

# **Prospects of Including Indigenous People in Urban Area Development Towards Sustainable Regional Development in New Clark City, Philippines: Documenting the Processes**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper documents the processes involved in the government's endeavor to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in an ambitious urban development project that will decongest Metro Manila, and save it from the threats of a mega-quake and rising sea-levels. In particular, it looks at the ways the project includes the Aytas, the Indigenous People around the development area, in the enjoyment of the benefits of the undertaking via what are claimed to be inclusive development approaches: providing them 1) culturally-appropriate education and 2) a central role in biodiversity development since the Aytas have much to contribute toward the enrichment of botanical knowledge around the fragile Mt. Pinatubo area. A reflexive ethnographic research, the paper looks at the relations between the state as an urban developer and the Indigenous People (IP) and argues that the role of supportive institutions serves as a strong force in the continuity of the presence of the Indigenous People in our midst, hence, preventing their disappearance or cultural annihilation through forcible assimilation. Moreover, disempowered IP groups like the Aytas assert state recognition of their cultural identity, heritage, and ancestral domain with the strong advocacy of cultural development workers and militant organizations.

*Keywords: area development, philosophy of space, culturally-appropriate education*

## INTRODUCTION

### ***Cultural and Environmental Sustainability in Regional Development***

This paper aims to contribute to the discourse on the marriage of culture and regional development, particularly the idea that describes area development as a project on spaces infused by the cultural perspective of space users that promote environmental sustainability (Van der Borg & Russo, 2005; Sheppard, 2018). In the heat of commercialization, threats of climate change, and congestion, it is to the benefit of the regional development project to plan a sustainable way of integrating cultural values protective of the environment in its philosophy of space.

The cultural perspective tackled here is that of the Indigenous People (IP), in particular, the Pinatubo Aytas in Central Luzon, Philippines. This IP group generally believes that the spirits of their gods live in forests and mountains, in rivers and seas, and in the skies, and hence should be respected lest the spirits be offended and punish those who desecrate everything in them. Desecration includes the indiscriminate cutting of trees and polluting the waters and skies. It is this cosmic view of nature that is worthy to be embodied in the principles of sustainability for regional development areas. As this cultural perspective is considered in area development, so too, must the culture bearers—they and their culture should be kept alive and made to infuse the way of life in new cities.

In the Philippines, the support of institutions and cultural advocates has been instrumental in helping prevent Indigenous People from vanishing or fully assimilating, hence assuring cultural sustainability that is good for environmental sustainability. Throsby (2001) theorizes that like the concept of environmental sustainability that posits that development is undertaken in a manner that production and consumption of natural resources take into account the welfare and needs not only of the present but also of future generations, the idea of cultural sustainability promotes the continuity of way of life that is anchored on the health of the eco-system for the benefit of future generations.

The assertion that the assistance of institutions and advocates (such as the University of the Philippines, cultural workers within and outside government, various non-government institutions and the media), is crucial in helping keep alive the way of life of Indigenous Peoples (such as in the case of the Pinatubo Aytas in Central Luzon, Philippines) contrasts with the notion that it is the Indigenous People themselves who autonomously act on their own to retain their way of life as suggested by Champagne (2008):

Throughout the world, indigenous peoples make similar efforts to retain culture, self-government, economic and political autonomy, and face similar issues of negotiating their claims with nation-states and in a world of increasingly globalized markets, culture, and information. Instead of vanishing away or assimilating, indigenous peoples propose to meet contemporary challenges from within their own cultures, communities, and with their own political interests and cultural values. Indigenous peoples are here to stay. Consequently, new ways of theorizing about indigenous peoples, and new policies and practices for undertaking relations with indigenous peoples are needed. p. 2

In the case of the Pinatubo Aytas, they have always been assisted by their defenders. This is given the fact that many Aytas, especially the younger generation, have imbibed the culture of the mainstream population, thanks to the unified educational system and the impact of modern technology and communication. On the impact of technology, Fox (1953) noted for instance that when the Aytas discovered the use of the guns left by the Americans in the mountain, they learned how to hunt alone. Hunting alone using a gun is an efficient way to catch animals for food but an abandonment of the collective practice of hunting in bands. In the process of this and other forms of cultural onslaught, their defenders, as earlier mentioned, have stepped in to help prevent the total annihilation of their way of life. The most important and far-reaching victory of the defenders was the passage of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997 or Republic Act 8371, which benefited not only the Aytas but all the Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines. The implementation of this law has been attended by problems arising from inconsistencies with the Philippine Constitution and civil law. The Philippine Constitution recognizes the doctrine of *jura regalia*,

which means that all lands of the public domain belong to the state. In addition, the nature of ownership in ancestral domains—private but communal community property, but the IPs in the ancestral domain are not co-owners in the sense that the lands cannot be sold, disposed of, or destroyed—conflicts with the concept of ownership in the New Civil Code. Nevertheless, IPRA opened avenues for the protection and development of Indigenous culture in the country, the realization of which, the defenders of Indigenous Peoples have always been strong advocates.

This paper looks at the impact of the continued advocacies for the recognition of the rights of the Indigenous People in Central Luzon, particularly the Aytas, against the backdrop of the transformation of an area used by the Americans as a former military base into a major area development project called the New Clark City (NCC). It posits that this particular group of Indigenous People around the Mt. Pinatubo area is able to gain recognition of their cultural identity, heritage, and land through actions, notably by non-government organizations (NGOs), academe, media and cultural workers within and outside government, who have mobilized to support them.

The process of defending the Aytas by various entities has a two-fold aim—social justice and the protection and development of their cultural heritage for the sustainability of their environment and livelihood and beyond. Because the Aytas keep on moving for economic and cultural reasons, it is difficult to ascertain their legal places of residence. If they could help it, their world would be open-access spaces which they could leave when a relative dies or when the soil has become overused and then return to when the spirits allow or the soil becomes fit for cultivation again. But the spaces and resources are getting scarcer as the population and needs of society increase. As population increases and competition for land gets tight, there comes a pressure to the state to readjust distribution. And then too, in the age of turbulence, the state has to plan and prepare spaces to save lives, property, and national wealth. But it must nevertheless, ensure social protection for those who are affected by the ensuing reallocation of resources.

As a result of advocacies for social justice for the Aytas and other Indigenous Peoples, their claims for permanent spaces where they could live their way of life have been recognized in several ancestral domain areas in Central Luzon. Those who have been granted

Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) could work their areas—in the range of 2 to 20 hectares per household if the total land area per CADT in Central Luzon is divided by the number of household beneficiaries—for food production and other uses. These spaces are huge areas, considering that many Filipinos are landless and even homeless. And that before the Spaniards colonized the Philippines, prehistoric natives of the archipelago were all Indigenous Peoples.

The philosophy of the Aytas on their relationship with nature is an appropriate philosophy of space for the environmental sustainability of the NCC and the regional community. Hence, it is a good area development policy to encourage the contributions of the Aytas to the regional community and to support them in this endeavor. I believe that such support will go a long way if provided within a designated area in the NCC through an appropriate education and skills development cum livelihood assistance using the Aytas' Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge (ITK) on ethnobotany.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Impetus for New Clark City as Major Area Development***

In the Philippines, an ambitious 9,450-hectare area development project has been named by the current administration of President Rodrigo Duterte as New Clark City (NCC) and called Clark Green City during the administration of President Benigno Aquino. New Clark City lies at the extended part of Clark Freeport Zone (CFZ) towards the north, until the town of Capas, Tarlac, and is called the Clark sub-zone (see Figure 1 below for the map of the NCC side by side with the officially registered ancestral domain of the Aytas in Tarlac and Pampanga).

After the departure of the Americans in 1991 following the rejection by the Philippine Senate of the extended operation of the United States military facilities in the Philippines, the government created the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) with the mandate to convert such military reservations into other productive uses under Republic Act 7227. The latest of this conversion endeavor is the NCC.

The purposes of this latest major area development are to decongest Metro Manila, to disperse development to the countryside, and to secure at-risk populations from possible disasters like the projected “Big One” (strong earthquake) and the effects of climate change. Today, Manila is considered the densest city in the world. Wright (2020) puts Manila’s population density at about 46, 178 people per square kilometer (PPSK); Pateros, which has 36, 477 PPSK comes as the second densest; and Mandaluyong, with 34, 925 PPSK, is the third. All three are in the National Capital Region. Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, with 32,874 PPSK is the fourth densest city in the world (Wright, 2020).

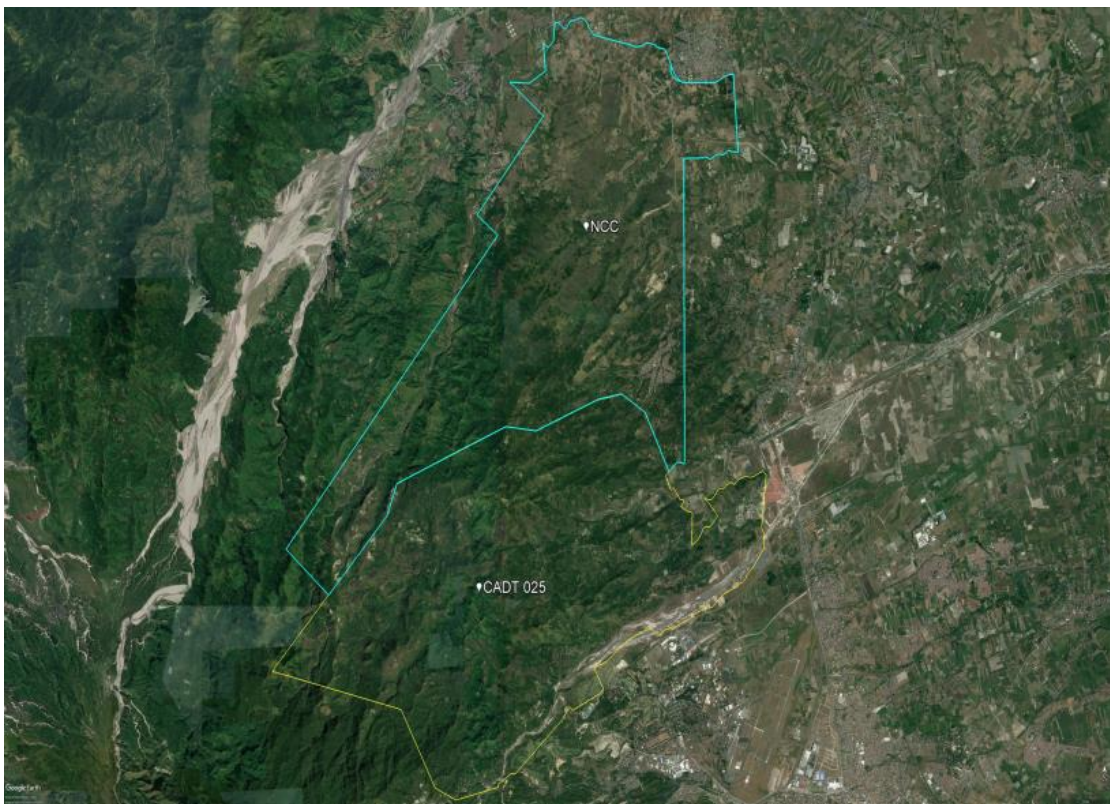


Figure 1. Map of the New Clark City beside the ancestral domain of the Aytas in the villages of San Nicolas, San Vicente, Sto. Niño, Anupul and Calumpang in Bamban, Tarlac and parts of Barangay Marcos in Mabalacat, Pampanga, under CADT RO3-BAM-1204-025

Metro Manila, the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines, is seeking to disperse development to other regions by encouraging the transfer of investments through incentives in infrastructure such as transportation and communication facilities, and boosting

existing regional natural resource endowments. Regional dispersal of population and industries has always been a part of the regional development strategy of the Philippine government, starting from the creation of regional offices of the national government in the early 1970s as mandated by PD 1177.

As the seat of government and center of power for centuries since the arrival of the Spaniards in the 1500s, Manila and its neighboring cities, which now comprise the region called Metro Manila (MM) or NCR, have enjoyed priority both in the allocation of resources and in the determination of regional wages. These two factors have led to the migration to MM by rural workers and the influx of country population from other regions to the metropolis for education, work, and residence.

Aside from the density problem, Metro Manila is threatened by the prediction of a major earthquake. According to the Department of Science and Technology - Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (DOST-PHIVOLCS), the “Big One”, an earthquake with a magnitude of no less than 7.2 on the Richter scale, may be experienced in our lifetime. The affected areas are those near the West Valley Fault (WVF), an active fault system consisting of two fault segments and located underground, moving where a big earthquake may originate. The two fault segments are the 10-km long East Valley Fault (EVF) in Rizal and the 100 km long WVF that runs through Bulacan, Rizal, Metro Manila, Cavite, and Laguna (NRCP, 2017). The Big One poses a threat to people, livelihood, buildings, and infrastructure.

Lastly, Metro Manila is also threatened by a possible sea-level rise resulting from climate change, according to the 2017 study of the Asian Development Bank and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. The study predicts that by 2085, the Philippine cities of Butuan, Davao, Iloilo, Caloocan, Malabon, Manila and Taguig, having low-lying coastal areas, will be at increased risk of flooding. Together, these imperatives compelled the creation of the NCC.

In an earlier study that I conducted for the Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), I was tasked to assess the climate information system (CIS) that was set up by the non-government organization Rice Watch Action Network (RWAN) and similar systems established by the DA and other institutions in

selected parts of the country. I observed that some of the places where the NGO set up the CIS were coastal high-risk agricultural and fishery areas that have actually suffered severe flooding that displaced the farming and fishing population in the recent past (Sebastian, 2018). In that study, I recommended contingency planning for the preparation of the relocation of the said population in anticipation of the predicted sea-level rising. It was my belief, and still is, that localities elsewhere should be ready and sincere to offer spaces to Filipinos who would be adversely affected by the possible submersion of coastal areas in the event that the prediction finally visits our land. It is in this spirit that I welcome the intent of NCC to offer succor to Filipinos who would want to relocate to the area regardless of their regional origins. Metro Manila hosted Filipinos from other regions who migrated to the metropolis for work, residence, education and other purposes for decades and in the process bore the undesirable consequences of urbanization. Should not other regions welcome their countrymates when their turn comes?

### ***The Aytas***

The Aytas in the Philippines, generally short, dark brown-skinned, and curly to kinky haired, were called Negrillos by the Spaniards when the latter were here from the 16th to 19th century. They refer to themselves as Ayta, Ita, Agta, Ati, Ateng, and Mamanwa depending on their geographical location. They refused to be settled in reducciones all throughout the Spanish rule. Reduccion was the Spanish policy of resettling dispersed Filipinos into compact settlements to facilitate governance. The natives were resettled “bajo de campana” or within the sound of the church bells. Chirino (1604, 12:209) related how this resettlement proceeded in Taitai (now Taytay, Rizal). After observing the flooding of the valley—from the “banks of the marsh of stream formed by waterfalls from the mountains of Antipolo”—where the old settlement was located, Chirino caused the transfer of houses to an elevated place where the barangai folks or resettled villagers could attend mass in the church which he said the natives also built with surprising haste. The Spaniards also had difficulty in converting the Aytas to Christianity because, as Chirino observed, the latter feared and mistrusted them. Comparing the Pintados and the Negrillos in the Visayas (Bissayas).



Chirino (12:217) described the latter:

These blacks have had very little to do with the Spaniards, not so much through hate as from fear and mistrust of them. It has already happened that Spaniards, unaccompanied and straying from the road, have fallen into their hands; but with a few presents and fair words they have been allowed to go free. They also fear the priests as being Spaniards, making no distinction between them. For this reason we could not undertake their conversion, although they were near to the village of Tigbauan; on this account all our energy was directed towards the Bissayas alone.

The Pinatubo Aytas are the Indigenous People around the Mt. Pinatubo area. In the early years of the passage of the IPRA, I asked a DENR officer how large the ancestral domain claims of the Aytas were. He said that those who were helping the Aytas (various NGOs whose group name he did not mention) claimed that the Aytas owned the area 30 kilometers from all points of the foot of Mt. Pinatubo onwards, hence, effectively covering the whole of Clark main zone and parts of the sub-zones, the whole of Angeles City and Mabalacat City up to parts of San Fernando City, Pampanga, parts of Zambales, Bataan, and Tarlac provinces. If such claim is to be taken seriously, where would the non-Ayta population of these provinces go? Where would they trace their ancestries so that they could in turn claim their own lands in which to live, work, and reproduce their kind? The claim taught by those who help the Ayta defenders whom the DENR officer was referring to seems inconsistent with the practices of the Aytas because the latter could not have conceived of “owning” lands prior to their introduction to the concept of ancestral domains. They roamed in forests in lowlands and uplands, treating the whole area as a commons or an open-access area. Moreover, “Territorial boundaries were never defined by the Aetas in terms of concrete boundaries... this is based on their consciousness and is defined by the use of markers such as fruit trees and natural demarcations such as rivers and ridges, whatever is present in the area” (David, 2011).

Rightly considered, all Filipinos were Indigenous People when the Spaniards came. And hence, the practice of land ownership in pre-historic time should be the basis of land allocation to all Filipinos in the post-colonial era. In my dissertation titled “Getting Beyond the

Commons Dilemma in Community-Based Forest Management in Central Luzon, Philippines: An Autoethnography”, I traced such land ownership practice from the Spanish chronicler Plasencia (1589). Talking about the customs of the Tagalogs, Plasencia described land ownership in the country during the 16th century—both individual and common as follows:

The lands which they inhabited were divided among the whole barangay, especially the irrigated portion, and thus each one knew his own. No one belonging to another barangay would cultivate them unless after purchase or inheritance. The lands on the *tingues*, or mountain-ridges, are not divided, but owned in common by the barangay. Consequently, at the time of the rice harvest, any individual of any particular barangay, although he may have come from some other village, if he commences to clear any land may sow it, and no one can compel him to abandon it (P.166).

The coverage today of the mentioned claim of 30 kilometers from all radii of the foot of Mt. Pinatubo extends to the areas that have been inhabited by the non-Ayta Kapampangans, Zambaleños, Tarlaqueños, and Bataaños for centuries. If the practice of the prehistoric Filipinos on land ownership should be the basis of land reform, it would be unjust to say that only the Aytas should own such land coverage. It is even interesting to note in the description of Plasencia that prehistoric Filipinos were unselfish as they would allow those from other villages who have commenced to clear any land to sow it, and not “compel him to abandon it.”

Agrarian justice was introduced from the 1950s land reform program and modified from then up to the present through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). CARP’s counterpart for the Indigenous People is the Indigenous People’s Rights Act (IPRA) which mandates the granting of certificates of ancestral domain titles (CADT) to qualified claimants.

#### *Awarding of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles*

After the approval of the IPRA Law in 1997, the filing and processing of the Ancestral Domains Claims of Indigenous Peoples in the country commenced. In May 2009, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo awarded the first four CADTs to be registered out of the 29

CADTs in the country (Orejas, 2009a). The first IP awardees were four Ayta groups in Central Luzon, namely:

1) Aytas in Pastolan in **Hermosa, Bataan**, who were awarded CADT RO3-HER-0703-008 that covered 4,284.13 hectares of lands and 13.7 hectares of waters;

2) Aytas in Barangay (or villages) Nabuklod and Mawakat in **Floridablanca, Pampanga**, and portions of San Marcelino and Subic towns in **Zambales** who were awarded CADT RO3-FLO-1206-057 that covered 5,496.82 hectares of lands. The CADT was awarded to 454 Ayta families.

3) Dumagats in Barangay Dibut in **San Luis** and in portions of Barangay Zabali and Pingit in **Baler, both in Aurora**, who were awarded under CADT RO3-SLU-1205-039 that covered 2,789.26 hectares of lands and 2,859 hectares of waters; and

4) Aytas in the villages of San Nicolas, San Vicente, Sto. Niño, Anupul and Calumpang in **Bamban, Tarlac** and parts of Barangay Marcos in **Mabalacat, Pampanga**, under CADT RO3-BAM-1204-025, who were awarded lands that were the biggest among the four—10,323.308 hectares. The CADT was awarded to 3,000 families in the mentioned areas.

### ***Other CADTs Awarded to Aytas of Central Luzon***

**Mt. Pinatubo, Botolan, Cabangan, San Felipe, and San Marcelino, Zambales.** On November 9, 2009, the 7,000 families of Mt. Pinatubo Aytas became official owners of the lands around the volcano where they used to reside before the eruption and where they returned to five years after (Orejas, 2009b). CADT RO-3 bot-0708-073 issued on November 9, 2009 sealed the ownership of lands that spanned the villages of Burgos, Villar, Moraza and portions of the towns of Cabangan, San Felipe, and San Marcelino. The CADT covered 15,998 hectares including the 3-km Mt Pinatubo wide crater lake (Orejas, 2009b).

**Cabangan, Zambales.** The Aytas known as Abellen of Sitio Maporac, Barangay New San Juan, Cabangan, Zambales, received the Philippine's first Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) on

March 8, 1996. They acquired their CADT 16 years later in December 2010.

The CADT award had a total area of 5,430 hectares covered by CADT No. R03-CAB-0110-151 with 2,685 hectares or 49% of the total area as an open canopy forest. The ancestral domain of the Ayta Abellen forms part of one of the Key Biodiversity Areas in the Philippines—the Zambales Mt. Range.

“The Ayta Abellen community is composed of around 186 households or 934 individuals in several settlements. Majority of them settled in Sitio Maporac in Barangay New San Juan while some have established settlements in Sitio Tangos, Barangay Dolores and Barangay Casabaan of the same municipality. Of the total number of households, 26 of them are migrants or non-indigenous peoples.” (ICCA Registry, March 2013).

**Morong, Bataan.** The CADT application of the Ayta Magbukun ICCs/IPs in Sitio Kanawan, Brgy. Binaritan, Municipality of Morong, Province of Bataan, was approved on the third and final reading by the NCIP Seventh Commission during its en banc session conducted on June 19, 2018 (NCIP, 2018).

**San Jose, Tarlac.** In 2018, the NCIP reported that the delineation of the CADT of the Ayta Abellen ICCs/IPs in Brgy. Maamot, Municipality of San Jose, Tarlac was ongoing (NCIP, 2018).

I compute that if each group of the abovementioned CADT recipients would allocate the lands to the members, the resulting distribution would range from 2.28 to 20.19 hectares per family (I did the computation for those with available data on the number of recipient families only).

Considering that many Filipinos are landless or own only the small lots where their houses are erected, and the very poor are even homeless, the Ayta groups mentioned above, who have been awarded permanent ownership of their ancestral domain, are far better off. Even middle-class Filipinos own tiny parcels of land only, like some 150 to 300-square meter lots where their houses are erected. They plant vegetables and ornamentals in the two-meter easement around their houses or do vertical gardening in terraces if the house fully occupies the lot.

How the Aytas would make use of their common property in their ancestral domains for their cooperative and individual purposes would determine the sustainability of both their environment and culture.

### ***The Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge of the Aytas Towards Area and Environmental Sustainability***

Robert Fox (1953), in his study titled *The Pinatubo Negritos: Their Useful Plants and Material Culture*, gave an account of the ethno-botanical knowledge of the Pinatubo Aytas. He observed not only their familiarity with both native plants and those that were introduced from the New World “by man” but also the relationship of such plants with animals and insects. This relationship was important because they could trace the behavior of the animals who frequently visit specific plants for food. Hence, even if they do not eat the fruits of some trees, these are important to them as markers of the location of animals and insects. Fox likewise observed the botanical knowledge of Ayta “medicine men and women” or the *mananambal*. He also listed the various uses of plants by the Aytas not only for food and medicine, but also for other domestic uses such as for shelter, weapons, adornment, clothing, and utensils.

There are areas of the forests and trees that the Aytas would not touch because spirits—either good or evil— live in them. They would leave a place either because a relative dies or the soil has become overused and then come back when the spirits allow or the soil becomes fit for cultivation again. Such intimate knowledge of, and relation with, the forest eco-system is the Aytas’ Indigenous and traditional knowledge.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study focuses on a project, the proposed Ayta Ethno-Botanical School (AEBS) inside the NCC. This school would be part of the overall concept of the BCDA to preserve Indigenous communities and the heritage of the IPs in Central Luzon and to include their concept of environmental protection in the philosophy of SEMMapace of the new city. In this narration, I use reflexive

ethnography for this case study on the infusion of Indigenous culture in area development efforts.

*Subject Position.* My participation in the whole area development project started in 2013 from the writing of the rapid assessment of the site for the new city. The rapid assessment included an inventory of those who populated the area, both Aytas and non-Aytas—their regional and provincial origins, socio-economic status, their expectations, and what they thought about the project. After the completion of the writing of the rapid assessment in 2014, I went back in 2019 to the BCDA, my partner in reviewing a curriculum for Ayta schools with an Alternative Learning System (ALS) based on the knowledge systems and practices of the Aytas. This curriculum was the product of an earlier action research project of the University of the Philippines Diliman Extension Program in Pampanga (UPDEPP) in collaboration with a campus-based cooperative.

I thought that the curriculum, having been developed in a community-based forest management area in Zambales with mixed Aytas and non-Aytas as forest stewards, would be useful for the ethno-botanical school I recommended in the mentioned rapid assessment report on the NCC area in 2013.

The intimate knowledge of the Aytas of their ecology, as discussed in the preceding section, is important in keeping the biodiversity in the forest ecosystem. As the NCC is surrounded by upland forests, the health of the forest ecosystem would be vital in the life of the area as it proceeds to become a sustainable city. As this city of the future would have increasing need for water and clean air, the rehabilitation, protection, and development of the forests around Mt. Pinatubo is an important component of a forward-looking plan. This is essential in the sustainability of the NCC environment and beyond. Hence, while the new city would be populated by locators who would rent spaces from the government, it is wise for the BCDA to keep the Aytas who settled in the area as keepers of the forest environment.

Below is the documentation of the transition from the rapid assessment of the area to the consideration and planning of the Ayta Ethno-Botanical School, which would utilize the forest curriculum.

## DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE AYTAS IN THE NCC

### *Pre-development Stage, 2013-2014*

In 2013, acting by virtue of its mandate to convert former US military facilities into development hubs, the BCDA started the New Clark City project by conducting a rapid assessment of the state of the government property. The rapid assessment included a survey of the Ayta and non-Ayta households that settled in this land. It found out that in the 9,450-hectare government property, there were around 2,000 households of mixed regional origins in four barangays who settled in the area for development. The number of Ayta households was indeterminate because they would leave and come back to the area as is characteristic of their cultural lifestyle. Since their housing make was susceptible to destruction, the accurate number of their households was difficult to ascertain. This means that the survey group found no actual Ayta houses built in parts of the surveyed areas but in the statistical sample, the survey doubled the number of the representation of the Ayta households because their houses might have been blown away, or they might have moved somewhere else.

Hence, during the survey of the estimated 2,000 households in the area, 27 Ayta households were included, a number that gave them fair chances to be represented out of the total 132-survey sample of household respondents. The rapid assessment report says:

A total of 132 respondents—representing 6.3% of the estimated number of households in the affected barangays—were surveyed. The barangay captains estimated the households in each barangay to be approximately 500 or a total of 2,000 households in four barangays. The survey approach was to mark every fifth house from a beginning point of the area. This would prevent the owner of the marked house from being interviewed again in the next batch of the survey. To allow the Ayta population fair chances to be represented in the survey as their sitios were in the remote areas, 27 of them coming from Sitio Manabayukan of Barangay O'Donnell were included in the survey, hence doubling the O'Donnell's representation in the total number of respondents.

This allowance for the Aytas was also made in consideration of the fact that in practice, they leave and come back to the community in the exigency of their economic and cultural practices. Moreover, their housing make was susceptible to destruction by the vagaries of nature and hence the accurate number of their households was indeterminable. Still, the representation of the Aytas (53 or 40%) in the survey was still lower than those of the Non-Aytas (79 or 60%). (Sebastian, 2014)

To assess the views of the Capas local government unit's planning and development staff, and of the sectoral and barangay leaders about the then named Clark Green City project, and to know the stakeholders' concerns, expectations, and claims, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted by the BCDA project development team called BCDA-Project Management Office for Clark Green City (BCDA-PMO-CGC).

The Aytas, the Indigenous People in Capas, were represented at the FGD by Program Margarita (PM), one of the nongovernment organizations (NGOs) assisting them. Prior to the FGD, the BCDA-PMO-CGC conducted onsite consultations at the sitios of the Aytas. The BCDA assessment group presented the project and asked the Aytas their concerns and what they thought about the project. The Aytas said they needed livelihood and accessible education for their children. The BCDA assessment team then asked who among their leaders could represent them during the multi-sectoral consultations to be conducted in Capas poblacion. The Aytas said Program Margarita could represent them. Hence, during the multi-sectoral consultations, PM was invited together with some Ayta leaders. The NGO expressed the need of the Aytas for higher education in a place close to their sitios and welcomed the proposed Center of Excellence in the Green City. The PM representative also appealed on behalf of the Aytas for training in livelihood and health management.

As the BCDA-PMO-CGC consultant on this rapid assessment, I informed the NGO representative of an alternative learning system (ALS) curriculum for Aytas managing common forest resource, which I developed as part of an action research in the University of the Philippines. When this ALS curriculum was developed in 2007-2008, IPRA was still young and the lands today covered by ancestral



domain titles were still under the program of the DENR called Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) with management contracts awarded to people's organizations (POs), constituting Indigenous Peoples or mixed IPs and non-IPs. Moreover, the then Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) of the Department of Education, which was later abolished, had not yet produced similar education and training materials for Indigenous Peoples. The Department of Education, as of this writing, is still in the process of developing location-and-tribe-specific curricula. The people's organizations managing the CBFM areas were, in the CBFM contract with the DENR, encouraged to nurture the awarded forestlands towards the holistic development of the community of the forest managers. The ALS curriculum was developed in the spirit of providing education and training tailored for Aytas forest managers because during that time, both IPs and non-IPs received education designed for the mainstream population. The action research was undertaken in a community-based forest management area in Zambales in consultation with the Aytas residing in the mixed settlement of Aytas and non-Aytas dispersed by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption. As in many CBFM areas in the country, the forestlands under the program were in need of rehabilitation, development, and protection (Sebastian, 2008). The Philippine forests were no longer as affluent as they were when the Spaniards arrived in the 1500s. Over the years, the forests have suffered from logging and extraction of mineral resources beyond their carrying capacity, from forest-fire causing livelihood activities to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 in Central Luzon. Hence, the need for all CBFM beneficiaries (both IPs and non-IPs) to help restore the health of the forests.

The action research likewise developed exemplar lesson plans or alternative learning system modules appropriate for the needs of the Aytas in the context of the conditions of the upland forest ecosystem in the twenty first century and the need for the IPs to protect their Indigenous and traditional knowledge as the Philippines joined the global economy. Hence, the curriculum included activities for agro-forestry-based livelihood (e.g. diversification of livelihood in order to lessen or totally abandon forest-fire causing charcoal making), health and sanitation management, processing of the useful plants of Pinatubo Aytas (in case they opt to supply other communities with their products or exchange such with those of other communities as many of them have already been doing), and information on or aspects of social processes they may need to know

as they interact with the people outside their communities. These processes include participation in elections, exchange of their products with those of others outside their communities, negotiation arising from the management of their common-property resource, and protection of their traditional/Indigenous knowledge.

The BCDA contingent stated that the curriculum would be useful for the Aytas in the affected areas and may be considered for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program of the BCDA. In the abovementioned rapid assessment report, I wrote that the following was recommended in response to the request of the Aytas for accessible education in the new city:

As part of the future ecological-cultural tourism area, the Ayta school areas could be developed as an Ethno-Botanical Garden in which the Aytas themselves could plant and be given maintenance responsibilities.

Further, hawong-inspired learning facilities would be built by the Aytas assisted by architects and engineers to ensure that the structures are weather resistant. These structures could be patterned after the Indigenous houses of the Aytas but fortified with concrete materials so they would not need to rebuild after every disaster. Both the ethno-botanical garden and the hawong learning facilities could become part of the ecological-cultural tourism of the place under an agreement with the community. The University of the Philippines in Clark could put up within the ethno-botanical garden an Ayta Studies Center cum Ayta Museum. The Ayta Museum could be designed as a big hawong although the whole ethno-botanical garden itself could serve as a museum. Hence, the theAytas could continue to live where they have settled in the government property, preserve their culture, and protect the forest environment. (Sebastian, 2014)

As would be clearer in the latter portion of this paper, these suggested structures would be discussed at length with the Aytas during the joint efforts of developing the competencies of the curriculum for Ayta education and during the conduct of the social preparation activities for the development of the Ayta Ethno-Botanical School.

### ***Development Stage, 2016 to 2020***

Prior to the commencement of physical development in the NCC, the BCDA negotiated with the project-affected population (PAP), meaning those who built houses and business structures in and used the future NCC area for farming and other business ventures. The agency gave them financial assistance in the amount of three hundred thousand pesos (\$6,000 more or less, based on the foreign exchange value of the peso at the time the assistance was given) per hectare of land claimed to have been used.

On the part of the Aytas, their militant defenders protested that the NCC deprived the Aytas of their ancestral lands (Subingsubing & Ramos, 2019). The BCDA explained that since the NCC area was classified government property, there were no IP ancestral domains within the area. The local chief executive of Capas, Tarlac and a former member of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples attested to the veracity of the declaration of the BCDA (Manabat, 2019). NCIP Region 3 issued a statement asserting that “There are no declared ancestral domains or Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) in the area. Therefore, Aeta communities are not displaced.” (NCIP, 2019)

## **THE AYTA ETHNO-BOTANICAL SCHOOL**

### ***Consultations on the Ayta Curriculum and the Establishment of the Physical Structures of the Ayta Ethno-Botanical School***

At present, the implementation of the proposal on the inclusion of a cultural space for the Aytas within the New Clark City is underway. In consultation with Ayta teachers and their community elders/leaders, the design of an Ayta Ethno-Botanical School (AEBS) is in the process of development. The consultation process is a part of the review of the curriculum for the learning system for the Aytas within the NCC as well as the plan of the BCDA to preserve the Ayta communities. The first part of the review of the curriculum has been completed. Involved in the review are: two licensed Ayta teachers, the Department of Education Region 3 Focal Person for Indigenous People’s Education, and an expert on the alternative learning system from the UP College of Education. The second part of the review is the development of the competencies required in the

implementation of the curriculum process as suggested by the curriculum review group members mentioned. This second review was supposed to be undertaken in the second half of this year, 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic halted the implementation of the planned activities as physical meetings could not be conducted in observance of the physical distancing rules of Bayanihan Law 1 and 2, and the Aytas in remote parts of Capas could not participate in online meetings.

A 10-hectare lot has been initially allocated for this learning facility where botanical knowledge and other expressions of culture of the Aytas will be highlighted. Hence, in AEBS, an area is devoted to the planting of forest and fruit trees interspersed with vegetable, medicinal, and other plants. The forest garden is called Museum of Ayta Botanical Knowledge. Two hectares are being planned to be allocated to the development of open-air learning facilities appropriate for the cultural learning norms of the Aytas. Included in the two hectares is a processing center where the Aytas could be taught to process their useful plants, and a display room for processed products.

Consultations with the Aytas and other reviewers of the curriculum have been undertaken under the purview of the BCDA Office of the Vice President for Conversion and Development Group headed by Engr. Joshua Bincang and BCDA Community Relations Office (COMREL) led by Jennifer Mallo. The BCDA fully welcomes the idea of the AEBS and is especially interested in the sustainability of its operation. Hence, following the instructions of the Vice President for Conversion and Development, I am preparing an action plan for the next ten years.

It is noteworthy how the BCDA, through the mentioned offices, have been keen about and welcoming of the idea of the AEBS. The agency even allowed the COMREL head to join me in presenting the early version of this paper at the London Regional Studies Association Winter Conference in November 2019 with the theme “Turbulent Times: Rethinking Regions and Cities”. The agency supported in both the logistics of my consultations with the Aytas on the review of the curriculum and in scouting for engineers, landscape architects, and social entrepreneurs who could be involved in the development of the AEBS. Through the COMREL, sourcing financial assistance for the development of the area and for the establishment

of the school has been initiated. Both the past—(President Benigno Aquino’s)—and present —(President Rodrigo Duterte’s )—administrations are supportive of the AEBS idea. Their chief executive officers (CEOs) in the BCDA, Arnel Paciano Casanova and Vivencio Dizon, respectively, posed no objections. In 2013, I presented the results of the rapid assessment of the then Clark Green City area to lawyer and past BCDA president Arnel Paciano Casanova. The assessment included the recommendation to create an AEBS among others, which would blend quite perfectly with the concept of a “green city”. From 2018 to the present, development economist and current BCDA president Vivencio Dizon, together with his agency’s mentioned offices, approves of what I am doing with the AEBS.

### ***Learning while Earning***

The target Ayta learners in the ethno-botanical school are those of working age who have not yet finished elementary or high school in the formal educational system. The proposed learners are Aytas of working age so that they may earn while they learn. This is to ensure that the learners would not disrupt their studies whenever their families need them to work to provide their basic needs. Dropping out from school because of the need to help their families is a common problem of Ayta children. This problem was observed during the development of the Ayta curriculum that would be used for the school—in the literacy class conducted which also served as the laboratory for the development of the curriculum.

### ***Recapturing the Indigenous Way of Life***

As many young Aytas have partly imbibed the life of the mainstream population and received the same education provided by the public school system to the rest of the Philippine population, they do not fully know their heritage anymore. They will therefore be taught by professional Ayta teachers as well as by elders in their community who are bearers of Ayta culture.

The curriculum exemplar lesson plans are divided into three parts. First, the curriculum material is designed for the Aytas to know themselves in the context of their environment and develop the skills their ancestors mastered, such as survival in the forest and making use of plants for food, medicine, and other applications.

Their elders will be the teachers of their Indigenous and traditional knowledge. Second, they will also be taught to understand the communities outside them. And third, they would be taught to grasp the world beyond with topics that include world geography, the Indigenous and traditional knowledge of IP groups in the world, their livelihood products, their technology, and how they are protected. The teachers will be professional Ayta teachers as well as non-Aytas trained in Indigenous Peoples education.

At present, the University of the Philippines Diliman Extension Program in Pampanga (UPDEPP), currently situated in Clark Main Zone, is preparing a short-term seminar-workshop to co-study with the Ayta teachers on IP Education. This course for teacher training is a must in order to make available teachers who will provide the young Aytas culturally-appropriate education. UPDEPP is part of the University of the Philippines, the country's national university and will have presence inside the NCC. It seeks to make itself a relevant partner to the community, the government, and other institutions that need its services in instruction, research and extension, and public service. An upcoming plan for an extension project being considered in UPDEPP is a partnership with the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Northern Luzon intended to encourage the sharing of Indigenous-traditional knowledge among the Indigenous Peoples of the North and Central Luzon areas. The Cordillera IPs are envisioned to share their ITK on rice terraces construction and maintenance with the Aytas. This ITK would be useful in the development and protection of the hilly parts of the ancestral domain areas of the Aytas in Central Luzon. The Cordillera and Ilocos IPs are likewise envisioned to share their ITK on weaving with the Aytas. The help of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the development of fiber plant variety that would grow in Central Luzon would be sought. The Aytas, in turn, could share their botanical knowledge with the Cordilleran IPS. Sharing of other ITK practices with the IPs in Northern Luzon is also being considered. These practices include culture/mythic stories/ritual dances, songs, healing practices and traditions, among others.

The review of the curriculum and exemplar lesson plans to be used in an alternative learning system mode in the Ayta Ethno-Botanical School has been undertaken as earlier mentioned. The curriculum and the needed competencies and outcomes are expected to be ready upon the completion of the infrastructure and land

development of the school to be built inside New Clark City. Should the AEBS Museum of Ayta Botanical Knowledge succeed, it would be replicated in the ancestral domains of the Aytas around the Clark Main and Sub-Zones.

### ***Expected Outcomes and Outputs of the AEBS***

The expected outcomes of the learning process in the AEBS are as follows:

- 1) A model of a culturally-appropriate learning environment for the Aytas; and
- 2) A model of sustainable livelihood creation for the Aytas using the resources of their environment and their Indigenous/traditional knowledge

The expected outputs of the AEBS, set for the next ten years upon the commencement of the school, are as follows:

- 1) Knowledge-reclamation of the Aytas of themselves, their heritage, their community, and the world around them;
- 2) Enriched and sustained cultural traditions and reintegration of the Aytas with their people in their habitat;
- 3) Rehabilitated, developed, and protected forests in the New Clark City and subsequently the forests in the ancestral domains of the Aytas;
- 4) Sufficient supply of food and other basic needs of the Aytas in their lands;
- 5) Rich supply of water for lowland farm irrigation and other water uses coming from the watersheds of upland forests not only in NCC but also neighboring areas of the provinces of Tarlac and Pampanga such as Zambales, Bataan and Nueva Ecija.
- 6) Environmental sustainability in the new metropolis.

## CONCLUSION

There is a sincere effort on the part of the state area developer BCDA to make the NCC an inclusive metropolis. It started with an assessment on who were using the former military area and later compensating them for vacating the development site despite having already benefited from the use of the government property. A laudable gesture of the BCDA is to design the new city as the area that will save the National Capital Region from congestion and threats of disasters while adopting a philosophy of space that marries culture and regional development, particularly the way of life of Indigenous Peoples that protects and respects the environment. The project to establish an ethno-botanical garden inside the new city where the Aytas could have culturally-appropriate education while working is a response to their clamor for opportunities for education services while being able to sustain themselves at the same time. Around the Ayta area are supporters and defenders and cultural workers in the community who are committed to helping them live their way of life and appreciate the value of maintaining their cultural identity and heritage in the place of their natural habitat. The challenge for the future is to get the rest of the new metropolitan population to imbibe such a philosophy and learn from the lessons of living in the National Capital Region, an area that has long overreached its carrying capacity.

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