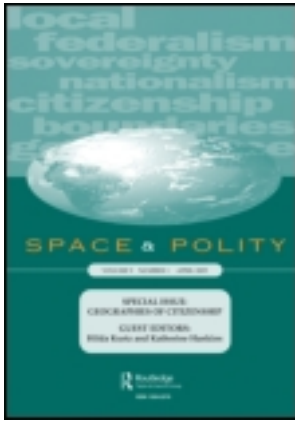


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Publisher: Routledge
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Space and Polity

Publication details, including instructions for authors and
subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cspp20>

Decentralisation, Power and Networked Governance Practices in Metro Manila

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Version of record first published: 04 Jul 2012

To cite this article: Emma Porio (2012): Decentralisation, Power and Networked Governance
Practices in Metro Manila, *Space and Polity*, 16:1, 7-27

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562576.2012.698128>

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Decentralisation, Power and Networked Governance Practices in Metro Manila

EMMA PORIO

[Paper first received, September 2011; in final form, March 2012]

Abstract. The institutionalisation of decentralisation among urban local governments in the Philippines since the 1990s has been highly documented. While most of the studies have hailed its progressive development, a few have argued that decentralisation has also led to the further entrenchment of traditional élites and their allied power structures in local governance. This paper argues that, while decentralisation has allowed some local governments to initiate effective, efficient and accountable structures, thus becoming more responsive to the needs of their constituents, it has also led to the strengthening of traditional élites/political families and allied power structures as well as the creation of new ones. In short, decentralisation has ‘selectively’ democratised as well as reinforced existing power structures through the entrenchment of élite political families in urban governance and development. Utilising the concept of networked governance practices, this paper examines how local chief executives and allied officials have transformed local power structures through the mobilisation of decentralisation and democratisation discourses/strategies within and across the government bureaucracies, civil society organisations (non-government organisations, people’s organisations and private-sector or business groups). Their mobilisation of such strategies is part of the overall governance framework of local government units to become locally/globally competitive amidst a weak metropolitan governance system in Metro Manila. The study describes how decentralisation compels local governments and their officials to deal strategically with the competing demands of economic growth and social and environmental governance, by reconfiguring or recasting existing power structures/practices through democratisation strategies/discourses, to respond to the needs of their constituencies, especially marginalised sectors like the urban poor. The paper concludes that the concept of networked governance practices allows us a broader understanding of how decentralisation promotes democratisation while strengthening ‘selectively’ traditional political élites and allied power bases in civil society and the business sector. These arguments are illustrated by examining the implementation of two local government environmental and social housing programmes—the Pasig

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Green City Programme and the Land and Housing Programme in Las Piñas City in Metro Manila.

1. Introduction

The enactment of the Local Government Code (LGC) in 1991 instituted the decentralisation process and movement in the Philippines. The following year, Congress also passed the Urban Development and Housing Act, which further promoted the decentralisation and democratisation of governance structures/processes already happening among local governments, especially those in cities and other urban areas. Following Rood (1998), this paper will focus on three aspects of local autonomy—namely, decentralisation, democratisation and development—and how the intertwining of these forces has shaped urban governance and the transformation of local power structures in Metro Manila.

As the national capital region (NCR) of the Philippines and the political, socio-cultural and economic centre of the country, Metro Manila is often referred to by political leaders in the provinces as 'Imperial Manila'. Accounting for 37 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product and being the seat of political power, this label is not entirely misplaced. In 2007, the National Statistics Office registered 11.5 million for the population of Metro Manila; with an area of 686 square kilometres, this makes it one of the most congested cities in the region with 18 650 residents per square kilometre (Porio, 2009). With only 3.5 million in 1970, the city's population has expanded almost four times over the past 40 years. However, economic growth and investments in basic services and infrastructure have not kept abreast with the expanding needs of the population. While Metro Manila's poverty incidence is lower (11 per cent) compared with the national figure (33 per cent), 1 in every 10 residents live in slum and squatter settlements (Ballesteros, 2010). Urban governance and management, then, become a critical factor in how cities can provide basic services, stimulate the economy and generate employment for their constituencies (Porio, 2009).

Metro Manila comprises 17 administrative cities, each having relatively autonomous local government units (LGUs), but loosely connected through the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which takes care of traffic, waste management and flood control functions. Owing to this highly decentralised governance structure, local chief executives, such as mayors and governors, have executive, legislative and judicial control over local officials, government employees and their political constituencies. To a certain extent, this particular decentralised set-up allows local elite families to continue to dominate political leadership in these cities.

The decentralisation of state power from national to local governments was instituted to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments in responding to the needs of their constituents. In the Philippines, decentralisation ensued alongside, the push for the democratisation of state–civil society relationships, which got a big boost in the 1986 People Power Revolution (Porio, 2002). This presumably dismantled the 20-year Marcos dictatorship, which was installed by the declaration of martial law in 1972. The push for the decentralisation/democratisation nexus in urban development got further institutionalised by the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) during the Ramos administration (1992–98). SRA was a result of different sectors of civil society crafting their own development

agenda—for example, farmers pushing for agrarian reform and sustainable agriculture, and the urban poor, for social housing and services—and integrating these into local development plans through a series of sectoral consultations in the first instance and finally through a nation-wide, multisectoral consultations, drafting and approval before the Philippine Congress. Thus, SRA during the Ramos administration, became the centrepiece for institutionalising democratic practices—for example, the consultation and participation of marginalised groups and other sectors—in local/national governance processes (Porio, 2002).

Two decades later, the progress of decentralisation and democratisation among urban local governments in the Philippines has been highly studied. Several authors have highlighted their innovations, exemplar accomplishments and successes (for example, Holmes, 2011; and Guevara, 2004). This has also spawned a number of awards and incentives for local governments to push for more decentralised/democratised structures of governance in their LGUs.¹ However, a number of studies have also argued that decentralisation has led to some governance challenges such as corruption and persistence of patron–client relationships and élite power structures in local governance (for example, Langran, 2011; Leviste, 2004; and Rivera, 2011). These authors have argued that the devolution of powers to local governments has also allowed much greater autonomy and control to local chief executives, sometimes compromising the delivery of basic services.

This paper re-examines how the decentralised local governance structures of state power have been reconfigured/recast through the mobilisation of decentralisation and the empowerment discourses by local urban governments, civil society organisations (CSOs) (non-government organisations and people’s organisations (NGOs)/(POs)) and private-sector groups in Metro Manila, as a strategy to become nationally/regionally/globally competitive amidst a weak metropolitan governance system. It is within this context that I will examine the progress of decentralisation and how urban governance had been transformed by traditional political élites mobilising decentralised/democratic strategies and discourses in urban development programmes.

2. Key Arguments and Methodology

I will use the concept of networked governance practices in analysing the transformation of the power structures in the cities of Pasig and Las Piñas in Metro Manila.² Following McGuirk (2000), this paper utilises the Latourian (Latour, 1986) notion of the social production of power in analysing the power flows and interactions among actors in local government, civil society groups and the private sector, as the local chief executive (i.e. the mayor) with other officials implement their flagship programmes for urban development. The structures and discourses of decentralisation/democratisation in the 1990s broadened the spaces in the local government for local chief executives to use socio-political and economic networks strongly connected to civil society organisations and the private sector when implementing their priority programmes. Through these mechanisms, the power of the local chief executive (including that of his family and allied networks) is socially produced and reinforced in governance structures and practices. Here, power is seen as the ability of local chief executives from dominant families to get other local governance actors to perform actions

and, in the process, thus revealing the contexts and networks of production of social relations (see Latour, 1986, 1991).

I will argue that traditional power élites like the political families of Pasig City and Las Piñas City in Metro Manila are able to mobilise the spaces that the forces of decentralisation/democratisation have opened up by utilising ‘networked governance practices’ in establishing their hold over local government and their constituencies. This approach allows us to understand how they have continually captured the spaces of power in their cities by mobilising the strategies and discourses of decentralisation and democratisation—for example, the participation and empowerment of marginalised groups, and consultation and involvement of the private sector—through selective coalition and network-building with partners within the local government bureaucracy and across civil society and the private sector.

Studies of decentralisation have often highlighted the shifts in the modes and instruments used in engaging governance actors like CSOs (NGOs/POs), as well as strategies of decision-making within government bureaucracies regarding urban regulation and the distribution of responsibilities across spheres of government and the private sector, including the cultures and structures of interaction between and among these entities (Painter, 1997; cited in McGuirk, 2000). These changes have relatively transformed the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of local governments in terms of their relationships and patterns of engagement with both government and non-government actors within and outside the bureaucracy. This study will explore how these modes and instruments have been mobilised in decentralising and democratising governance in local governments of Pasig City and Las Piñas City.

To substantiate these arguments, I utilised primary (i.e. semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions) and secondary data sources (municipal socioeconomic, environment and housing data, and LGU programme profile submissions to the Galing Pook Awards). I interviewed a total of 20 key informants (10 in each city) and conducted 6 focus group discussions (3 in each city, 8–10 in each group, a total of 55 people). Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted among three groups of governance stakeholders: members of the community who belong to NGOs/POs and ordinary citizens; the mayor and other elected municipal/city officials; and, programme implementers from municipal/city or national government agencies.

3. Decentralisation, Power and Urban Governance

Using the cases and programmes of Pasig City (the Pasig Green City Programme) and Las Piñas City (the Land and Shelter Programme), the paper examines how the traditional élite political family is able to transform itself into a more decentralised (efficient, effective and innovative) and democratic (transparent and accountable),³ local governance system while maintaining its political stronghold on the city’s electorates.

The paper examines how the old élitism in local power structures seems to have been eroded and transformed with the decentralisation and democratisation of governance structures in the Philippines today. Through these legislative reforms, local officials, mainly through the chief executive or the mayor, can craft and recast their local power structures by engaging the flows/channels of networked governance routines and practices in their administration. We shall

explore this by examining how local chief executives implement their flagship development programmes through multiscaled policy and implementation networks of actors and stakeholders within the local government bureaucracy, and across civil society and private sectors. In particular, I focus on how their locus/control of power is efficiently transformed by their interactions and their active shaping of power flows among social-political networks of decision-making (within and outside local government) as they grapple with the competing demands of economic growth and social equity/inclusion under a decentralised/democratised context of urban governance.

3.1 *Decentralisation: The Political-economic Context*

The Local Government Code has institutionalised a systematic allocation of powers and responsibilities between the national and local governments. According to Guevara (2004, p. 97), the political motive is a very strong factor that influenced devolution of the powers of the central state to local governments.⁴ Compared with other decentralisation processes happening in other parts of Asia, the process in the Philippines has been quite comprehensive as seen in Table 1 which shows the functions/services devolved to different levels of local governance such as provinces (81), chartered cities (136), municipalities (1495) and barangays (about 40 000).

Decentralisation has been perceived as an effective way to diffuse power from the centre and prevent an authoritarian regime from re-emerging in the future, such as the imposition of martial law during the Marcos era (Asanuma *et al.*, 2003). Thus, from the 1990s onwards, decentralisation was a common response of many governments all over the world to the clamour by the people for a greater voice in the way they are governed (Dillinger and Fay, 1999). To make local governments more efficient, according to President Ramos, the five Ds of the local autonomy—devolution, decentralisation, deregulation, democratisation and development—have to be calibrated more systematically. However, this has taken more time and, perhaps because of the diversity in local governments, the relative success of these processes needs to be contextualised

The efficiency factor in devolution began to surface during the Ramos administration. Market reforms were vigorously pursued by government. Trade, banking and industry were liberalised. A privatisation programme was pursued to relieve the central government of several functions where it has no comparative advantage. Devolution was compatible with these thrusts. Government recognised that it would be more efficient if communities were given the power and the responsibility to decide on goods and services that they need. President Ramos encouraged the processes of consultations, consensus-building and provision of adequate information to constituents (Milwida Guevara, Undersecretary of Finance, Ramos administration).

However, the efficiency of the implementation of decentralisation was hampered as the design of the Code was segmented and lacked coherence. In part, the budgeting process was crafted by Congress independent of the actual expenditure and allocation process at the local government level, resulting in a compartmentalised approach to devolution because political forces shaped decision-making, rather than efficiency considerations (Guevara, 2004, p. 5). Thus, on the whole,

Table 1. Services or functions devolved by the Local Government Code to LGUs

Villages (barangay): lowest political/administrative unit

Agricultural support services including collection of produce and buying stations
 Health centre and day care centres
 Solid waste collection
 Village justice system
 Roads and infrastructure funded by the village
 Information and reading centre

Municipalities/cities

Agricultural extension and on-site research services
 Community-based forestry projects and management of communal forests
 Primary health care services and access to secondary and tertiary health services
 Public works and infrastructure projects funded out of local funds
 School building projects
 Social welfare services
 Information services
 Solid waste disposal system and environmental management system
 Municipal buildings, cultural centres, public parks and sports facilities
 Tourism facilities and promotion

Provinces

Agricultural research extension and on-site research services
 Enforcement of forestry laws
 Hospital and tertiary health services
 Social welfare services
 Infrastructure funded from provincial funds
 Low-cost housing
 Telecommunication services for provinces and cities
 Low-cost housing projects for provinces and cities
 Investment support services, industrial research and development services for provinces
 Tourism promotion

Notes: Cities are expected to perform the services that have been assigned to municipalities and provinces (Guevara, 2004). *Barangays* exist within municipalities and cities, and their population ranges from 70 to 1000 families (Rood, 2004).

Source: Guevara (2004).

arbitrariness and the lack of certainty in the internal revenue allotment (IRA) system have come in various forms. In 2000, the availability of funds was made as a precondition for the release of the IRA. Currently, there is no governance factor that can nurture an efficient transfer system as subsidies are given to LGUs based on political patronage (Guevara, 2004).

Some have, however, emphasised that the democratic prospects of decentralisation are quite important in local governance. Decentralisation approached from a liberal, development-oriented framework usually assumes the rubric of good governance as illustrated in the following description

Decentralization is a commitment to sustainable development through empowering citizens and their locally elected officials, accompanied by a reduction in the monopolization of resources and powers by central authorities. From the perspective of intervention, external resources should be used not so much to produce direct results as to strengthen local capacities to initiate and manage activities that produce benefits

for the local community. This implies a demand-driven process, where communities define what they feel they need in terms of development, and where participatory processes for such input are institutionalized. Decentralization should not be viewed as a goal in itself, but as an instrument for achieving more effective service delivery systems, opening institutions to wider civic participation, and increasing public trust in government (ADB, 2005, p. 8).

Thus, one of the major outcomes of decentralisation is the shifting of responsibilities from national to local governments, while privatisation policies have shifted the burden of delivering public services from the public to the private sector. The underlying rationale of these policies is that they will lead to more efficient and effective functioning of urban governments and the expansion of economic growth.

Experiences in the Philippines and south-east Asia show that many local governments do not have sufficient resources to respond to the challenges of decentralisation. In some cases, they have also supported the initiatives of the private sector at the expense of the interests of vulnerable groups like the urban poor, women and youths. Thus, some civil society leaders and other good governance advocates have argued that urban development and public service delivery require strong local governments, which subscribe to the principles of good urban governance for a productive, but also, inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Just like other national capitals or mega urban regions in the Third World, Metro Manila is experiencing rapid economic growth, population growth/congestion and environmental degradation. Owing to these factors, governance of cities in the metropolis poses great challenges both to local officials and to leaders in civil society and the business sector. Urban local governments confront a myriad of challenges in governing cities such as environmental degradation and pollution, infrastructure development and ensuring affordable housing and basic services for the marginal populations like access to potable water and electricity, lack of low-cost housing, rising unemployment rates and unreliable police and fire department services (ADB, 2005).

However, despite these challenges, Guevara (2004) has argued that decentralisation has made the following gains: more resources for local governments; greater autonomy in decision-making; development of processes towards accountability; efficiency in public choice; heightened public consciousness regarding local governments' responsibilities; and, the emergence of more demonstration cases of success or excellence in local governance. The following sections shall expound more on these assertions.

To a large extent, the relative dependence of local governments on the national government for their internal revenue allotment determines their capacity to create local innovative arrangements to deliver services to their citizens. Among the most innovative local governments, their capacity to innovate depends largely on their ability to mobilise social, political and economic networks to finance their innovations. Figure 1 shows the relationship between decentralisation, local governance and development (Holmes, 2011, pp. 20–22).

To substantiate the arguments in this paper, I draw on my interviews with national and local government officials, NGO/PO leaders and private-sector leaders associated with the Galing Pook Awards for Excellence in Local Govern-

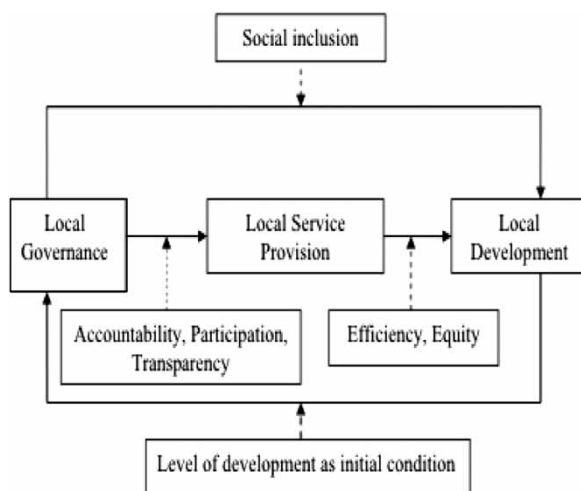


Figure 1. Decentralisation and democratisation in local government. *Source:* Capuno (2005), cited in Holmes (2011, p. 20).

ance.⁵ Table 2 shows the number of local governments that have been recognised for their innovation and excellence in local governance. The case studies on the decentralisation and governance of the cities of Pasig and Las Piñas are drawn from this database.

As can be seen, even though decentralisation has been in place for almost two decades, the expected outcomes of ‘good governance harvest’ from this governance reform has been rather small. More significantly, quite a large proportion of the local chief executives occupying the helm of these LGUs come from traditional political families (see the Appendix).

It is important to study the local governance structures through the dominance of the mayor and his/her political family, because trust in the government and the decentralisation process is very much reflected in what the mayor does or how he/she performs. Holmes (2011, p. 6) has found that according to a survey by Pulse Asia,⁶ close to 7 (68 per cent) out of 10 Filipinos are satisfied with the quality of local governance. Much of their satisfaction stems from the LGUs’ provision of services or social welfare to the promotion of public–private collaboration in order to generate economic growth and urban expansion in infrastructure development. Significantly, Holmes (2011) has argued that, among the local government stakeholders, the mayor has obtained the highest trust rating (78 per cent), while

Table 2. Number and percentage of LGUs recognised for excellence in local governance

LGU Level/items	<i>Barangays</i>	Municipalities	Cities	Provinces	Total
Number of LGUs per level	42 025	1 512	122	80	739
Total number of GPF awardees	10	89	36	38	173
Percentage of total distinct GPF to total LGUs	0.02	5.89	29.51	47.5	0.40

Source: Holmes (2011, p. 25).

other local governance stakeholders—i.e. the barangay captain, members of the barangay council, the police, the NGOs and business associations—garner plurality to a significant majority trust rating. The poll results show that LGU partnership with the business sector and CSOs has penetrated the consciousness of the majority of the local government stakeholders' constituencies.

Holmes (2011, p. 5), however, has also warned that the institutional environment at the sub-national level (cities, municipalities and barangays/villages) reflects that of the national level where local governments display a subjugation of the public administration to the dominant political power and that this has led to a "complex and enduring web of connections between political executives, civil servants, and business interests". Holmes has further cautioned us not to underestimate such obstacles in the quest for improvements because, in both national and local governance systems

the workings of intergovernmental (fiscal, administrative, and political) relations are particularly vulnerable to the instability induced by an excessively politicized system of rewards and allocations, and by uneven institutional strength and resourcefulness among national executive, congressional, provincial, and city or municipal actors (Holmes, 2011, p. 31).

He has concluded that elected government officials have continuously emphasised political engagement through a reform coalition among CSOs and 'progressive' elements of political society, wherein most are organised parochially (Holmes, 2011, p. 31).

Ronas (2011; citing Schmitter, 2004), has argued that the absence of accountability among delegative democracies is primarily due to the stronger power of the president relative to the powers of the legislature and the judiciary. This principle can actually be applied to the situation of the local chief executive—i.e. the mayor of a city or municipality, and in some situations, the village or barangay captain in the Philippines. Thus, accountability which includes vertical (between rulers and ruled) and horizontal relationships (between the branches of the regime and the state acting according to pre-set constitutional or legal rules among elected local officials is quite hard to implement because of the strong grip of the local executive.

4. Decentralisation, Local Autonomy and Networked Governance Practices

Studies of local governments and governance structures in other countries have "indicated that the shifting scales, scope and culture of the relations of governance have repositioned" structures of power alignments at the local level (McGuirk, 2000 pp. 653–654). Moreover, the organisational forms of the exercise of governing power have shifted and become more fluid and, in some cases, fragmented (Newman and Thornley, 1997; cited in McGuirk, 2000). To a large extent, these processes can also be observed in the decentralisation and democratisation of local governance structures in the Philippines and other parts of Asia (see Hadiz, 2004).

These studies of local governments have also shown that local governments have become one of the many agencies involved in decision-making, especially in the framing of local regulatory frameworks and in seeking access to resources and capacities to implement policies (McGuirk, 2000). Accordingly, within these institutional contexts, governance and power are increasingly practised through

shifting cross-sectoral coalitions and networks, often organised along a range of spatial scales (McGuirk, 2000). McGuirk further argued that the organisational forms through which power is socially produced in urban governance involve co-operation, interdependencies between organisations, a multiplicity of actors and the mobilisation of networks to access the various resources essential to creating the capacity to govern and to achieve policy goals.

These processes will be examined in the context of the consultation, participation, negotiation, alliance-building and consolidation of resources that the local chief executives—i.e. mayors—from the traditional political families of Pasig City and Las Piñas City, employ in deepening their power base strongholds while trying to implement efficient and effective governance structures. Here, I will demonstrate how the powers of local chief executives are produced and reproduced through the channels flowing in the municipal/city bureaucracy and their forms of governance practices. However, before examining the mobilisation of different levels, scales and layers of networks in the governance practices of the city governments of Las Piñas and Pasig in Metro Manila, let me digress a bit by describing the role of political families in strengthening local traditional power structures while opening up spaces for democratic and decentralised governance practices.

5. Decentralisation, Traditional Power Structures and Political Families

According to Steven Rood, the

the traditional view of local politics and government in the Philippines is not flattering: elected officials are personalistic faction leaders (or worse, bosses or warlords) interested in parlaying their personal wealth and power rather than promoting good governance (Rood, 1998, p. 1).

Following this logic, he argues that decentralisation may just transfer power from the central government to the powerful, but irresponsible, officials and the expected outcomes of efficient delivery of resources and growth in urban development may not proceed accordingly or, worse, delivery may be obstructed or hampered. However, some have also argued that devolving the powers listed earlier might hasten development because local officials know more intimately the problems of their citizens. Decentralisation, then, through deregulation and privatisation of economic services, and the engagement or active participation of its citizens, may promote urban growth and expansion through progressive policy-making and more transparent and accountable implementation of development programmes. Thus, the maze of government rules and regulations can become more understandable and implementable (Rood, 1998).

Rood (1998) has further argued that, while decentralisation has eroded some of the local political élite families, it has also strengthened as well as democratised some governance practices. Porio (2002) however, has asserted that decentralisation does not necessarily lead to civil society empowerment and redistribution of resources at the local level without discounting the possibility of CSOs and movements taking the alternatives spaces for public action that decentralisation has created.

The following section will describe how traditional political élite families, within the context of decentralisation, have transformed urban governance and power structures by mobilising the strategies associated with democratisation,

development and local autonomy. In particular, the deeper entrenchment of traditional political families and the strengthening of associated networks of power and governance practices will be described in Las Piñas and Pasig City—two of the 17 local governments in Metro Manila under the metropolitan governance of the Metro Manila Development Authority. This discussion will be anchored on the programme implementation of the Land and Housing Services for the Urban Poor in Las Piñas City and the environmental and climate change adaptation programmes (the Pasig Green City Programme and the Disaster Risk Reduction Programme) in Pasig City. This study has chosen these two cases because, since the EDSA People Power in 1986 and the implementation of the Local Government Code in the 1990s, the governance and political administration in each of these two cities have been dominated by the interlocking networks of traditional political family/clan and how they have employed networked governance practices. Their political genealogy and local administration history can be found in Table 3.

Rivera (2011), studying political families in the Philippine provinces, has defined them as having been central in the political life of a local government for at least three terms—the maximum length of continuous service of a local elected official.⁷ The dominance of a political family can also be demonstrated with the presence of other family members in other local or national government offices. Often, this persistent dominance is also reflected by dominant political families' high and intense 'connectivity' to actors and relations in the economic and civic spaces of their cities and local communities.

Rivera (2011) has argued that political families have figured prominently in the history of electoral manipulation, election-related violence and coercion in the Philippines. Thus, he has argued that their dominance in elections demonstrates the incompetence of state organisations like the Commission on Elections's (COMELEC) and, more importantly, the élite capture of powerful structures in local governance. Their continuing dominance also reflects the highly unequal power relationships in urban localities/cities, which pose real structural constraints to increasing the access of resources to marginalised groups. Moreover, elections where citizens are supposed to have real choices of who will govern them actually become arenas where the enduring structures of political and economic power of the local élites will serve just to reinforce their powerful rule, not only in the political arena, but in social and economic areas as well.

Table 3. Political genealogy of the local chief executives of Pasig City and Las Pinas City

The A political family in Las Pinas City, Metro Manila
Mayor A Sr (1963–86; 1995–2004)
Mayor A1 (wife): 2004–07
Mayor A2 (son): 2007–present
Congresswoman A-V (sister of Mayor A)
Speaker of the Senate (husband of Congresswoman A-V)
The E political family in Pasig City, Metro Manila
Mayor RE Sr (father): 1987–99
Mayor SE1 (wife): 2000–07
Mayor RE2 (son): 2007–present
Top councillor RE (son of the first mayor; brother of present mayor)

In Rivera's (2011) preliminary study of the role of political families in elections from 1987 to 2010, he has found that, of the 77 provinces, 71 or 92 per cent have political families. The study has also counted a total of 167 families, where 81 or 48 per cent belong to old élite families, while 86 or 52 per cent belong to new élite families—i.e. of the post-martial law period. On the average, he has found that each province has an average of 2.17 families. I would argue that this number and distribution of élite families also reflects the situation in the local governments of municipalities, cities and villages. This persistence of old élites and the creation of new ones can be seen in the prominent rise of personalities from some civil society groups and the private sector in local governance and urban development.

The hegemonic dominance of traditional power élites is not new. Mary Racelis Hollnsteiner, writing in 1963 in her classic, *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality*, has asserted that, at the local level, alliance systems among élites are very pervasive. Control over votes, access to resources from the national level and personal rivalries have led to shifting alliances that mirrored the shifts in national parties. The monopoly of power among local leaders is also punctuated by the persistence of rivalries among political-economic élite families and their allied factional groups. The shifting of alliances, therefore, can sometimes lead to instability and violence at the local level, often related to the struggle for control of votes during elections and access to resources at the municipal, provincial and national levels.

The shifting political alliances at the local level often mirror the shifts at the higher level. By employing various mechanisms, these unstable and shifting alliances, resulting from rivalries of different political families and their allied factions or coalitions, have allowed them to remain in control of local power structures (Rood, 1998). Timberman has described electoral politics on the local level in the following way:

Local elections, then, have traditionally tended to be contests between the members of the wealthiest and most influential families, or their proxies. Local campaigns have emphasized local issues and personal relationships. They secured votes by using a combination of family ties, *utang na loob* [debts of gratitude, loyalty, and promises of jobs, payments, or other material benefits. If necessary, they would also use threats and intimidation (Timberman, 1991; quoted in Rood, 1998, p. 2).

6. Networked Governance Practices in Metro Manila

Before proceeding to describe the mobilisation of networked governance practices by local chief executives, let me first present the social and political map of the networks/linkages of groups, within LGUs and across civil society, private-sector, education and church groups, which the two governments have employed in implementing their flagship programmes. For the case studies, we examine a Galing Pook Awardee—the Las Piñas City Government's Land and Shelter Programme for the Urban Poor of Mayor Vergel Aguilar. This is followed by another Galing Pook Awaedee—the Pasig Green City Programme and Disaster Risk Reduction Programme of Mayor Eusebio and the Pasig City Local Government.

6.1 Case Study 1: Las Piñas City Local Government's Land and Shelter Programme for the Urban Poor

Las Piñas City has a population of 532 330 (NSCB, 2007). Of this total population, 36 710 families, or about 183 500 people, belong to the informal sector, or the urban poor, who have no decent roof over their heads. These homeless families live either in government or private lands in the 20 barangays of Las Piñas City and are organised into some 281 community-based organisations (CBOs). Quite a large segment of the urban poor (36 710) live in danger areas, such as riverlines, canals, creeks and other waterways. The local government of Las Piñas has crafted the Integrated Shelter and Land Tenure for the Urban Poor to reduce the incidence of poverty and homelessness. The programme has mobilised all government, civil society and private-sector resources to achieve the following: to ensure security of land tenure of the 36 710 urban poor families of Las Piñas City; to generate support for social housing from national government sources; to enhance the capabilities of CBOs in implementing their housing project from beginning to end, and beyond; to establish a mechanism for CBO empowerment towards participatory governance; and, to work for a more meaningful principled partnering with NGOs, the private sector and other sectors (see Figures 2, 3 and 4).

The programme has used the following strategies to meet these objectives: utilisation of the city's database on its informal settlers in proceeding to the next steps; land acquisition; fund allocation; sourcing and savings mobilisation; site development; and, delivery of housing and basic services. Integral to these strategies are community preparation and organisation, education and capacity-building—for

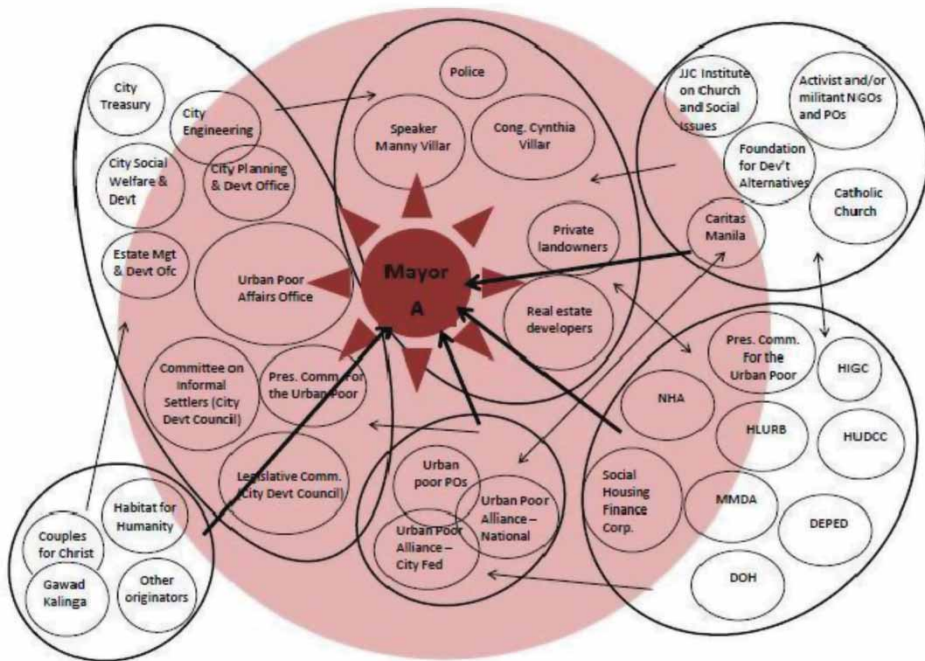


Figure 2. Las Piñas local government's Land and Shelter Programme: social map and power sites.

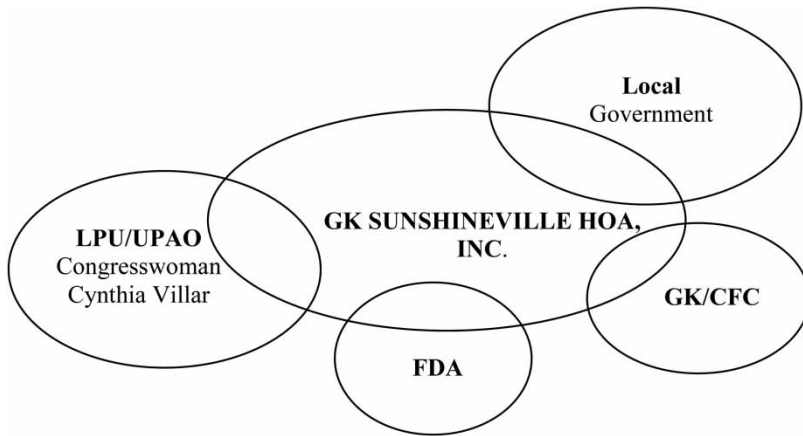


Figure 3. Networks of the People’s Organisation partner of an NGO and the Las Piñas local government.

example, training, seminars and workshops, participation of all stakeholders in the projects, and networking and establishing linkages with other interested sectors. These integral components of empowerment are present at every stage of the programme, including setting in place sets of necessary systems for monitoring and sustaining. Likewise, control mechanisms—for example, against squatting and squatting syndicates—are installed and institutionalised in collaboration with the CBOs, the NGOs, the police, the private sector and the church groups. This is continually reinforced by the programme’s advocacy work and continuing development of its staff, and the beneficiary communities’ savings mobilisation, with regular monitoring from the Urban Poor Affairs and the Office of the Mayor.

The Mayor’s Office, through the Urban Poor Affairs, also collaborated with NGOs such as the Foundation for Development Alternatives (FDA) and the Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI) to install the “Informed Database in Planning Poverty Reduction Programme”—a very valuable planning tool for an effective monitoring and control system in the urban poor communities. The database grounds the programme on the specific needs and character of the urban

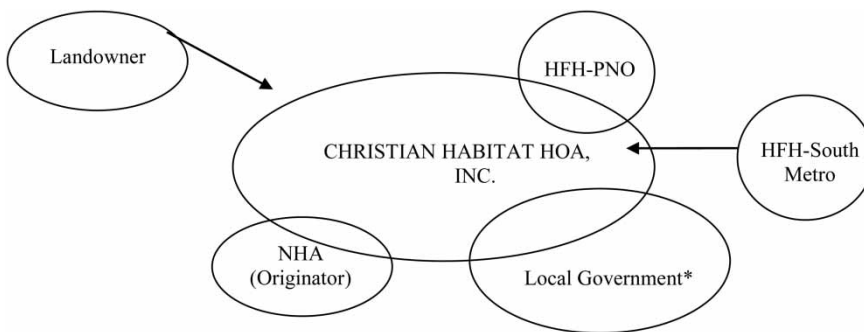


Figure 4. Networks of the partner NGO. *Note:* the specific local government agencies, personalities and aspects include: the mayor’s office, UPAO, LGU’s Legislative Committee and Congressman Manny Villar (for providing tax cuts).

poor beneficiary communities as well as effectively linking the latter to the governance system of the city.

6.2 Case Study 2: *The Networked Governance Practices in Pasig City*

Pasig City, one of the oldest cities of the Philippines, ranks 10th largest among Metro Manila cities and towns, but 4th in terms of population and economic growth (in GDP terms). Located approximately 12 kilometres east of the city of Manila, it sprawls along the banks of the Rivers Marikina and Pasig and the Napindan Channel draining towards Laguna Lake. Given this environmental location, flooding in the city has caused many casualties among the residents and much destruction of properties, greatly hampering its economic growth and development.

In 2009, after Typhoon Ketsana submerged 70 per cent of the city for several days and weeks, the mayor, together with the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO), rationalised his flagship programme, The Pasig Green City Programme, by strengthening the Pasig Command, Communications and Control (C3) Centre. Pasig C3 has been purposely installed by the mayor as the nerve centre for directing and co-ordinating traffic, emergency and disaster situations, and it is the focal point for implementing counter-emergency and/or disaster plans. C3 brings together all aspects of communication, information, warning and alerting of residents, situation assessment and monitoring, tasking allocations and overall co-ordination of initiatives towards an environmentally safe and sound city. C3 also serves as a communication link to other services or units provided by the city government—for example, social services, public safety and order, traffic management and environmental services and public information with a 24/7 emergency monitoring operation. The C3 has various system components in order to perform its functions and these are as follows: computer telephony interface; computer-aided dispatch with GIS capability; centralised communication console motorola command lite; geo-mapping system; GPS vehicle monitoring readiness; research and manpower database; and road management monitoring.

Collaborating with this office is the Pasig Search and Rescue Unit, which has the following programme components: earth and landslide search and rescue course to all communities; barangay cluster emergency teams; rescue training programmes with public/private schools and business establishments; and a safety inspection and building emergency evacuation plan for Pasig for every building and establishment in the city. In addition, C3 has also employed the following strategies: creating and mobilising community-based volunteer groups like the Green Police, the Tanod Sapa (River Security), the Environmental Brigade and the Bantay-Ilog (River Watch) from the 30 barangays of the city; enactment of environmental ordinances and strict enforcement of laws, requiring all establishments to secure an Environmental Permit to Operate prior to the issuance of a Business Permit and to install anti-pollution devices; effecting a recycling and livelihood programme in partnership with schools and parents' associations and private establishments; and, implementing massive greening and anti-pollution programmes in partnership with CBOs, NGOs and the private sector.

The Pasig Green City Programme and its programme components have employed the co-operation of networks of actors and governance strategies. Over the years, these groups and networks have been created and transformed

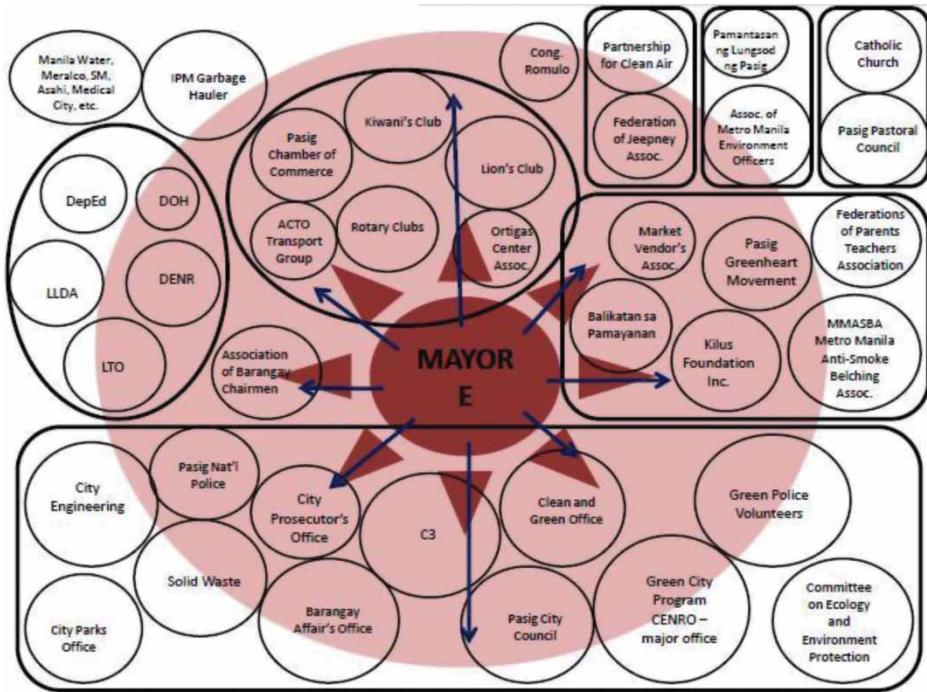


Figure 5. Pasig City's environment programme: social map and power sites.

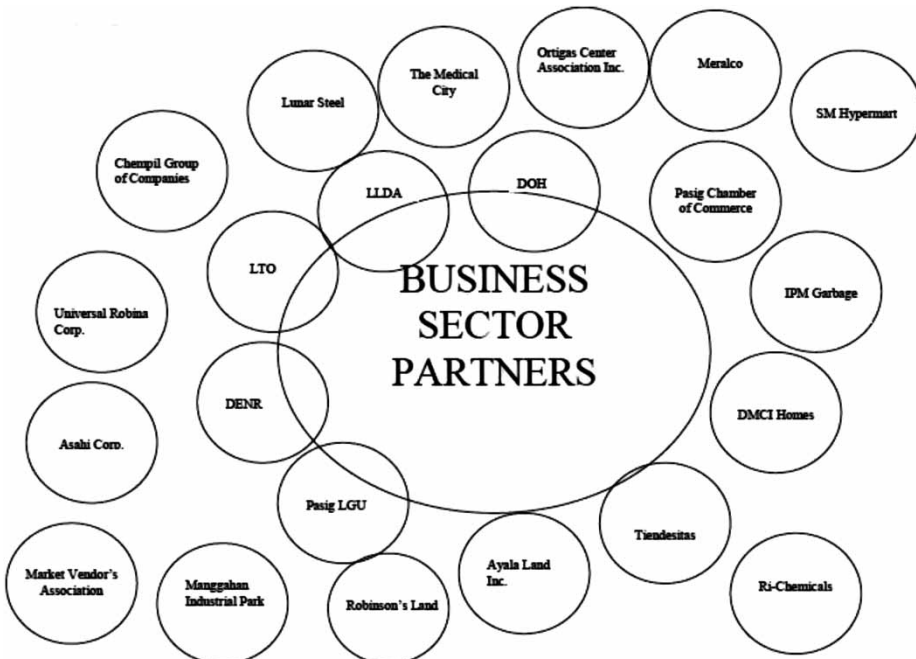


Figure 6. Pasig City's Green City Programme: business partners.

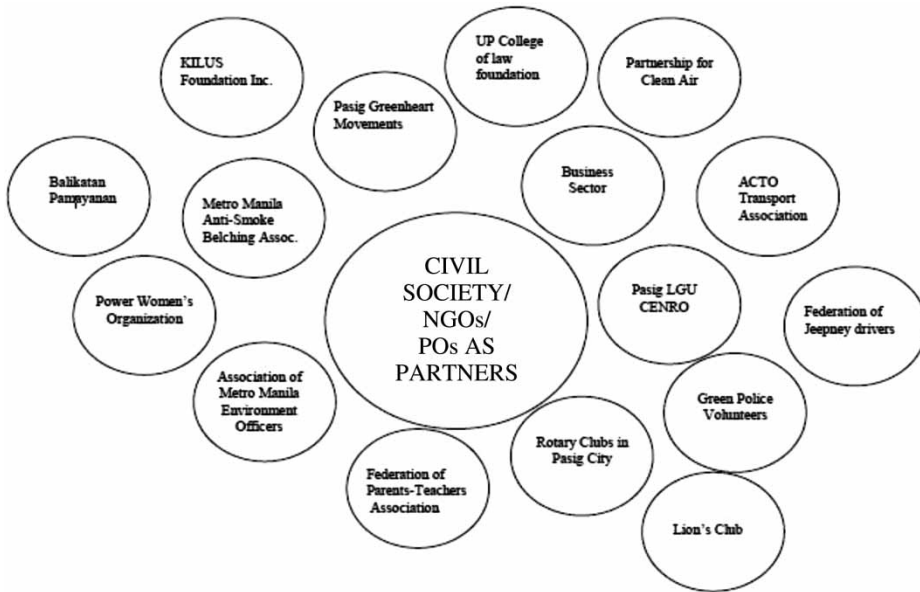


Figure 7. Pasig City's Green City Programme: civil society partners.

by different political administrations, but coming from the same political family (see Table 3), in Pasig City. The linkages of the actors and networks active in the local governance of Pasig City can be seen in Figures 5, 6 and 7. These figures illustrate the intersections of actor networks mobilised in governance practices by local governments and their local chief executives in order to achieve the goals of local autonomy and development. By so doing, they also perpetuate the control and power of their families in local politics.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The mobilisation of networked governance practices among local governments in this study and in the Philippines can be examined through the following democratisation and decentralisation strategies and techniques. These practices, which are utilised by the mayors, allow them to have a stronghold on local power structures, which, in turn, feed on the continued dominance of their political families and allied socio-political and economic networks through

- creating a network of CSOs and/or grassroots organisations through community organising and the mobilising of community-based groups or POs and NGOs to provide participation and support;
- coalition-building and mobilising of private-sector partners to support the projects of the mayor and the ruling party, and employing these strategies in decision-making networks with regard to resource mobilisation for programme implementation;
- institutionalisation of regulatory frameworks, permit system, fees/taxation and resource mobilisation strategies within, for example, environmental compliance certificate, environmental license to operate, business licence to operate; and
- connecting each of these sets of practices of allied actor networks (from community, private sector and civil society) with regulatory practices (formulating

plans, policies and programmes, and the fulfilment of necessary documents/papers/permits) into a set of decentralised and democratic governance practices like consultation, public hearings, participation and consensus-building in decision-making regarding the implementation of policies and programmes.

Has decentralisation facilitated the democratisation of power and resources at the local level? To a certain extent, decentralisation has facilitated the democratisation of power and resources in some localities—for example, Galing Pook localities and the case studies cited here—but, on the whole, it has suffered from innate systemic limits and has not really propelled what it wanted to do (Holmes, 2011, p. 20). These systemic shortfalls, such as scarcity of resources and lack of technical competences in managing bureaucracies, have also been reinforced by the continued dominance of political families at the helm of local/urban governance.

These contradictory governance outcomes can also be seen in Table A1 which shows that, of the 17 LGUs in Metro Manila, more local governments with traditional leadership (i.e. family dynastic élites) seemed to deliver better services to their constituencies (see Appendix). Has decentralisation made inroads, then, at the LGU level, if traditional family dynastic élites can spread public goods more evenly, especially to the urban poor? If we focus on one of the expected outcomes of decentralisation, which is better access of services by the constituents, then the answer is positive; but if we examine it from the rubric of democratisation of power and decision-making in the local government, then the answer would be negative.

Despite these shortfalls, the governance practices of local governments in the Philippines have relatively transformed their hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, especially in terms of their relationships and patterns of engagements to both government and non-government actors (within and outside the bureaucracy). As seen in the case studies presented here, the LGU officials' networking, negotiation, bargaining systems and coalitions have incorporated non-government actors into the formulation of local regulatory frameworks, policy-making and implementation of their flagship programmes. These multiscaled and cross-sectoral networks of interactions are the 'powered-up' sites where policy-making options are generated and reconfigured over time through collaborative arrangements and negotiations in the implementation of these key programmes. The emerging shifts, then, in the locus of power within and across local governance structures demand that we pay attention to the social production of power of these interactions and networks, dominated by political families in alliance with groups in civil society and the private sector. In a sense, the decentralisation/democratisation structures and processes of the 1990s have made these governance networks and practices perfectly legitimate.

The concept of networked governance practices allows us to understand, more broadly, how power structures in urban governance are produced and transformed in interactions and power flows in everyday as well as institutional practices of urban governance. Decentralisation in the Philippines has often highlighted the shifts in the modes and instruments that local governments and officials have used in engaging governance actors, like CSOs (NGOs/POs), in decisions and actions within government bureaucracies regarding urban regulation and the distribution of responsibilities across spheres of government and the private sector, including the cultures and structures of interaction between and among these groups and institutions.

How has decentralisation shaped urban governance in Metro Manila and vice versa? The liberal view of decentralisation, which has emphasised the democratic processes and empowerment discourses of the 'rulers and the ruled' may have obscured some of the hegemonising tendencies of the decentralisation process. Analysing the process of decentralisation through the lens of networked governance practices in urban governance routines reveals the seeming contradiction between the increasing dominance of traditional political families and the efficient and effective outcomes of their administration in local governance.

Dal Bó *et al.* (2009), reflecting on the persistence of elite families in the American democratic political system and elsewhere, concluded that in politics, power begets power. Thus, the successful incumbent political office-holder consolidates his political stronghold by recruiting succeeding generations (family members and political networks) to political offices in Congress or appointive offices in the judiciary or executive branches of the government.

Examining the networks of governance practices allows us a broader understanding of how decentralisation promotes democratisation while strengthening 'selectively' traditional political élites and their allied power bases in civil society and the business sector. While decentralisation has compelled local governments and their officials to deal with the competing demands of economic growth and social-environmental governance, it has also allowed them to recast existing power structures and processes by appropriating democratisation strategies and discourses to respond to the needs of their constituencies, especially marginalised sectors like the urban poor. However, while mobilising decentralisation and democratisation strategies as part of their overall governance framework for their cities to become locally/globally competitive amidst a weak metropolitan governance system in Metro Manila, LGU chief executives also strengthen their strongholds in local politics.

This pattern reinforces Michel's assertion that, even in democratic organisations, the leadership once elected or chosen would entrench itself in power, undermining in the process, the democratic principle of a level playing-field (Michel, 1911/1995; cited in Dal Bó *et al.*, 2009). Local governments in the Philippines do not have a monopoly of this decentralisation trend as this pattern can also be observed in other developing countries.

Notes

1. The most prestigious amongst these awards is the Galing Pook Award for Excellence in Local Governance (see: www.galingpook.org).
2. Pauline McGuirk (2000) has applied the concept of networked governance practices in analysing urban governance and the locus of power in Dublin.
3. Indicators of decentralised, democratic governance—i.e. good governance.
4. Dr Milwida Guevara was the former undersecretary of finance during the Ramos administration and president of the Galing Pook Foundation (1998–2007), the award-giving body of the Galing Pook Awards for Excellence in Local Governance.
5. These interviews were mostly done in the context of validating programmes for the Galing Pook Awards for Excellence in Local Governance. The Appendix (Table A1) shows the list of Galing Pook Award winners and trailblazers among local governments from 1994 to 2010.
6. This is one of the major polling groups in the Philippines, the other being the Social Weather Stations (SWS).
7. To prevent the formation of deeply entrenched political dynasties, the Local Government Code allows elected officials a maximum of three terms (3 years each), but (s)he may rest for one term

and be eligible again for a series of three terms. It seems that the Code has just circumvented a little the stronghold of traditional élites in local politics.

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Appendix

Table A1. Governance, political élite families and delivery of services in Metro Manila

Good delivery of services	Uneven delivery of services
<i>Traditional political leadership</i>	<i>Traditional political leadership</i>
Taguig	Caloocan
Marikina	Manila
Pasig	Malabon
Makati	Valenzuela
San Juan	
Navotas	
Las Piñas	
Mandaluyong	
<i>Non-traditional political leadership</i>	<i>Non-traditional political leadership</i>
Muntinlupa	Pasay
Quezon City	Pateros
Parañaque	