a point where on some months of the year, the sea water level rises and submerges

their small docking area for pump boats and other sea transportation vessels, reaching up to knee or above-the-knee level. In order to adapt and respond to this situation, residents have improvised the construction of their respective households by creating second floors where they move and evacuate to when seawater rises, or when strong typhoons hit such as the supertyphoon Odette back in 2021, where some residents utilized the second floors of some households as temporary evacuation shelters.

The realities seen and experienced in both islands pave the way for several and equally pressing issues to arise. Most importantly, the on-ground realities seen by both islands reveal the necessity of revisiting current frameworks of urbanization and development—one that shifts from a core-focus in metropolitan areas, towards a procedural one that sees common aspects of urbanized spaces such as population density and construction landscapes. In other words, frameworks of urbanization must shift towards solely focusing on cities and developed areas, and consider small island communities that are gradually being populated on a daily basis.

Frameworks and visions of urbanization that limit itself within the confines of the city or the metro continue to fall short in multiple areas. For one, these frameworks and visions are often situated in short-term bases depending on political terms, which means that administrative shifts could also alter the course of how urbanization is being carried out in a given area. This also underscores the lack of an integrated body that focuses on sustainable urban development that goes beyond term limits and continues despite several administrative shifts. When these visions and frameworks tend to be situated on short-term bases, communities that are greatly vulnerable are placed to further vulnerable positions. The scale of these effects are often ballooned in the context of small island communities experiencing island urbanization, because unlike the cities and metropolitan areas that often have room for revisions in terms of space when visions shift, small island communities do not necessarily have that privilege. Urbanization in small island communities needs to be calculated, especially given existing damage and conditions— a concern that is negatively exacerbated by frameworks and visions that are core-centric and short-term.

Secondly, these frameworks and perhaps plans that are core-centric often neglect physical conditions of these detached island communities from the mainland, and only consider the physical traits and nature of the city core. What is dangerous here is that what is often applied in core areas are also applied to these remote areas, but such fails to consider the quality of the soil

and its potential sustainability given that often, the ground on which these small island communities reside in dense populations are often softer and more fragile than the mainland. With this in mind, vertical infrastructure would not necessarily be too feasible given that the weight of vertical construction might lead to gradual land subsidence, causing the islands to further sink from their already sinking situation. Additionally, the creation and sustenance of available resources cannot be copied exactly from the city core to these islands given that the proximity of these islands to the mainland varies and the transportation to and fro can also be varying. This discussion is pivotal given how dense the two island communities are which necessitate the availability of crucial social services such as consumable resources such as water and units that cater to healthcare and education, as well.

Thirdly, the core-centric frameworks and visions have already exhibited poor urban planning, especially in the Philippines, wherein spaces are unequally shared between development and leisure and public green spaces. This is multiplied ten-foldth in the context of small urban island communities such as Banacon and Nasingin, wherein because they are not necessarily considered as urban spaces, even despite their dense population and construction landscape, planning tends to shift and spontaneous depending on arising needs. The problem with this kind of thrust is that available land spaces would not be strategic, causing long-term problems such as sinking parts in the long run. Furthermore, the absence of appropriate space planning within these small urban island spaces tend to exclude proper adaptability of perceived risks and vulnerabilities, whereas responses to these occupy second prioritization after that of arising to meet pressing needs.

But most importantly, the core-centric frameworks of urbanization in the metro and the on-ground realities of both small island communities reveal a severe problem in the development landscape of the Philippines: that is, due to the overwhelming development of metropolitan areas, neighboring communities carry the spillover in varying degrees, either directly or indirectly. These overspills do not necessarily take the form of running out of space due to absence of space, but can also include running out of space due to economic inequalities in core urban areas. This is supported by the manifestation of some of the islands' residents saying that some of the members of the communities often work in the province of Cebu who go home from time to time. Because urbanized spaces in the metro fail to account for the real socio-economic realities of the people working there, nearby small island communities swoop in to bear the burden. Additionally, the spillovers also take the form of physical changes in the metro, wherein because there is relative but continuous

reclamation projects in nearby highly urbanized cities and developing municipalities, displaced water often recede to these islands through the form of the “basin effect”, which was also claimed by the residents, citing potential linkages to ongoing reclamation initiatives in the South Road Properties of Cebu City.

What is interesting here is how while these areas are considered environmentally vulnerable, the construction of houses are permitted by local authorities. When asked on how new constructions are being made, the residents have stated that they would need to first acquire building permits from the municipality before commencing construction. This tends to be a matter of concern because while the island gradually sinks especially during periods of high tide, construction, especially of concrete houses and infrastructure can still be permitted. This can signify the reinforcement of the paradoxical situation that while they encourage residents to relocate, ongoing constructions are also given permission to take place. When asked whether or not the municipality has offered them relocation opportunities, the residents have affirmed stating that they have been offered to relocate to the mainland especially given the perceived risks environmentally, but they chose to stay in these urban islands due to its proximity to their primary source of income and livelihood. Furthermore, they have also noted emotional attachment to the land given that most of them were born and raised in these islands.

Overall, the on-ground realities being experienced by both islands reveal a potential link between metropolitan areas and neighboring islands creating a core-periphery relationship between developed metropolitan areas and small communities such as island communities. Most importantly, the accounts of the residents from both islands further prove the need to rethink approaches to urbanization—especially that such a trend has now reached what usually are not considered urban spaces. In other words, the on-ground realities require a response on how these affected communities can adapt and prosper while being balanced with sustainable urban and environmental development, especially in crucial areas both involved in economy and environmental protection.

To Stay Afloat: Recommendations

From the accounts of the residents, development, particularly, sustainable urban development needs to be adjusted to accommodate wider and more vulnerable communities in the process. With this, it is clear that potential recommendations must involve inclusive participation and dialogue, as well

as creation of a more responsive collaborative body that oversees progress and development within these communities.

1. Inclusive Participation and Dialogue

One of the most important recommendations drawn from the findings of this paper is the establishment of more inclusive participation and dialogue on how development, planning, and sustainability can be achieved in the context of these small urban islands—one that goes beyond core-centric approaches. A particular concern that was observed from the accounts of the residents is the dominance of technocratic and highly academic/intellectual approach to these issues, which results in the exclusion of community-based and traditional knowledge. The residents have mentioned that there have been multiple organizations that tried to help and address their vulnerabilities, including academic and scientific researchers, however, their plight was that their perspectives were often disregarded and treated as lesser than what is commonly considered ‘formal’ and ‘empirical’ knowledge.

Additionally, when technocratic knowledge is always considered the sole reliable source for policy creation and implementation, it also disregards emotional and cultural attachments of people to spaces familiar to them. This is particularly true in the case of both islands wherein while residents were offered potential relocation to the mainland, there is a reservation due to emotional and cultural attachments to these areas, something that cannot be necessarily addressed through using technocratic expertise alone.

The problem when small community concerns are being approached with widescale metropolitan and highly technocratic perspectives is that it erases insights that are experienced by the local communities, creating a gap on the creation of applicable solutions to the severe issues. This can be seen in terms of how local units create policies to respond to the solutions, wherein the proposed points of actions can sometimes negatively affect the residents, similar to how the initiatives on their mangrove forestry have impacted the catch of fish of the residents. Furthermore, when the communities do not feel highly involved in the process of creating policies that respond to their struggles, their reception might not be too optimal and tensions could potentially arise.

Aside from considering community knowledge into the creation process of sustainable policies, people’s organization amongst the residents of both

islands have to be empowered and supported as well. However, similar to other civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Philippines wherein strains in longevity and also the lack of considerable extent of their participation can be observed, the peoples' organizations in these islands also feel lacking in terms of conviction and impactful participation in formal bodies and institutions. Moreover, they have mentioned that the existing peoples' organizations in these islands tend to have their own personal agenda that may not necessarily mirror the sentiments of the people in these islands. Additionally, these organizations lack the resources to sustain themselves due to shifting political wills and also the lack of independent bodies that oversee these developments, wherein there are some instances that the line between peoples' organizations and formal state institutions tend to blur, eventually ostracizing the genuine sentiments of these communities.

2. Creation of a Robust and Sustainable Overseeing Collaborative Body and Ensuring Sustainable Support to Communities in Peripheral Islands

Complementing inclusive dialogue and participation is the necessity to create a robust and sustainable overseeing collaborative body that facilitates potential developments and planning across these areas. While there are existing collaborations between the local government units and private entities, as well as regional and national agencies such as the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR), the smoothness in terms of their collaboration seems to be lacking. For example, there exists potential tensions between the DENR and the peoples' organizations in both islands, which can create gridlocks on the creation of potential policies.

Another potential tension here is that without a formal collaborative body, agencies that are 'involved' can be driven by their own interests and are often subjected to political alliances, patronage, and wills. Furthermore, the regional and national agencies are often subjected to administrative shifts as well, which can hinder the creation of responsive solutions to alarming issues and concerns. This can be seen on the shifting of gubernatorial administrations in the province which could also shift the focus of the various agencies. As highlighted in the earlier parts of this paper, administrative shifts both exacerbate the lack of long-term visions, as well as inconsistencies in the carrying out of spillover initiatives from one shift to the other. Additionally, the lack of a formal and equally shared collaborative body could also result in the dominance of certain actors

in the policy process – inferiorising equally important sentiments by the perceived ‘lesser powerful’ actors such as community representatives.

More importantly, the roles of these consultative bodies need further reassessment and compliance checks to ensure that the consultation and dialogue initiatives go beyond merely consultative, where prior agreements from authorities have already been made and consultation now becomes synonymous to information dissemination.

It is also crucial that support for adaptation goes beyond consultation but also the provision of enough support for the residents to actually carry out and participate in the implementation of these initiatives. This means that there must be ample provision of social services that go beyond the “band-aid” level, but towards alleviating secondary levels of concerns.

But perhaps the most important recommendation that can be drawn from this paper is the need to revisit existing frameworks and visions of how sustainable development can be achieved vis-a-vis urban development especially in spaces that are not oftentimes considered urbanized spaces. This requires a shift and implementation, wherein differences in landscapes and realities must be taken into account. Most importantly, what needs to be emphasized here is on how sustainable development must not view small communities such as small neighboring island communities as extensions of the metro, wherein what exists in the metro can be carried out in these spaces, but rather, modern frameworks of sustainable urban development must consider the external effects that their developments make, not limiting to what can be observed in the short term scale, but also, what is affected in the long term run, such as land subsidence, sinking islands, and environmental degradation that are often outside of what small communities could control.

There is also a need to deliberate how metropolitan areas view urban development, particularly on the direction it takes and the priorities that are put on top. From the accounts of the residents from both islands, it can be said that their experience of urban sprawl was not born out from a deliberate initiative to ‘urbanize’, but rather was a consequence of the overspill from core, metropolitan areas, which creates massive disparities on their approach– for the peripheries, the urbanization by force is an act of difficult survival, whereas for the core, urbanization is seen as a step forward. This also brings up the difficulty of pursuing sustainable development in fragmented settings, wherein jurisdictions are often highly reinforced, and within-borders development is

prioritized without taking into account the outside-borders repercussions. In other words, reassessment should be done on how the country should carry our development and the pursuance of urbanization, particularly on the part whether cross-border effects were highly agreed upon by both parties and how risks and unfavorable repercussions can be mitigated.

Ultimately, the insights drawn from these communities highlight how urban development cannot be seen as physically geographically restrained and constrained, but rather, urban development, and more so sustainable development in general, is an integrated process, one that involves, either deliberately or not multiple actors with varying stakes, and with this comes also the involvement of varied forms of inequalities especially when the rounds of development begin to take place. It is important to highlight that development in metropolitan areas also affect their peripheries, especially those that are not necessarily on par with them economically and politically. After all, because the process of urban sustainable development is intensively integrative and interlinked, so are the potential effects of mishaps and failures in the creation of policy initiatives. However, while the effects, particularly environmental, are shared such as flooding and potential land subsidence, the degree of these effects eventually differ from the core and the peripheral islands, wherein the effects seen in these core areas are expanded in these neighboring spaces. Therefore, the need for collaborative and integrative policy and implementing body is not only to include perspectives in policy initiation and carrying, but most importantly, it is imperative to ensure accountability and transparency, ensuring that while cities may continue to rise, neighboring islands would never have to carry the weight, eventually sinking and be left behind in the larger scale of development initiatives.

Declaration

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