Leadership Development in the Perspective of the People’s Organization, the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Relocatees ng Bagong Silangan (Organization of Relocatees of Bagong Silangan)

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Abstract
This paper explores perspectives of Leadership Development (LD), an area of Organizational Development (OD), applicable to the context of People’s Organizations (PO). The literature surrounding OD primarily applies to Non-Government Organizations (NGO). The approaches in OD do not exclusively indicate that only NGOs can use these approaches, but the framework specifically takes the NGO context as its locus of application. The research question seeks to explore where the PO is distinct, and where OD intersects with PO systems. This question is meant to bridge the gap between the perspective of the Community Development (CD) practitioner and the perspective of the PO. CD practitioners can use the OD perspective as a means for analysis of PO realities and systems. CD practitioners come to understand the perspective of the members of the community through engagement in conversation and experience. Discovering perspectives in a community setting is essential in the process of Community Development (Manalili, 2012).

Keywords: Leadership Development, Participatory Research, Peoples’ Organizations, Organizational Development, Community Development.

Introduction
Leadership Development (LD) is an area of Organizational Development (OD), usually emerging from the perspective of Corporations, Non-Government Organizations (NGO) or Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) (Felizco, et.al, 2004). This paper intends to examine the perspective of Peoples’ Organizations (PO) on Leadership Development in communities, as an alternative lens in understanding community realities and systems. The use of participatory research enables Community Development (CD) practitioners to understand the perspectives of members of the community through engagement in conversation and experience (Manalili, 2012).
This paper focuses on participation in the context of leaders of the PO, the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Relocatees ng Bagong Silangan (SANAREBAS), a partner of the faith-based NGO, Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc (VMSDFI). The span of the research experience is based on four years with the SANAREBAS PO in Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City, Philippines. This particular paper, however, describes specific interactions from a period of four months of community fieldwork with the members of SANAREBAS. The research participants are the elected leaders of the PO, as well as members of the community with delegated authority in community-based programs.

**Literature Review**

PO and NGO partnerships in the Philippine context are part of the history of Civil Society. The division between the private and public spheres situates them in the private spheres (Co 1996). So that, the work that POs and NGOs do are sometimes lumped together. It should be noted, however that the history of POs and NGOs, while intertwined, has shown important distinctions in these organizations. POs in the Philippines are characterized by voluntary membership, participatory learning, and democratic decision making. Even more importantly, POs work towards the direct benefit of its members, majority are affected by poverty, injustice, and underdevelopment. Whereas, NGOs work in relation to POs towards support and capacity building among members of POs. (Alegre 1996).

At best, the indicators of a thriving partnership between POs and NGOs include (a) a common understanding of objectives and means while working together, (b) a mutual acknowledgment distinct character in relation to their situations in the development context, and, (c) an equitable share in the work, benefit and growth within the partnership (Alegre 1996).

The gaps on the other hand show deficiencies and injustices that hamper the growth of POs which include (a) relationships of dependency, especially in terms of institutional and financial stability, (b) incongruous decision making processes, (c) imbalance in autonomous authority for POs, (c) financial concerns, (d) dominance and loyalty, (e) interpersonal gaps among members of POs and NGOs (Alegre 1996).

One aspect in which the gaps can have an influence is in leadership. The pool of leadership in the PO in partnership with NGOs usually takes their cue from community organizing activities. The gaps in capacity emerge within the PO when leadership models adapted in the PO are dependent upon different expectations from the NGO partners, as discussed above (Manalili 2012). Without the NGO, the PO is substantially strained, depending on the wideness of the gap in the partnership. Mechanisms that enable leveling off of understanding in a PO-NGO partnership is one of the most important areas for improvement (Alegre 1996, Manalili 2012).

LD is largely relegated to the NGO, for their technical knowledge. While the perspective of NGOs is valuable in the PO context, the gaps are magnified in the process and aspect of LD. Therefore, the focus on the LD perspective in the PO is consistent with promoting a greater capacity for autonomy, independence, as well as thriving partnerships with NGOs, other organized groups in civil society, and government units. (Dolandolan, Macalalag and Garcia 1997)

**Methodology**

The paper is qualitative in nature, employing participatory research methodology. Participatory research aims to understand factors that surround issues and conditions through the experience of those involved. A consistent objective of participatory research is the value of emancipation and empowerment among those who take part in its democratic means of acquiring information (Krimerman 2001, Ibon Foundation 2004).
The primary question that the paper seeks to interact with is, “What is Leadership Development (LD) from the perspective of PO leaders?” The answer to this question is meant to explore the gap between the perspective of the CD practitioner, usually operating on the framework of an NGO or FBO, and the perspective of the PO as an independent organization.

The findings of this research are based on a series of Participatory Research approaches meant to facilitate dialogue and identify common themes emerging from diverse perspectives (PLA Notes 1998). Group discussions provide opportunity for detailed feedback and interaction within the PO (Francis 1994, Rambaldi 2008). Group discussions also serve to build rapport between members of the PO, as well as with the facilitator (Arrossi 1994). Creative means for group interaction, such as with the use of illustrations, solicit reflections which show what values and opinions participants have in relation to issues and realities, especially those which are not usually part of discourse (Gibson 1994, Bandre 1998). The methods of research also include document reviews on the background of the NGO and PO, respectively, to provide a backdrop for the reported and the experienced character of leadership in the PO.

Particular references used in preparation for the making of Participatory Research materials include the following guides:

1. Ibon Manual on Facilitating Participatory Research (Ibon Foundation 2004)
2. From the Roots Up: Strengthening Organizational Capacity through Guided Self-Assessment (Cubbels and Koss 2000)
3. Training for Transformation (Hope and Timmel 1999)

The guides cited above were formulated to suit the convenience of a seminar type meeting with participants both in PO and NGO contexts. However, this paper has adapted the use of diagrams, charts and tables to suit daily community interactions in small group settings. The fieldwork involved in this paper can be divided according to the variety of interactions, and according to themes in interactions with leaders in the PO. The segment documented in this paper is a period of community visits spanning from September to December 2015. The interactions were planned with specific objectives, gathering information with members of the PO in leadership positions.

Table 1: Summary of Activities, Objectives and Materials during Fieldwork.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Materials, Tools Used, Documented Output</th>
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| 1.9.2015 to 22.9.2015 | Entry into the community | 1.Going through channels of authority  
2. Personal introductions to the community | - Introduction Letter  
- Tentative Timetable |
| 28.9.2015 to 11.11.2015 | Participation in community processes with PO leadership  
- Officers’ Meetings  
- Home visitation  
- Help officers finish community profile  
- Writing out community | 1. Building relationships with the leadership  
2. Participating in dialogues in the community  
3. Reporting in the community  
4. Documentation of lessons  
5. Drawing knowledge from experience  
6. Adapting tools to be used for Participatory Research | - Household Profile Questionnaire  
- Community Map  
- Problem Identification and Prioritization Matrix  
- Review of current mid-term and long-term action plans of PO  
- Report from Community Profile |
resolutions | 1. Reviewing activities from the study | - Thematic Identification of Capacity Areas
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11.11.2015 and 10.12.2015 | Exit from the community | 2. Goodbyes with members of the community | - Action plans for implementation
3. Expressing recommendations for action plans of the PO

Above is a timetable of interactions in relation to the objectives for each. The planned objectives for each interaction were adjusted and suited to current interactions.

An overarching objective in the use of Participatory Research methodology was to identify gaps between what is reported and what is experienced in the context of the PO. The reference materials used for gathering data were chosen and adapted for use in activities which could be fitted into the context and time constraint of small group meetings and home visitations in the community, instead of planned seminar-type group meetings (Cubbels and Koss 2000).

Important community processes included meetings with agenda set among the PO leaders, home visitation for gathering household profiles, and small group discussions for writing out community policy suggestions. Many of these meetings were done in the homes of the PO leaders, during the morning or afternoon snack hours, where conversations happened over coffee and snacks. In some situations, meetings with agenda set for PO leaders allowed for prepared materials to be discussed in reports, tables, anecdotes and illustrations. The character of these interactions considers expressions of people’s needs and their concrete experiences (Dolandolan, Macalalag and Garcia 1997).

The research analysis pays attention especially to specific matters that relate to the view of leadership in the PO, namely: (a) common narratives in community life, (b) characteristics of good and bad leadership, (c) variety of duties and responsibilities of leaders in the community. The research closes with the leaders taking stock of the achievement short-term goals in the PO.

**Results and Discussion**

This paper was initiated as a result of the desire to return to community partners from relationships built through the Field Instruction Program facilitated by the College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines. It has been four years since the author first had personal interaction and working relations with members of the community (2012-2016). The PO, Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Relocatees ng Bagong Silangan (SANAREBAS), is situated in a relocation site in Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City. The PO is a partner of an NGO, the Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc (VMSDFI).

SANAREBAS was founded as a part of a housing program initiated through partnership with VMSDFI. The land for the housing program was privately donated property to VMSDFI, and financial support for the building of houses came from supporters of VMSDFI, as well as the city government of Quezon City, Philippines. Many of the first members of the organization to relocate in Barangay Bagong Silangan in Quezon City came from Barangay Payatas in Quezon City, after the trash slide in the open landfill area in Barangay Payatas in 10 July 2000. The eventual process of relocation for survivors and vulnerable households in Barangay Payatas was not pre-planned, but a need-based response for what seemed most feasible at the time. The site later included groups relocated because of the threat of demolition in Barangay
Bahay Toro in Quezon City and Barangay Bagong Silangan. Survivors from the Barangay Bagong Silangan during Typhoon Ondoy (Typhoon Ketsana) were also relocated on site in 2009 (Borja 2012).

The PO was formed initially to ensure continuous follow up for the process of relocation to Barangay Bagong Silangan. Among its initial objectives was to document the process of relocation and set up a memorandum of agreement between the PO-NGO partners. Initial activities in the PO were the selection of leaders, and the participation of these leaders in training programs through the resources of the NGO. After 16 years, the PO has surpassed its initial objectives of facilitating the relocation of vulnerable households from different barangays around Quezon City. Casting future direction is dependent on identifying new objectives, existing issues, and potential courses of action.

The elected leadership of the PO is composed of the following officers: (1) president, (2) vice-president, (3) secretary, (4) treasurer, (5) auditor, and (6-10) 5 board members. Other positions of leadership selected by members of the community are those of the block leaders. The community setting is composed of 152 households, composed of 17 blocks of row houses, with block leaders assigned for each block. Below is a sketch of the blocks in the community, with the assigned leaders, taken from the notes during fieldwork. This does not include 50 new units under construction as of writing.

Fig. 1: Sketch of community map with names of block leaders, in contrast to locator map.
The first interactions with leaders in the NGO and PO were to introduce the author through written letters addressed to the Executive Director of the NGO and the President of the PO, respectively. With permission to engage in formal entry into the community, the first meeting of the author with the group of leaders in the PO was during a set meeting between VMSDFI staff and SANAREBAS leaders. The author was introduced to the community as part of the agenda, and was endorsed as a volunteer in the current work of the PO, particularly in completing an update of the community profile. Another important meeting set as part of the initial activities for fieldwork was a meeting with the president of the PO, joined by a board member and a block leader who were available for conversation. The agenda set was to layout goals for the immediate period of fieldwork in the community.

In this paper, the interactions dwell on current events in the community setting. In particular, a span of four months is committed to the review of the composition of the leadership roster and priority projects for the PO in the community.

During the period of fieldwork, the NGO wanted to (1) update information from the households in the community, (2) update the status of the PO as a registered organization, and (3) revisit regulations in relation to being residents in the community. Several households were yet to be interviewed for the updating of the community profile. The author took part in the interviews of the households in the community. In contrast, the PO wanted to (1) facilitate concreting of pathways, (2) finalize the penalties some members who did not adhere to regulations, and (3) complete the resolution of policies for peace and order in the community. The PO also sought more independence in the management of community affairs.

The initial meetings showed that the NGO and the PO had different means and ideas in operating in the community. The agenda of VMSDFI and SANAREBAS differed largely in the aspects which they wanted to address in the community. Even so, both the PO and the NGO sought for the proper administration of community affairs. After 16 years on site, the NGO is responsible for interactions with the Barangay, the basic local government unit in the area. The NGO seeks to identify key areas of improvement with the PO, especially to facilitate its registration with the government. The NGO has staff workers who visit the community on occasion.

In contrast, the PO leadership is concerned primarily with matters relating to peace and order, and physical conditions of infrastructure in the community. The programs run by leaders in the community for the past terms included the roving patrols within the community premises. The common ground that the NGO and the PO have is the sanctioning of community members who violate peace and order policies agreed upon by the general assembly. Actions taken towards responding to these agenda were not mutually exclusive in enforcing better policies and processes in the community; however, these agenda spell out different action items, both for VMSDFI and SANAREBAS.

The period of fieldwork in the community was allotted for various activities, based on goals set from the initial meetings, as well as additional goals set in subsequent meetings with the leaders in the community. As mentioned before, the author was able to participate in the interviews with members of several households in the community for the completion of the community profile. The completion of the community profile enabled the author to build rapport with the community leaders, by showing willingness to follow-up with members of the community for the interviews. The presence of an outsider in the community compelled some of the members of the community to set aside time for the interviewers, which did not seem possible before.

Usually, the time spent in the community was between 1-2 hours in the morning and 1-2 hours in the afternoon, when it was likely for people in the community to take their snacks or coffee. Many of the community members engaged in work in their homes. The lull between preparing the children for school
and beginning work for the day was the most advantageous time in the morning. In the afternoon, the best period was during the merienda or snack time, as a rest from work.

These visits in the community were mostly set for the interviews with members and short follow-ups on output in the community. While they were brief, they allowed for the author to take note of homes the locations where the members and leaders of the community lived. This was important for follow-up and subsequent setting of meetings during the fieldwork.

The daytime visits were often short, since the hours were set for home-based livelihood among the community members. Longer meetings for the officers to have discussions based on specific agenda were set according to the availability of PO leaders, usually held in the evening. During the fieldwork, the author was able to join two evening meetings. The particular focus of the PO during the evening meetings was to set responsibilities among the officers according to the current agenda: (1) progress concreting of pathways in the community, (2) the penalties for some members who did not adhere to regulations, and (3) policies for peace and order in the community.

The evening meetings usually took 2 hours, after dinnertime in the community. The presider determines the agenda for the evening, and then proceeds to discuss each one. The meeting ends in a brief plan for action. Some lessons from these meetings show that while the presider facilitated the pace and flow of the meetings, they were often filled with simultaneous comments. Many times, loud voices in the meeting, often men, were simultaneously met with soft spoken comments which were left undocumented in meetings, mostly from women. Therefore, opposition to certain points is not documented as part of the process. This would later reflect recurring disagreements within the leadership, and cause postponement of decision-making on certain agenda items.

This atmosphere of contentious dialogue within the leadership would also show that there was uncertainty in passing items for policy implementation in the community. The responsibility of decision making, then, is relegated to the members of the PO, for election during the general assembly. The author opted not to join the general assembly set within the period of the fieldwork, since it might present confusion in the dynamics of the leadership and the members of the PO.

After the first evening meeting, it was decided that the officers and block leaders conduct small group meetings per block to identify community problems in relation to policy implementation and suggestions on how to proceed with implementation in the future. The author took the opportunity to volunteer and facilitate several small group meetings per block, with the officers and block leaders in the community. The proceedings from the small group meetings were thematically discussed with the use of a standard flow of questions and the use of a chart to help identify and prioritize issues in the community.

The small group discussions were advantageous in showing the personal position of many leaders in the PO which were not expressed in the PO leaders’ evening meeting. These small group meetings were usually helpful in balancing the views between the loud voices of the men in the PO leadership and the undocumented comments from the women in the PO leadership. Aside from the identification of problems and suggested policies, some had expressed concerns on their lack of knowledge, uncertainty, and fears in their own role as leaders. The small group setting was helpful in establishing more points for dialogue among leaders who belonged to the same block. And since many of the small group meetings were conducted in the homes of the leaders, the more relaxed setting allowed for open discussion of opinion and suggestions for the course of action to be considered for identified issues in the community.

During the second evening meeting, the author was requested to make a report on the small group meetings. The report was written on a large format paper, for presentation in the large group of leaders. The output
from the individual flow of questions and charts were reflected as a diverse collection of responses from the small group meetings. One of the specific themes that cropped up from the discussions in the small group meetings were suggestions in keeping peace and order in the community, and enforcement of penalties to members who did not comply with regulations set by the PO. There were some points of agreement in the identified issues and suggestions among the leaders of the PO, but there were also many differences in the personal opinions of leaders in the community.

Fig. 2: Flow of Questions and Chart used for the Small Group Meetings.
The written form of the report was useful, in particular, to the secretary of the PO, who copied the output as a reference for the use of the leaders preparing for the upcoming general assembly of the PO. Since the PO leaders opted not to decide on a particular policy options for implementation, the general assembly included in its agenda the discussion and election for policy decisions. It is notable that after the general assembly, one of the members suggested that the general assembly facilitated by the PO leaders should be called for as a means to report what has been decided by the leadership, instead of as a means to gather votes for every policy suggestion. It was in a conversation with one of the leaders that this point was mentioned, from personal reflection on the salient points from the general assembly.

Fig. 3: Presentation of Report from the Small Group Meetings.

The function of democracy in the PO is considered valuable, but it is not always efficient. The significant example from these meetings includes that the leaders of the community depended on the vote of the majority of members in the PO to decide on policy. Since the issues currently identified in the communities are complex, the views and suggestions understandably differ significantly from person to person. As a
result, the general assembly also opted not to vote on a final decision as to the agenda of coming up with policies in relation to the area of peace and order in the community.

Another important finding of this paper involves exploring the internal and external aspects of leadership in the PO. Decision-making within the community setting differs from representing the interest of the community in relation to external authority such as the local government unit of Barangay Bagong Silangan in Quezon City. The partnership of the PO with the NGO is also a different area of focus for leaders, because of varied priorities and processes of working. Aside from the question of policy implementation of the PO, accountability with the local government unit of Barangay Bagong Silangan, as well as with the leadership of VMDFSI was another matter for SANAREBAS. The agenda set for the concreting of pathways in the community and the keeping of peace and order had important aspects of coordination which reflected the level of support received in the community.

Through the evening meetings and small group discussions, it was noted that many of the existing policies discussed in previous general assemblies in the PO were held in addition to the policies held in the local government unit. When asked, leaders in the PO had varying levels of knowledge as to the implementation of policies enforced by the local government unit. The leaders in the PO were more familiar with policies suggested in the PO assemblies rather than the policies already in force in the local government unit. Part of this disparity is that the local government has limited presence and resources devoted to the community in comparison to the high level of concern of peace and order.

Many of the policy suggestions had to do with enforcing the curfew hours, keeping the level of noise to a minimum, and ensuring the security of homes in the community. The members of the community usually report grievances to authorities in the Barangay Bagong Silangan Hall, and is usually considered the second line of response, after the block leaders and officers in the PO.

The familiar relationships between members in the community allow for quick response, but only limited remedy for the grievance, especially if the people involved in the breach of policy are fellow members in the community.

Block leaders and officers in the PO speak with the parties involved. Aside from this, when minors are involved in the complaints, the head of the family unit serves as representative during such instances. At times, this is sufficient. But in instances when formal complaints are necessary, some grievances are not given the attention necessary. Sadly, the community has a high incidence of complaints filed with the police force of the barangay. During the course of fieldwork, one of the challenges to the leaders in the PO was to distinguish between the assertion of authority of PO policies and the necessity to hold the local government unit or barangay accountable for public service in the community.

The final significant activity for the author was a final meeting with the PO leadership, set for a review of the past period set for fieldwork, and a formal leave for exit from the community. The meeting was the only meeting presided and facilitated by the author among the large group of PO leaders. The final meeting was presented with a timeline of past activities conducted with the PO leaders. Much of the work done was in the context of small group discussions and household visits. This means that the author was not able to meet personally with the PO leaders on a daily basis, but only during the times set for small group discussions in the course of the fieldwork between September to December 2015.

The final meeting also included a portion devoted to feedback on the period of fieldwork in the community. The feedback was specifically focused on the reflections and lessons learned in relation to the agenda set (1) from the immediate actions taken, and (2) for output still needed.
The leaders in the PO desire better implementation of policy in the community. It was agreed upon that clear links with the households would be the best means to facilitate clear dialogue and accountability. Stronger partnership with the local government unit was an area that needed better learning, since its function and authority is not so clearly established.
Conclusion

To conclude, this paper shows that the most significant distinctions of the leadership model in the PO include (a) the focus on family units as accountable members of the community, (b) the participation of certain members of the community can vary according to the willingness to commit time and resources, (c) decision-making processes employ more than setting general assemblies, which includes taking concessions from daily conversations with members of the community, and (d) the role of leadership in the PO is understood as an elective position, this fact in relation to other members of the community who have leadership characteristics but refuse to participate in the responsibility of holding an elective position.

Family units in the PO are considered the strongest link in communicating the existing vision, identified issues, and current policies of the PO. Since most of the issues identified involved keeping peace and order between, within and among members of the community, it was decided that the most feasible policy for the moment is to speak with parties involved in community grievances, as the situations permit. No penalties for the breach of regulations were decided upon.

The time devoted to the fieldwork reflects realities that opportunities to gather meaningful feedback from the community requires multiple channels for interaction. In the course of 4 months, there were 4 PO leaders’ meetings, 1 general assembly, and 7 small group meetings, as well as 3 fieldwork days devoted to helping the PO leaders complete the community profile.

This time period was flexible, and not routine, depending on the availability of community members and leaders. The dynamics within the PO leadership in relation to necessary output depended upon the balance of identified issues, their priority level among the PO leadership, the daily work of PO leaders, and their personal willingness to participate in functions relating to the work of the PO.

The decision-making process in the community is based on consensus. The decision to consider family units as the most feasible units for accountability was met with the most agreement; so that the PO leaders did not even deem it necessary to pass a resolution to enforce this decision. It was a matter of course in the responsibility of PO leaders to facilitate dialogue among parties in conflict in the community. In matters where opinions varied sharply, such as the penalties to breaches in PO regulations, no clear decisions were made. Even in the compromise to relegate the final decision to the assembly, the assembly was unable to come up with a feasible policy option.

In working with PO leaders and interacting with a few members in the community, the conversations showed differing levels of competency, willingness and drive among leaders and members. The small group meetings were opportune settings in which the PO leaders expressed their opinion on the responsibilities and duties as leaders. Some of the PO leaders were no longer eager to participate in leadership roles once their terms ended. A primary concern for the PO is establishing a clear means for feedback and decision-making. Another concern is for the PO to establish better ways of pushing through with decision-making even as matters become more complex and contentious.

The value of POs in community life is in facilitating transparent and fluid conduits for dialogue among members of the community. The value of leadership in the community is highest with keeping members of the community engaged in meaningful avenues for feedback and accountability. While the purpose of POs can be limited at times, cultivating stronger partnerships with the local government and NGOs can maximize the benefit and development for members of the community where POs are situated.
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