

## How does Decentralization Affect the Performance of Municipalities in Urban Environmental Management in the Philippines?

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**Abstract** This study explored the factors that affect the environmental management performance of municipalities in the Philippines, which have expanded their environmental policy authority through decentralization. Individual case studies have shown that in order for a municipality that has expanded its authority over environmental policy in the process of decentralization to effectively implement this policy, it is important that the mayor take political initiative to overcome financial and technical constraints and encourage the effective participation of stakeholders. In response to these arguments, this study examines each of the following four questions – whose policy input improves local government performance, whether local government performance improves when mayors have frequent contact with stakeholders, whether the frequent contact with external political actors affect the performance of local governments, and whose financial support increases local government performance – using statistical analysis on the results of a large-scale local government survey in the Philippines. It was revealed that financial inputs from the private sector and a frequent contact with the neighboring local governments have a positive correlation with high environmental management performance, while close relationships with various stakeholders and strong financial support from the central government departments have a negative correlation, and the mayor's policy initiative has no effect.

**Keywords:** • Philippines • decentralization • environmental governance • private sector

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## 1 Introduction

Decentralization has taken place in many countries around the world since the 1980s. Its aims are to make local governments more responsive to the needs of the local population and to provide public services more efficiently. To achieve this goal, mayors need the ability to manage local governments, to build partnerships with local communities and various stakeholders and to make the most relevant policies (Greasley and Stoker 2008; Grindle 2007). Local government officials also play a major role in the capacity of local governments to formulate and implement policies (Kikuchi 2019). Therefore, capacity building of local government officials is an important issue for improving the policy performance of local governments.

Under the circumstances where decentralization is accompanied by democratization, the mayor is required to manage the public administration more inclusively. This is because decentralization has increased residents' interest in local politics and public services, and democratization of local politics has strengthened competition for local political power among local political leaders (Carnegie 2010; Ziegenhain 2015). The change of political environment has encouraged mayors to seek partnerships with external actors and stakeholders, and successful networking is now considered important for improving local government performance.

In reality, however, decentralization has not always been implemented as expected. There are several issues that prevent local governments from effectively carrying out their roles and obstruct the meaningful participation of stakeholders in policy making and implementation such as environmental protection management. These include budget constraints, technical issues, institutional problems such as the limited participation of and conflicts between various stakeholders, and a lack of political leadership (Atienza, 2011: 71, 79-81; Magno, 2012; Milne and Christie 2005; Oracion et al. 2005). Especially in developing countries, local governments often suffer from poor financial bases and a lack of competent personnel with sufficient expertise and ability to coordinate among stakeholders with various interests. These local governments face difficulty balancing the volume of functions imposed by decentralization with their financial and management capabilities.

In particular, it is not an easy task for these local governments to carry out an environmental management project because these projects require the coordination of conflicting interests among various stakeholders and sometimes involve the construction of large-scale infrastructure requiring large amounts of capital. These local governments face not only budget shortages, but also a lack of understanding among the private enterprises and residents regulated by environmental policies. In countries such as the Philippines, where decentralization is accompanied by democratization, residents' awareness of their rights and participation is increasing during the process of decentralization. In such circumstances, it is not so clear

whether public participation improves the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental management projects of local governments.

Case studies have clarified the factors that improve environmental governance. These include the mayor's initiative, inter-governmental collaboration, and cooperative relations with NGOs, residents' organizations, local residents, and private enterprises (Antonio 2009; Eder 2009; Eisma-Osorio et al. 2009; Lowry et al. 2009; Magno 2012; OECD 2017). Although these factors obtained from case studies are illustrative of individual cases, their generalizability has not been tested. Therefore, it is important to explore the conditions that contribute to improving public management for environmental protection. Against this background, in this paper, I will clarify what factors influence the environmental management performance of local governments by utilizing data from a large-scale survey of local governments in the Philippines.

## 2 Literature review

In theory, decentralization is expected to improve the performance of local governments as they are closer to the people with a better understanding of the actual situations of problems. They are also able to incorporate the opinions of the people, and can be more inclusive of diverse viewpoints and knowledge (Alam, 2006: 2; De Guzman and Reforma 1998; Denters and Rose 2005; Grindle, 2009: 6-8; Nickson, 2006: 27; Ribot et al., 2010: 116; Tang and Tang 2001; Tang and Tang, 2004: 173). This is because it has become difficult for national governments to effectively provide public services to the people amid economic globalization while responding to demands for more direct participation of the people (Batley, 2006: 15; Eaton and Connerley, 2010: 3).

In order to effectively implement decentralization, it is important to provide local governments with sufficient authority and financial resources. In this regard, the institutional design of decentralization in each country is diverse. In countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia, and Uganda, substantial fiscal and administrative responsibilities are devolved to local governments. On the other hand, there are some countries, such as Cambodia, Nicaragua, and several West African counties, that provide local governments with only modest power (Smoke, 2010: 192-193). While some countries emphasize the development of a market-oriented economy and make efficiency the most important goal of decentralization, others place more emphasis on democratization and the introduction of public participation systems (Eaton and Connerley, 2010: 1). However, even in the latter case, improving the efficiency of public service supply is an important goal of decentralization. For these countries, the main objectives of decentralization are the democratization of policy-making and implementation processes to achieve efficient supply of more effective public services.

Decentralization devolves many administrative powers and functions to local governments (Grindle 2009: 5). Sakuma (2012), for example, lists at least twenty-six functions that were transferred from the national to local governments in the Philippines (Sakuma 2012: 179-180). However, in reality, decentralization has not been implemented as designed by the law, and various problems have arisen. Teng-Calleja et al. (2017) summarizes the problems discussed in the literature of decentralization as follows: 1) residents are not given sufficient information by the government and are inactive; 2) there is confusion about the roles of the national, regional, and municipal governments; 3) the national government resists the transfer of authority to local governments; 4) local governments suffer from insufficient financial, material, and human resource capacities; 5) there is weak leadership at all levels of government; and 6) corruption of local political leaders (Teng-Calleja et al., 2017: 65). The severity of the problems may vary depending on socio-economic and political conditions, but local governments in developing countries in particular generally experience the problems pointed out here. Local governments must therefore manage their limited resources in order to fulfill their given functions during the decentralization process.

The mayor's power and roles are important in the context of institutional changes in which local governments have gained greater financial and administrative authority. Grindle (2007), for example, shows that mayors in Mexico give a huge impact on the administrative management of local governments by reorganizing the institution and personnel (Grindle 2007: 100-101). In addition to this, elected mayors recognize the importance of responsiveness to the needs of public and stakeholders and make "decision making open, transparent, and engaging" (Greasley and Stoker 2008: 726). Therefore, they seek to facilitate networking with local community. This network can be defined as social capital. Kobayashi and Osaki (2019) found that, in the Philippines, the richer the mayor's social capital with local community, the better the performance of delivery of public services by local governments (Kobayashi and Osaki 2019: 183). Busch and McCormick (2014) also shows that it is important for the mayor to act as a hub to form social capital among key actors including businesses for successful environmental policy (Busch and McCormick 2014: 12).

At the same time, Busch and McCormick (2014) shows by case studies that the roles of businesses are important in environmental projects that require large-scale equipment.

Against the theoretical background described above, I will explore the factors that affect environmental management by local governments in the Philippines. I choose environmental management because this issue involves all actors in society, from the supply side to the demand side, and because of its regulatory nature, it requires coordination among many stakeholders with different interests. I choose the Philippines because this country is one of the nations where decentralization has

delegated a great deal of financial and administrative authority to local governments.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Local government: Responsible Entity for Environmental Policy**

I choose the Philippines as the case for analysis because it has a legal system that gives local governments a great deal of financial and administrative authority. The 1987 Constitution, in Section 3 of Article 10, called on Congress to enact a local government code to promote decentralization and delegate more authority to local governments. Section 5 of the same Article provides local governments with “the power to create its own sources of revenues and to levy taxes, fees, and charges.”

The Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) transferred many administrative powers to local governments, environmental administration among them. Section 3 (i) of the code states, “Local government units shall share with the national government the responsibility in the management and maintenance of ecological balance within their territorial jurisdiction.” Section 17 provides demarcations of function related to environmental management between the barangay, city/municipality and province. According to this article, the barangay is responsible for “services and facilities related to general hygiene and sanitation, beautification, and solid waste collection” (Sec. 17, (1), (iii)), while the municipality is responsible for “implementation of community-based forestry projects,” “management and control of communal forests,” and “forest development projects” (Sec. 17, (2), (ii)), as well as “solid waste disposal system or environmental management system” and “services or facilities related to general hygiene and sanitation” (Sec. 17, (2), (vi)), and “drainage and sewerage” (Sec. 17, (2), (viii)). The province is in charge of “enforcement of forestry laws limited to community-based forestry projects, pollution control law, small-scale mining law, and other laws on the protection of the environment” (Sec. 17, (3), (iii)) and “drainage and sewerage” (Sec. 17, (3), (vii)), while the city is responsible for “all the services and facilities of the municipality and province” (Sec. 17, (4)).

Beside the Local Government Act, there are several laws that provide legal frameworks for environmental protection, such as the Clean Air Act of 1999 (RA 8749), the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (RA 9003), and the Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275). In accordance with these laws, local governments play an important role in environmental protection administration<sup>1</sup>. These laws also call for the participation of various stakeholders from civil society, such as non-government organizations (NGOs), people’s organizations (POs), and private enterprises<sup>2</sup>.

However, as mentioned in “Introduction”, there are several issues that prevent the improvement of local governance through decentralization, such as financial and technological constraints, a lack of effective cooperation with various stakeholders, and a lack of political leadership. Magno (2012) points out that “the devolution of decision-making authority” in the area of environment has “not been fully accomplished” even after two decades since the implementation of the Local Government Code of 1991 (Magno 2012: 2). Against this background, this paper presents the results of my analysis on the elements of local governments that improve their environmental management performance.

For the analysis, I utilized as dependent variables performance scores for environmental governance extracted from the Local Governance Performance Management System (LGPMS) that was developed by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). For the independent variables, I obtained data on “policy input,” “relations with the constituents,” “network with other government institutions,” and “external financial support” from the results of the survey “2011 Local Government Survey in the Philippines: Local Capability and Decentralization,” which was conducted from 2011 to 2012.

### 3.2 Research Questions

The research questions were based on factors that are theorized to affect environmental governance performance. As mentioned above, individual case studies have identified several factors that impact the performance of local governments in environmental management. Improved performance is hindered by administrative problems including financial and technical constraints. local governments—especially those with a weak fiscal base—have suffered from budget constraints. Under these circumstances, the budget for environmental policies and projects is sometimes diverted to other purposes (Milne and Christie 2005). External financial support is one way to address this budget shortfall. It is therefore important to examine the local governments’ ability to acquire financial support from external actors through the building of close connections and the resultant effects on environmental management. Another possible way to solve the budget shortfall for a particular environmental policy is to prioritize said policy. This can be accomplished especially when mayors place an emphasis on environmental policy (Eder 2009). With this in mind, I analyzed the effects of different sources of environmental policy ideas on the local governments’ environmental management performance.

Another factor affecting the local governments’ performance in creating and implementing environmental management policies is their ability to network, including inter-governmental collaboration and cooperative relations with different stakeholders such as NGOs, POs, local residents, and private entities including private enterprises and academic institutions (Capuno 2005).

My hypotheses are as follows: 1) the environmental management performance of local governments improves if mayors exercise leadership with an interest in environmental policy; 2) strong relationships with stakeholders improves local governments' environmental management performance; 3) strong networks with external political actors, such as the central government, senators, congresspersons, and neighboring local governments improves environmental management performance; and 4) if local governments can solve financial constraints, environmental management performance will improve.

To test my hypotheses, I set out to answer the following questions: 1) Whose policy input on environmental issues can improve the local governments' environmental management performance? 2) Which stakeholders do mayors have frequent contact with and how do these contacts affect the local governments' environmental management performance? 3) How often are local government officials in contact with external political actors? How does the frequency of this contact affect the local governments' environmental management performance? 4) Whose financial support improves the local governments' environmental management performance? Regarding the relationships with external political actors, such as the secretaries of departments of national government, senators and congresspersons, the frequency of contact with them is represented by the strength of the financial support.

### **3.3 Data**

The data used in this paper for the independent variables were acquired using the survey mentioned above. Of the 1,591 governments in 80 provinces in 17 regions, we excluded 76 governments in 4 provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao owing to their political instability. This resulted in a population of 1,515 local governments (771 in Luzon, 336 in Visayas, and 408 in Mindanao) in 76 provinces in 16 regions consisting of 135 cities and 1,380 municipalities. We used a representative sample of 300 local governments (170 in Luzon, 67 in Visayas, and 63 in Mindanao) in 76 provinces in 16 regions consisting of 93 cities and 207 municipalities.

In our survey, we interviewed the mayor and the city/municipal planning and development coordinator (hereafter, C/MPDC) at each local government using a questionnaire for mayors and another for C/MPDCs. Interviews were conducted by the research company Social Weather Stations (SWS), and were conducted mostly face-to-face with a few exceptions. There was a total of 300 respondents (100% response rate for both mayors and C/MPDC). The sample comprises one-fifth of the entire country's governments and covers more than half the residents of the nation. Cities are overrepresented in the sample because of their large population sizes. The sample largely maintains the proportions of governments and residents by island group.

In conducting the analysis, I first divided the sample of 300 local governments into cities ( $n = 93$ ) and municipalities ( $n = 207$ ). This is because I assume that municipalities with poorer financial bases, human resource capacities, and other resources receive a larger impact from cooperation with local stakeholders and external political actors. In order to confirm whether the difference in the performance of environmental management between city and municipality is statistically significant, I performed a two-sided  $t$ -test at a significance level of 5%, using the performance score of “urban ecosystem management” in 2011 as a dependent variable. The result was  $t(249.741) = 5.155, p = .00$ . From this result, I may conclude that the performance of urban ecosystem management of city is significantly higher than that of municipalities. In other words, the fact alone that a local government is municipality has a negative impact on the environmental management of that government. Therefore, municipalities rely more on the use of various networks than cities do. This is the reason why, in this paper, I focus on the environmental management performance of municipalities.

### 3.4 Independent Variables

The first category of independent variables concerns mayors’ policy input. We asked the mayors to choose from among the following options about policy idea sources: “mayor,” “city/municipal councilors,” “barangay captains,” “business persons,” “NGOs,” “local POs,” “city/municipal officials,” and “common local residents.” In this category I set up two independent variables. The first variable is “mayor initiates environmental policy by themselves or not (does = 1, does not = 0)”. I found 114 (55.1% of 207 mayors) mayors initiate environmental policy themselves. To construct a second variable, I recoded existing variables into a new variable. I coded the cases in which the mayor obtains ideas only from government officials and local politicians such as city/municipal councilors, barangay captains and city/municipal officials as “0”. I then coded cases where the mayor obtains ideas not only from government officials and local politicians but also from actors in the private sector such as business persons, NGOs, local POs, and common local residents as “1”. I found 82 (39.6% of 207 mayors) mayors obtain ideas on environmental policy from actors other than government officials and local politicians.

The second category of independent variables concerns the frequency of contact mayors have with local stakeholders. The independent variables were frequency of mayor’s contact with the stakeholders “NGOs,” “local POs,” “business persons,” and “common local residents”. I set the level of frequency as follows: none = 1, several times a year = 2, once a month = 3, two to three times a month = 4, once a week = 5, and several times a week = 6. The distribution of contact that the mayors have with local stakeholders is indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Frequency of Mayor's Contact with Local Stakeholders

	NGOs		Local POs		Businesses		Common residents	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
none	3	1.4	3	1.4	15	7.2	3	1.4
several times a year	54	26.1	49	23.7	75	36.2	31	15.0
once a month	57	27.5	62	30.0	45	21.7	22	10.6
two to three times a month	34	16.4	31	15.0	30	14.5	14	6.8
once a week	22	10.6	29	14.0	17	8.2	16	7.7
several times a week	37	17.9	33	15.9	25	12.1	121	58.5
Total	207	100.0	207	100.0	207	100.0	207	100.0

The third category of independent variables concerns the networks the local government forms with other political actors. First, I extracted data on frequency of contact of C/MPDCs with neighboring local governments (once a month or more = 1, less than once a month = 0). The frequency distribution is the number of C/MPDCs who contact with neighboring local governments once a month or more is 128 (61.8% of 207 C/MPDCs) while those whose frequency of contact is less than once a month is 79 (38.2%).

The fourth category of independent variables concerns the strength of financial support from outside the local government. I extracted data about the strength of financial support from 1) congresspersons, 2) senators, 3) secretaries of departments in the central government, and 4) the private sector. The strength of financial support was rated using a scale of 1 to 4. One (1) means "no support," two (2) means "little support," three (3) means "moderate support," and four (4) means "strong support." The distribution of the strength of financial support that local governments receive from external financial supporters is indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2:** External Financial Support

	Congresspersons		Senators		Secretaries		Private sector	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	24	11.6	49	23.7	54	26.1	51	24.6
2	23	11.1	85	41.1	53	25.6	46	22.2
3	42	20.3	56	27.1	64	30.9	52	25.1
4	118	57.0	17	8.2	35	16.9	58	28.0
Missing value	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0
Total	207	100.0	207	100.0	207	100.0	207	100.0

### 3.5 Dependent Variables

For the dependent variables, I extracted performance scores for environmental governance from the 2011 LGPMS. Environmental governance consists of four subsections: forest ecosystems management, freshwater ecosystems management, coastal marine ecosystems management, and urban ecosystems management. I focus my analysis on urban ecosystems management in this paper because the other three subsections are not applicable to all 300 local governments. Forest ecosystems management is not applicable to highly urbanized local governments, freshwater ecosystems management is not applicable to local governments that have neither rivers nor lakes/ponds, and coastal marine ecosystems management is not applicable to inland local governments.

All of the performance scores are based on a five-point scale, with 5 indicating the highest performance and 1 indicating the lowest. The score for urban ecosystems management was calculated by considering factors such as data on short-term and long-term planning for pollution control and solid waste management, citizen participation in greening and cleaning, the establishment of protection measures against pollution, performance of protection measures against pollution, function of the Solid Waste Management Board, solid waste management planning, establishment of materials recovery facilities in barangays, performance of solid waste collection, and the situation concerning final disposal facilities. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable (from LGPMS 2011)

	Minimum	Max	Mean	SD
Urban Ecosystems Management (N = 207)	1.48	5.00	3.8996	.69413

**3.6 Control Variables**

I set one variable for the local government's attributes and three variables for the mayor's attributes as control variables. For the control variable regarding local government's attributes, I distinguished differences in income class (income class 1 and above = 1, income class 2 and below = 0). Income class 1 and above municipalities are 96 (46.4% of 207 municipalities), while income class 2 and below municipalities are 111 (53.6%).

As variables related to the mayor's attributes, I set three variables regarding whether the mayor is participation-oriented, whether he/she is from a business family, and whether he/she is an NPM-type mayor. I found that 77 (37.2% of 207 mayors) mayors are participation-oriented, 86 (41.5%) mayors are from business families, and 171 (82.6%) mayors are NPM-type mayors.

**3.7 Analysis**

To clarify the determinant factors that influence the municipalities' urban ecosystems management performance, I examined each research question using multiple regression analysis. Table 4 indicates the results of the analysis.

**Table 4:** Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis (Urban Ecosystems Management)

	Dependent Variables	
	Urban Ecosystems Management	
Independent Variables	$\beta$	
Mayor's initiative on environmental policy	-0.077	
Obtain ideas from the private sector	-0.210	**
Frequency of contact with NGOs	0.063	
Frequency of contact with local POs	-0.125	
Frequency of contact with business	0.012	
Frequency of contact with common residents	0.012	
Frequency of contact with neighboring local governments	0.179	**
Support from congresspersons	-0.085	
Support from senators	0.137	
Support from secretaries of the departments	-0.237	**
Support from the private sector	0.274	***
Control Variables		
Income class 1 and above dummy	0.190	**

Participation-oriented mayor dummy	0.049
Business family origin dummy	0.036
NPM-type mayor dummy	0.054
$R^2$	0.158

Note: N = 207 municipality. \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

First, I analyzed the relations between the source of environmental policy—mayors themselves or the private sector—and the municipalities’ environmental management performance. The survey results showed that the mayor’s initiative in creating environmental policy had no significant effect on the environmental management performance of municipality. However, I found that local governments governed by mayors who obtained environmental policy and project ideas from “private sector” performed significantly worse on urban ecosystems management.

Second, I analyzed the relationship between the frequency of contact mayors have with local stakeholders—NGOs, local POs, businesspersons, and common residents—and the municipalities’ urban ecosystems management performance. The results showed that the frequency of contact between mayors and local stakeholders had no significant effect on the environmental management performance of municipality.

Third, I analyzed the relationship between the frequency of contact of C/MPDC with neighboring local governments and the municipalities’ urban ecosystems management performance. I found that frequent contact between C/MPDC and neighboring local governments is associated with better environmental management performance of municipality.

Fourth, I examined the connection between the ability of municipalities to acquire external financial support and their environmental management performance. It became clear that the greater the financial support provided by private sector, the better the performance. However, if municipalities receive more financial support from department secretaries than other municipalities do, their performance is significantly degraded.

#### **4 Discussion**

My analysis revealed several factors that affect the municipalities' urban ecosystems management performance.

First and foremost, a t-test reveals that the urban ecosystem management performance of cities exceeds that of municipalities. The larger financial base of

cities is the primary reason for this. Republic Act No. 9009, amending Section 450 of the Local Government Code of 1991, stipulates as a condition for creating a city that the locally generated average annual income must be 100,000,000 pesos or more for two consecutive years (Section 1). In contrast, the condition for the creation of a municipality is that the locally generated average annual income for the past two years is 2,500,000 pesos (in 2017, the House of Representatives approved an amendment to raise this to 12,500,000 pesos). Another finding from my analysis is that wealthy municipalities with income class 1 and above have better environmental management performance than municipalities with poorer financial conditions.

These facts strongly suggest that financial capacity is a key condition for good environmental management performance. Many municipalities in the Philippines seriously lack this capacity. Therefore, I will next examine which means and ways are effective for municipalities with relatively weak financial bases.

First, I found that the mayor's initiative in creating environmental policies and projects has no significant effect on the environmental management performance of municipality. This result is inconsistent with the prevailing view that emphasizes the mayor's initiative in policy formation and implementation. A comment made to the author by the mayor of a municipality in the Ilocos Region seems to indicate part of the reason for this point. The mayor told the author of his plan to promote the local economy. The plan was for the municipality to purchase central government land and invite regional offices of several departments of the central government there, and to develop the surrounding land into parks and other tourist facilities so that local people who visit the regional offices can enjoy sightseeing. On the other hand, this mayor noted that municipalities generally do not come up with such ideas, and further lamented that the government officials of his municipality do not develop the same management sense as he does. This statement indicates that the mayor himself senses that his own project idea is not well understood by the municipal government officials and therefore how difficult it is to realize this project<sup>3</sup>.

What this case illustrates is that even if a mayor comes up with a policy or project idea on his or her own, the policy or project will not be successfully implemented unless at least the local government officials understand and share the idea. In other words, the mayor must have a firm grip on local government officials and build a cooperative relationship with them. The importance and difficulty of a mayor's firm grip on local government officials is illustrated by Mayor Belmonte, who first became mayor of Quezon City (located in Metro Manila) in 2001 (he is an influential politician, as evidenced by the fact that he was speaker of the House of Representatives before becoming mayor), who said that he found it difficult to get a firm grip on city government officials during his first year (Quezon City 2004).

Second, I found that frequent contacts between the mayor and actors in the private sector such as NGOs, local POs, businesspersons, and common local residents do not provide positive impacts on the performance of environmental management of municipalities. Furthermore, it was revealed that municipalities' environmental management performance would deteriorate when the mayor obtains ideas on environmental policy from the private sector.

At first glance, this looks strange. This is because, as I saw in "Introduction", the case studies show that the factors that improve environmental governance include cooperative relations with NGOs, POs, local residents, and private enterprise. In particular, the importance of the role of NGOs in environmental management is emphasized around the world. For example, Maria Francesch-Huidobro (2008), who discusses the environmental protection project of the city-state Singapore, points out that NGOs that grew up even in an authoritarian regime were able to advocate for the importance of environmental conservation based on their expertise, and successfully changed government policies (Francesch-Huidobro 2008). There is a case that illustrates how the EU is initiating capacity-building by focusing on local environmental NGOs in order to improve environmental governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of the post-socialist states of Europe (Fagan 2009). Regarding another post-socialist state, Poland, Kronenberg et al. (2016) investigate the environmental governance of the three cities and point out the importance of NGOs in environmental governance, saying that they should be used more as a bridge between the government and other actors (Kronenberg et al. 2016).

One possible point to explain the confusing consequences of the participation of the private sector, including NGOs, is that there may be inputs of unsolicited and unadjusted individual interests in the policy-making process from the private sector. A case study of participatory democracy in a city in Uruguay shows that in order for the community to contribute to the improvement of local governance, it should have the ability to organize themselves, articulate their interests, conduct negotiation and dialogue with external actors effectively, and form constructive relationships with local government (Canel 2010). Turning to the Philippines, a local chapter chairman of a national-level NGO once noted that POs are well aware of the problems occurring locally but lack the capacity to materialize projects to address the problems<sup>4</sup>. Community organizations lacking such capabilities cannot effectively make proposals to local governments and will find it difficult to form constructive cooperative relationships with them.

The other point is that POs and NGOs often lack financial capacity. For example, Bryant (2005), who detailed the activities of a national-level NGO that supported the anti-logging campaign of a local community in the Philippines, revealed how the local community's activities stagnated when the NGO ran into financial difficulties and withdrew its support (Bryant 2005: 115-116). In the Philippines, small NGOs and local POs often rely on local government for financial and

technical support. In a coastal municipality in Cavite province, for example, fisherfolk groups are not financially capable, therefore the local government is responsible for creating projects including budget allocations, and fisherfolk groups mobilize their members to participate in the projects. In this municipality, POs often solicit aid from the mayor<sup>5</sup>. In one city in Metro Manila, relatively poor civil society organizations, such as the urban poor and farming and fishing groups, are more active in working with the local government, which provides them with assistance in microfinance, education, health services, and infrastructure construction<sup>6</sup>. As long as local governments are responsive to the requests of POs and residents' organizations, the cooperative relationship between the two is smooth, but once local governments are no longer responsive to the requests of POs and residents' organizations, the cooperative relationship and trust between the two is damaged. The treasurer from a homeowners' association of a lower middle-class village in a city located in a neighboring province of Metro Manila criticized the city government saying, "We have been asking the city government for financial support for purchasing trash bins and hiring street cleaners, but no support."<sup>7</sup> This statement indicates that the homeowners' association was unable to establish a cooperative relationship with the local government.

Urban ecosystems management consists of policies with regulatory characteristics such as solid waste management and air pollution control. It is difficult for a mayor to impose such regulatory policies on businesses and common residents in a democratic decentralized institutional framework because mayors have to take into account the political support of the people for election purposes (Lim and Tang, 2002: 562; Tang and Tang, 2001; Tang and Tang, 2004; Tang and Tang, 2006). The interests of the local residents, POs, and companies are diverse (Gera 2016). If the number of stakeholders contacted by the mayor and local government is large, it may take time to coordinate their varied interests.

Furthermore, the poor and lower middle class are so dedicated to maintaining their livelihoods that they cannot afford to be routinely interested in environmental issues and local POs tend to lack the technical knowhow necessary for effective participation in local consulting bodies and meetings (Gera 2016). Caparas and Agrawal (2016) point out, based on their case study in two barangays in the Philippines, that "invitation to meetings increases only attendance but does not influence participation" (Caparas and Agrawal 2016: 959). After all, "sense of public engagement is a precondition for participation rather than a consequence" (Michels and De Graaf 2017: 878).

Another possible explanation is related to the problem of elite capture (Hiskey 2010: 38). Hiskey points out that in areas where clientelism is well developed, people perceive themselves as agents of political bosses, leaving the decentralization process to the continuation of politicians' undemocratic rule (ibid.). Additionally, residents in such areas often devote their energy to using clientelism to derive

tangible benefits from the government (Grindle 2009: 141). Hutchcroft (2001) makes his point that decentralization doesn't necessarily promote democratization, especially when local bosses dominate the local political economy (Hutchcroft 2001: 43-44). Porio (2016) points out that governance reforms with public participation gave the mayor room to legitimately form networks and alliances with civil society organizations and private enterprises, leading to the legalization and justification of client-patron relationships (Porio 2016: 32). In fact, case studies of community-driven development in Bohol island reveal that the patron-client relationship survived and poverty alleviation was slow to progress, even as the project took place (Reid 2011; Poncin 2019). As a series of case studies on 2016 local elections depicts, money politics and patron-client relations between local politicians and constituencies endure in the Philippines (Hicken, Aspinall, and Weiss 2019). In such a political environment, it is inevitable that even NGOs tend to act as clients of local political bosses.

Third, in terms of the municipalities' ability to acquire external financial support, I found that their close relation with private sectors helps in the successful conduct of urban ecosystems management. This result seems to be inconsistent with that mentioned above about the mayor's close relationship with the private sector leading to lower performance. However, frequent contact with the private sector and securing financial support from them are different. While frequent contact with private actors, as described above, may merely increase the volume of "requests" that municipalities receive from them, financial and technical support from private enterprises with more capital and technological resources has the potential to solve the shortage of financial and technical resources for municipalities and improve their environmental management performance. An officer of the League of the Cities of the Philippines once recalled that when the league implemented a national caravan to understand the needs of the constituencies of city governments, private companies made donations to provide education-related support. He said that the financial support of private companies is important for local governments to implement public services<sup>8</sup>. In another case, a private company provided financial support to fisheries cooperatives and the municipal government encouraged fishermen who were not members of the cooperatives to join it<sup>9</sup>. Also, at a provincial development council held in a province in the Visayas region, when representatives from local governments in that province announced their priority projects, the provincial governor emphasized the shortage of budget of public sector and encouraged them to recognize the importance of involving the private enterprises for implementation of the projects<sup>10</sup>. As these cases implicate, local governments in the Philippines recognize the importance of the roles of private enterprises in the supply of public services.

In this regard, it is worth paying attention to the discussion about the impact of Public-Private Partnerships (hereafter, PPP) on the performance of local governments. I can observe the movement to establish PPP in many countries with

the goal of overcoming local governments' financial constraints and lack of expertise in order to improve governance (Akintoye, Liyanage and Renukappa 2011: iii). Especially for local governments in developing countries, which often lack technical expertise and have a weak financial base, a PPP that enables them to solve these problems and carry out public works projects is an important scheme.

The Philippines has also been promoting the introduction of PPP in areas such as the public market, the information technology sector, power and water supply, among others (ADB, 2016). ADB (2016), monitoring the implementation of PPP projects in several local governments in the Philippines, points out that BOT—one of the schemes of PPP—is attractive for local governments with weak financial bases, as it is difficult for them to borrow from the private sector and the budget is tight if the internal revenue allotment from national government is used (ADB, 2016: 29). Considering that municipalities have a relatively weak financial base, obtaining financial resources from the private sector through PPPs can be considered important for them to improve their environmental management performance. As can be inferred from the discussion on PPP mentioned above, I can say that, for municipalities in the Philippines, financial support from private enterprises makes a great contribution to improving the performance of various policies and projects, including environmental management. In addition to this, as a Mexican case study shows, project implementation will be easier and smoother if it is clear that the community will make a definite financial contribution to project implementation (Grindle 2009: 132).

On the other hand, the results also show that greater financial support from the department secretary of the national government deteriorates urban ecosystems management performance. This result seems to contradict the findings that overcoming fiscal constraints improves environmental management performance. One possible explanation for this is “fatigue by plan-making.” Each national government department and agency has been imposing local governments, including municipalities, with developing implementation plans along with their own jurisdiction. The more financial support local governments receive from the departments of the national government, the greater the number of plans that need to be formulated. For local governments, and especially municipalities who lack capable staff, this actually results in poorer urban ecosystems management performance. This point is also supported by the fact that the complexity of paperwork, which is pointed out as a problem with PPP that involves external government agencies, prolongs the project implementation process for local governments (ADB, 2016: 29).

By nature, obtaining additional financial support from central government departments in the Philippines is not an easy task. According to the recollection of a mayor of a municipality in the Ilocos region, he used to go to Manila every week to meet with the central government department secretaries and other high-ranking

officials to apply for assistance for his project. It would have been a good achievement if 2 to 3 of the 10 people he approached had promised to help<sup>11</sup>.

Considering the above two points, it can be said that the process of receiving financial assistance from the central government is a long, complex, and difficult one, requiring local governments to repeatedly visit departments and agencies to obtain promises of assistance and, if assistance is obtained, to complete complicated paperwork required by the departments and agencies.

I also found that frequent contact with neighboring municipalities by C/MPDC improves environmental management performance. For municipalities lacking technical expertise, acquiring and improving know-how on environmental projects through communication with neighboring local governments is effective for the smooth implementation of effective environmental management projects. In fact, ADB observes that information sharing between local governments can improve the performance of contractor selection work and operation of PPP projects (ADB, 2016: 43).

## 5 Conclusions

For more than two decades, local governments in the Philippines have implemented environmental management imposed on them by decentralization. During this time, various problems emerged, but many successful cases have been observed. This empirical study used a quantitative survey to test the factors, which are extracted from case studies, whether they positively affect local environmental management.

I found the following points based on statistical analysis.

First, financial capacity is a crucial factor in improving the performance of environmental management of local governments. In this respect, it is inevitable that municipalities have poor environmental management performance compared to cities. The importance of financial capacity was also shown in the analysis results, as income class 1 and above local governments have higher environmental management performance among municipalities.

Therefore, it is necessary for municipalities to secure financial resources to overcome budget shortages. It has become clear that the most effective source of funding is the private sector, including businesses. Contrary to this, I found that greater financial support from department secretaries in the national government has a negative impact on environmental management performance. This can be because municipalities have to shoulder a greater burden of paperwork in order to secure the release of funds from the national government. This is supported by the fact that local governments are forced to do a great deal of paperwork over a long period of time to conclude a contract to carry out PPP (ADB, 2016: 29).

Third, it was also found that frequent contact with neighboring municipalities by the C/MPDC contributes to improved environmental management performance. If municipalities do not have sufficient administrative and technical expertise in environmental management, sharing information with other local governments and accumulating environmental management know-how will contribute to effective project implementation.

What was surprising was that when the mayor receives an environment-related proposal from the local private sector, the environmental management performance of the municipalities under such mayor declined. The results suggest that, as a technical matter, miscellaneous, poorly organized requests are placed before the mayor by various stakeholders and he cannot prioritize these requests effectively. When the municipalities suffer strict budget constraints, it becomes even more difficult for the mayor to meet these demands. Another point that explains this problem is related to political clientelism. In countries where patron-client relationships dominate, stakeholders use their relationships with the mayor to seek personal gain, and therefore the public interest of the entire locality may be sacrificed. This can happen more easily in countries like the Philippines, where the mayor is elected directly by local electorates, as the mayor is eager to maintain voter support.

It was also surprising that the mayor's initiative did not contribute to the improvement of environmental management performance. This may indicate that it is important for mayors to have a firm grip on local government officials to ensure the smooth implementation of their own policies. In the Philippines, mayors have a strong influence on local government, especially in local official personnel matters, as a legal consultant in a coastal town in Cavite province stated that in the Philippines, generally, local government officials are replaced when the mayor changes<sup>12</sup>. For the mayor, however, exercising his/her personnel authority to assign staff members as he/she sees fit will not immediately build or strengthen trust between him/herself and its staff and create a common understanding of mayor's own policies. If the mayor cannot build a relationship of trust with local government officials and a common understanding of policy, it will be difficult for the mayor to take the initiative and implement policy smoothly.

This study mainly focuses on mayors' policy initiatives, networks and cooperation with local stakeholders including the private sector, and their ability to acquire external financial support. However, an local governments' environmental management performance is not influenced solely by these factors. Other elements can affect performance, such as the capability of bureaucracy and social capital. To derive more relevant results, holistic analysis is necessary in future studies.

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**Notes:**

1 Section 36 of the Clean Air Act of 1999 stipulates that “Local Government Units (LGUs) shall share the responsibility in the management and maintenance of air quality within their territorial jurisdiction.” Section 10 of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 mandates local governments the “primarily responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the provisions of this Act”. Section 20 of the Clean Water Act of 2004 provides “the responsibility in the management and improvement of water quality within their territorial jurisdictions.” And in all these laws, many sections specify the role of local governments in environmental managements.

2 Section 4 (c) of the Clean Air Act of 1999 recognizes the rights of citizens “to participate in the formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring of environmental policies and programs and in the decision-making process.” Section 2 (i) of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 declares the policy which shall “institutionalize public participation in the development and implementation of national and local integrated, comprehensive and ecological waste management programs.” Section 2 (j) of the Clean Water Act of 2004 mandates the state “to encourage civil society and other sectors, particularly labor, the academe and business undertaking environment-related activities in their efforts to organize, educate and motivate the people in addressing pertinent environmental issues and problems at the local and national levels.”

3 Interviewed on August 18, 2011 by the author.

4 Interviewed on August 23, 2010 by the author.

5 Interviewed on September 7, 2022 by the author.

6 Interviewed on September 1, 2022 by the author.

7 Interviewed on November 30, 2019 by the author. The village has around 300 households and the interviewee is a former overseas Filipino worker who has working experience in Japan during the 1980s. This homeowners’ association has been suffering fiscal constraints because, according to the interviewee, there is a difficulty collecting membership fee (only half of the total members pay the fee, which is 150 pesos per month).

8 Interviewed on March 23, 2010 by the author.

9 Interviewed on March 27, 2013 with an officer of a city government in a neighboring province of Metro Manila by the author.

10 The author observed the provincial development council held on September 7, 2010.

11 Interviewed on August 18, 2011 by the author.

12 Interviewed on September 7, 2022 by the author.

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