Exploring the learning and literacy dimensions of local volunteering by youths and adults in the Philippines: an ethnographic study

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Abstract

My thesis seeks to investigate the learning and literacy dimensions of local volunteering and contributes to the limited research on the experiences of volunteers who, themselves, come from so-called vulnerable communities. Moving beyond the dominant examination of learning and literacy as skills that volunteers *bring to* and later *gain through* volunteering, I use 'development as discourse' (Escobar 1995), 'learning through communities of practice' (Wenger 1998) and 'literacy as social practice' (Street 1984) as conceptual lenses to explore how volunteers engage with learning and literacy in the everyday – including how this engagement shapes their identities, discourses, and power dynamics.

I conducted an 11-month ethnographic study with two volunteer groups in the Philippines: an NGO driven by youths living with HIV, gay men and transwomen advocating for HIV/AIDS awareness; and an informal settlers' association fighting for land tenure led by landless volunteers who were evicted from their home of over seven decades.

My study reveals that volunteer groups can be understood as *constructed* learning spaces that not only 'contain' but also shape and/or are shaped by diverse and, at times, conflicting learning and literacy practices. Volunteers' experiences were influenced by the broader development sector that sometimes exacerbated power inequalities within the groups – a process partly mediated by text. Volunteers learned to work in certain bureaucratic ways which could be in tension with their understandings of volunteering as informal helping and solidarity. Volunteering offered a means to challenge ascribed identities, often based on deficits around their assumed vulnerabilities. However, volunteers still vacillated between identifying as beneficiaries who receive and as volunteers who give.

Contributing new insights into the links between volunteering, learning and literacy, my thesis encourages academics, policy-makers, and planners to challenge dominant assumptions around the kind(s) of learning and development that volunteering can facilitate and for whom.

Access Condition and Agreement

Acknowledgements

The voyage I took for this research had been full of challenges but also of triumphs – thanks to the many people and institutions that supported me on the way. I am eternally grateful, first and foremost to the volunteers and staff of the two organisations whose stories, opinions and experiences were central in this thesis. Before I left fieldwork, one of you told me that I should tell people 'here' that I had given you more than what I received in the 11 months we were together. Well, I beg to disagree. This thesis would not have been possible without your warm welcome and steadfast friendship – *madamo gid nga salamat sa pag-share sang inyo nga istorya sa akon.* The thought of your continued generosity and passion – despite all the challenges you face (before and during pandemic!) – inspired me to reach the 'finish line' of my own journey.

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALHIV	Adolescent Living with HIV
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
CBL	Constitution and By Laws
CMP	Community Mortgage Programme
CBS	Community Based Screening
DOH	Department of Health
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HYO	Health Young Ones
HLURB	Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KAP	Key Affected Population
LGU	Local Government Unit
LSP	Literacy as Social Practice
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PLHIV	Person Living with HIV
VIO	Volunteer-Involving Organisation
UIC	Unique Identification Code
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

Chapter One
Introduction

1. Introduction

In my many years working in the Philippines, the kinds of volunteer activities that I came to know and admire were informal, community-based helping activities that were bustling *even* (or, perhaps, *especially*) in resource-poor contexts and difficult circumstances. For instance, I observed that the first responders after a devastating typhoon were usually one's neighbours and friends who were also affected by the disaster. Lacking support from the government and NGOs, I saw how a group of individuals with lupus formed a mutual-aid group to share health information and raise funds for their medication. When a big fire broke out in our city several years back, inmates gave up one hot meal a day so their ration could be given to evacuation centres. In the face of a shared problem and adversities, people turned to each other for support – regardless of their socio-economic status. The 'poor' helping his/her fellow 'poor' remains a strong impulse that shapes many helping activities in the country.

My thesis explores the learning and literacy dimensions of local volunteering in contexts and circumstances where individuals experience some form of vulnerability – referred to in this thesis as 'vulnerable[1]' volunteers. Reviewing the literature on volunteering and development, Lopez-Franco and Shahrokh (2015:17) identified that volunteering activities within these contexts have been under-explored and encouraged researchers to investigate: "How do volunteers, who are themselves from the poorest and most marginalised communities, experience volunteering?" Likewise, the learning dimension of volunteer work has been considered by some as a "peripheral theme" in volunteering literature (Duguid *et al.* 2013:219) while literacy has been rarely explored. In this thesis, I am particularly interested in volunteers' experiences of learning and literacy: not only finding out what they have learned (e.g. literacy as learning to read and write), but also exploring how learning and literacy are embedded in (and shape) their everyday volunteer activities and relationships. I situate my discussions in the context of international

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[1] I use the term 'vulnerable' to describe adults who express or experience some form of vulnerability brought about, for instance by poverty, long-term illness, landlessness, job insecurity, etc. In using the term, I am aware of its constructed meaning and often homogenised, deficit characterisation (thus, the single quotations). While I do not dismiss this 'development category', I will attempt to problematise its premise. See also my discussion on the limits of using the word 'vulnerable' in my conclusion chapter.

development to explore how volunteering, learning and literacy link with concepts around social change, particularly within communities in the Global South[2]. As such, my research sits at the intersection of debates around 'adult learning and literacy' and 'participatory development (through volunteering)'.

My overarching research question is: *How do 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers engage with learning and literacy practices in/through their volunteer work?* To explore this question, I employed a comparative ethnographic case study approach. I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork for 11 months in Iloilo City, Philippines. I selected two volunteer organisations that are composed of/engage with 'vulnerable' volunteers as my case studies (see Chapter 4 for the strategy and criteria for selection). Youth4Health[3] is a community-based NGO driven by young people living with HIV, gay men and transwomen advocating for adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH), including HIV/AIDS awareness. Land4All is an informal settlers' association fighting for land tenure that was formed by a group of landless people who were evicted from a land they have been living in for over seven decades. As I explain later using volunteer typologies (see section 1.3 below), volunteer work done in/through these two organisations may be categorised as 'formal' volunteering. However, I made the conceptual and methodological decision at the outset to observe a variety of volunteering activities that went beyond those conducted within the organisations or those that contribute towards organisational aims. In fact, one of the key areas I explore in this research is how 'formal' motivations and ways of doing (e.g. those that related to project deliverables) interacted with more 'informal' ones (e.g. those related to fellowship and community-building).

In this chapter, I will present my starting points and motivations in setting out on this research journey, as stemming from two sources: my personal experiences as a former development worker in the Philippines and an intention to fill a research gap within volunteering literature. I begin with my personal journey and then move to an overview of the literature on volunteering and the gaps that I have identified. I will then chart how these debates shaped my initial research questions.

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[2] In this thesis, I prefer to use the terms 'Global North' or 'North' and 'Global South' or 'South' rather than developing and developed countries or First World and Third World countries.
[3] The names of the two case studies are pseudonyms.

1.2. My personal journey into the topic

Growing up in a poor family in the Philippines, my experiences of everyday kindness – both as a giver and a recipient – have been abundant. These experiences, among others, inspired me to volunteer, later, during my youth. I was a long-time volunteer for a national NGO whose main thrust was to build houses for the urban poor. The organisation's Executive Director once said "*Pag ikaw ay umuuwi sa isang tagpi-tagping bahay, ang pananaw mo sa buhay ay tagpi-tagpi rin''* (When you go home to a patchwork house your outlook in life is patchwork as well). Back then, I believed that smuggled within this message was a noble promise[4] which I was invited to participate in as a volunteer: better housing meant a better life for the urban poor. So, I spent weekends mixing cement and stacking hollow-blocks for the NGO's housing projects.

Years later, I volunteered to conduct training, campaigning and advocacy work, with the goal of bringing more young people to volunteer. There was a slight shift from me 'doing' volunteering to 'teaching' volunteering or, perhaps, tapping into values of volunteerism among the youth. This remit brought about awkward questions for a trainer like me, such as: 'can one teach empathy?' I also worked in a university that presented itself as catering to students from low-income households. My direct supervisor and I decided to bring our students to community outreach programmes in the belief that they would learn skills and values in the process. She would often remind our students of the famous St. John Paul II quote: "no one is so poor that he has nothing to give". In my many conversations with fellow volunteers, a common narrative persisted: individuals were learning *so much* through volunteering – although this sentiment was often expressed almost as an afterthought – a benefit that while many of us did receive, we did not really want to talk about it in those terms.

I became interested in literacy because I observed that several of these volunteer groups were increasingly becoming 'text-saturated'. As volunteers, we engaged with 'literacy' but not necessarily learning to read and write (as many of us knew how to). Rather, we engaged with texts by making sense of campaign materials (some of which we needed to create), training modules, policy texts, donor forms, etc. We were expected to *readily* engage with sometimes complex information and documents on our own. Those who were able to navigate them took on more senior roles and tasks. Lacking support, others were either less involved or had to drop out completely (e.g., those who had not finished basic schooling or were unfamiliar with legal

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[4] I now find this quote quite problematic as it seemingly strips away informal settlers with any positive outlook in life, just because they do not have proper housing.

jargon). Literacy influenced the way we volunteered and the kind of roles we were expected to fulfil.

Taken together, these experiences taught me that volunteering, learning and literacy are tightly linked. Together, they could potentially bring change to people's lives and the life of communities. While this belief was strong, I was also aware that my tendency to paint a chiefly positive picture of volunteering and learning – and their contributions towards personal and social change – might have created a smokescreen that prevented me from looking at these activities critically. A short conversation with my mother once brought this to fore. One afternoon, after finding that I had just returned home from a whole day's volunteering, my mother asked me bluntly: "can you maybe tell that group if they can help us build a house too?"

The question struck me. My family neither owned the land nor the *tagpi-tagping bahay* (patchwork house) that stood in an urban poor squatters' area where we lived. So, our family could be described using the same labels that this NGO (and wider development sector) called its beneficiaries: urban poor, landless, informally squatting. I had not thought about my volunteer work in a way that my mother's questioning compelled me to do: that I could very well be a recipient of the services that I was helping to facilitate for others. These shifting of identities and positionalities in the context of volunteering fascinated me and piqued my research interest to think about issues around accountability, power inequalities and representation. When I did my MA in Lifelong Learning Policy and Management, for instance, my dissertation explored the role of dialogue in engaging the 'poor' in social enterprises in the Philippines. This small research study already troubled what I thought, and believed, social businesses could do for the poor, particularly, showing how the 'poor's participation' in development was often a guise for tokenism.

I share these previous experiences because they were not only sources of insights and motivations for this research, but they have also influenced many of the decisions I made in this research process – such as the choice of methodology (see Chapter 4). The questions that I am asking in this study are dilemmas that I had already been grappling with as a practitioner. Therefore, this research is also partly an attempt to understand my own experience of volunteering (retrospectively) and, through an academic inquiry, challenge some of my own assumptions around volunteering, learning and literacy.

1.3. Definitions of volunteering: what slips through the net?

I will now investigate how the term 'volunteering' has been defined and used – a research strand that has attracted much academic interest – and how my current exploration fits (or does not) within these debates. In 1996, after analysing 11 of the most commonly-used definitions of volunteering in the US, Cnaan and colleagues (1996) found that the most dominant way of characterising volunteering was as a wide range of activities performed out of free will and a desire to help another person, group or society without compensation, usually through a formal organisation or platform of support (see also Anheier and Salamon 1999, Wilson 2000, 2012; and also policy-focused definitions in Davis Smith 2000; International Labour Organization 2011). Within this definition, volunteering had been dominantly framed using a service-delivery model: volunteer work is seen as a vehicle in providing services and development programmes to those who have less. Close to two decades later, Hazeldine and Baillie Smith (2015), through their *Global Review of Volunteering*, found that similar definitions not only maintained ascendancy but has also been problematically regarded as 'universal', despite being skewed towards volunteering practices in the Global North[5]. As such, the authors offered a caveat that "by naming definitions that are rooted in the experiences of the Global North as universal, particular forms of volunteering are privileged over others" (Hazeldine and Ballie Smith 2015:29). It seems to be implied in their argument that these 'other' forms of volunteering included those from the Global South – such as the Philippines. If this was how volunteering had been dominantly framed, what volunteering activities, expressions and ideologies might have slipped through the net?

Within these dominant definitions, volunteering through a structured organisation (i.e. formal volunteering) was most commonly recognised (see for instance the review of Wilson 2000) compared to what has been described as informal volunteering – everyday helping activities and networks of support – such as those that I discussed in relation to my experience in the Philippines. In its recent analysis of the magnitude of volunteering globally, the *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* (United Nations Volunteers [UNV] 2018) noted that informal volunteering was "more difficult to capture and often less visible to mainstream development actors" (UNV 2018:x). Despite this, the report still found that informal volunteering comprised a staggering 70% of the world's volunteering activity, which, collectively, equates to 109 million full-time workers – surpassing the workforce even of major global industries (UNV 2018). For

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[5] Interestingly, Cnaan et. al's (1996) study analysed volunteering definitions mostly from US policies and programmes (e.g. President's Task Force on Private Sectors Initiatives, National Association of Counties) and from studies that were based in the US (e.g. Hodgkinson and Weitzman's 1992 study entitled *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*)

me, the report suggests that the prevalence of such forms of volunteering could be more widespread than these comparative measures suggest.

The challenge in recognising these forms of volunteer activity is partly because variations in volunteering understandings and practices extend between communities in the *same* country and between *individuals* within an organisation – including major influences brought about by cultural values and practices. Acknowledging the embeddedness of voluntary action in the daily lives of communities is a move beyond the dominant definition of volunteering as a 'structured' service delivery mechanism through 'formal' organisations. Volunteering can be understood as part of a wider spectrum of everyday helping activities in communities such as mutual aid, self-help, philanthropy and campaigning (Rochester, Paine and Howlett 2010; Millora 2020). These volunteering practices are driven not only by instrumental values and motivations (e.g. meeting basic needs) but also a sense of solidarity – people turning to each other for support in the face of shared and urgent problems.

Some of these values and practices have long histories and could be thought of as 'indigenous' or 'pre-colonial'. In the Philippines, for example, volunteering is usually considered as *pakikipagkapwa* – a means of extending oneself to others (Aguiling-Dalisay, Yacat, and Navarro 2004). Framed as an indigenous Filipino value, *pakikipagkapwa* is rooted in the concept of the *kapwa.* Although usually translated to the word 'other' in English, *kapwa* is significantly different in meaning as it refers to the *unity* of others *and* the self (Enriquez 1986). In using the concept to understand volunteer activities in the Philippines, volunteerism could therefore be seen as motivated by "accepting and dealing with another person as equal" (Enriquez, 1986:16). Similar to the Philippines, volunteering in the African region also has a long history where "a tradition of self-help, individual and collective responsibility for the well-being of families and kinship groups predates the colonial era" (Patel and Wilson 2004:25). A sense of oneness is embedded in the pan-African concept of *ubuntu* that has been used as a framework to understand volunteering in the region (Perold 2016; Butcher 2010; Patel *et al.* 2007; Patel and Wilson, 2004). *Ubuntu* is linked with community support achieved through reciprocity, mutualism, empathy and commitment (Mupedziswa *et al.* 2019).

I also found some key linguistic differences in talking about volunteering locally. In the Philippines, for instance, I often heard people use the English term 'volunteer' or phrases such as the social media hashtag *#ParaSaBayan* (#ForTheNation) to refer to such activities and motivations. Rarely have I heard the term *boluntir* (direct Filipino translation) or *paglilingkod*

(service) used. In Botswana, over ten words, phrases and proverbs were found to refer to a variety of helping activities that were not always called 'volunteering' (Patel *et al.* 2007). Adding to the complexity are individuals who fail to or deliberately choose not to recognise their work as volunteering, such as individuals from Buenos Aires who do not consider their church work as volunteering (Roitter 2017). Within some black and minority ethnic groups in the US, for example, volunteering was found to be more communal than structured, so some rejected being called volunteers because it sounded "too formal" or "like a job" (Lukka and Paine 2001:33). As such, many volunteering activities and expressions might have 'slipped through the net' because of how volunteering has been dominantly defined in academic and policy spaces.

These debates presented a challenge as to what extent I could adopt a single definition of volunteering for this thesis. In this regard, I took the cue from the experience of Butcher and Einolf (2017a) who, in their anthology of studies of volunteering in the Global South, concluded that their decision to frame their study around a single definition[6] turned out to be ineffective. This was because concepts and practices of volunteering varied immensely across the countries where the various contributions were located (e.g. Argentina, South Africa and Georgia), and many did not fit these 'standard' definitions. While I recognise that defining volunteering is an important step in shaping the contours of my research, I feel that adopting a *single* definition is too limiting for an ethnographic study such as mine. Additionally, considering that the experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers presents a research gap (cf Butcher and Einolf 2017b; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015), I did not want to begin by already setting up strict boundaries as to what counts and what does not count as volunteering – as I did not want too many activities to 'slip through the net'.

A framework that recognises different degrees and configurations of volunteer activity (Table 1) seems to be most helpful as a starting point. I took the four dimensions of volunteering identified by Cnaan and colleagues' (1996): free choice, remuneration, structure and beneficiary. Each dimension has categories that determine whether an activity is *purely* or *broadly* defined as volunteering. An activity done out of free will with no remuneration, in a formal structure that benefits others, is considered the *purest* definition of volunteering, while other configurations are broader and looser 'forms'. Since their framework was drawn from analysing dominant definitions of volunteering from the US, I have expanded this to accommodate the range of

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[6] In their study, they used the definition of volunteering from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

volunteer activities that might occur in resource-poor contexts (also explored in Butcher and Einolf 2017a; Duguid, Mündel, Schugurensky, *et al.* 2013; Roitter 2017).

Table 1. A framework capturing various volunteering activities

Dimension	Categories
'Free' Choice	1. Free will
	2. Relatively uncoerced
	3. Relatively coerced
	4. Obligation to volunteer
Incentivisation (Monetary and/or otherwise)	**1. Unreimbursed costs**
	2. None at all
	3. None expected
	4. Reimbursed costs
	5. Stipend/low pay/**low incentives**
Structure	1. Formal
	2. Informal
Intended Beneficiaries	1. Benefit/help others/strangers
	2. Benefit/help friends or relatives
	3. Benefit oneself (as well)

Adapted from Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth (1996) and Duguid, *et al.* (2013).
Words in **bold** are my additions

First, certain societal pressures *relatively coerce* disadvantaged groups to participate in volunteer work. For instance, because the Canadian labour market did not recognise their work experience, some Chinese immigrants turned to unpaid volunteering, though they would have preferred paid employment, to improve their CVs in the face of unemployment (Slade, Luo, and Schugurensky 2013). In a Kenyan slum, the economic situation was so difficult, that the meagre stipend earned through volunteering became significant for survival (Hacker, Picken, and Lewis 2017). These instances create situations where volunteers may have been given too little choice about whether to volunteer or not. Second, some have found that non-monetary incentives (i.e. gifts, certificates, training, social recognition) have proved to be valuable for some volunteers in poorer contexts (Lewis 2015; Moleni and Gallagher 2007). Thus, thinking of volunteer rewards solely in monetary terms is limiting. Finally, it is rarely recognised that, for some low-income individuals, volunteering may be a *cost*. In the Canadian study, some volunteers needed to pay for their own transportation and food to be able to volunteer (Duguid *et al.* 2013). In a study in Malawi, the time some individuals spent volunteering for schools competed with time they could have spent for their own income-generating activity (Rose 2010). Here, the costs that volunteers incurred remained *unreimbursed*.

In this section, I have discussed how dominant ways of defining volunteering, while often presented as universal, were influenced by Northern conceptions of volunteer work and would

therefore be limiting if adopted as a basis for framing volunteering in this thesis. In response, thinking of volunteering as an activity with specific elements but with various specifications within each element, may hopefully reduce the risk of being too exclusionary. The framework recognises the different permutations of volition, remuneration, structure and beneficiaries in a voluntary activity – as influenced, in part, by contextual and cultural issues. Methodologically, this opened up my choice of possible case studies while also not casting my net too widely. The framework was malleable enough as a springboard to exploring the diverse concepts and practices of volunteering on-site.

1.4. Volunteering among 'vulnerable' groups

In this section, I explore research about the experiences of volunteers who may be considered as experiencing some form of 'vulnerability'. Within the volunteering literature, studies suggest that those with higher socio-economic status (SES) tend to volunteer more (Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy 2010; Lukka and Paine 2001; Wilson 2000) because they have *surplus* money, time and expertise (Cnaan *et al.* 1996). Lukka and Paine (2001:32), for example, have identified a "Western" image of a volunteer: that of a middle-aged, middle-class woman with time and money to spare for those in need; an "altruistic giver benefiting the needy recipient". SES has not only been found to impact volunteer participation but also recruitment: some organisations target people with high "participation potential" based on their socio-economic resources (Musick and Wilson 2007:290) and they tend to fulfil "more prestigious and meaningful tasks" (Hustinx *et al.* 2010:422) in the organisation. While these dominant status debates do not argue that volunteering is exclusively the domain of the rich and educated (Wilson 2000), they have a tendency to exclude many helping activities conducted by those with lower socio-economic status and/or those who have been commonly considered as 'recipients' of development programmes (Hustinx *et al.* 2010). Butcher and Einolf (2017a) argue that this exclusion creates a false impression that people in resource-poor and marginalised contexts volunteer less.

On the contrary, there has been research that documents volunteering as thriving in 'poorer' contexts, with the participation of individuals from marginalised backgrounds (Burns *et al.* 2015; Butcher 2010; Butcher and Einolf 2017d; Lewis 2015; Lukka and Paine 2001; Patel *et al.* 2007; Perold and Graham 2017). A five-country study in Africa found that the majority of the volunteers came from the same disadvantaged community they were 'serving' (Patel *et al.* 2007). In *Valuing Volunteering* – a two-year participatory action research project on volunteering and

poverty reduction in Nepal, the Philippines, Mozambique and Kenya – it was found that "many of those volunteers who are helping to extend the reach of services to the most marginalised are often the same individuals who are living in poverty" (Burns *et al.* 2015:21). Research in Malawi revealed that young people, often coming from low-income households were at the forefront of civic service in the country (Moleni and Gallagher 2007). In some countries in the North, it was found that people with disabilities and prisoners also participated in volunteer work (Gillette 2003; Lukka and Paine 2001). One study revealed that helping someone from the same community and religion was considered a community trait by black and minority ethnic groups in the US (Obaze 2000 as cited in Lukka and Paine 2001). The study in Mexico and South Africa found that some volunteers helped each other alleviate poverty because of a sense of shared responsibility (Butcher 2010). Religion has also been found to be a major motivator (Butcher 2010; Lukka and Paine 2001).

When discussed in the light of development discourses, accounts of volunteering by disadvantaged groups seem to put forward a rhetoric that volunteering allows the 'poor' to reposition themselves from being the ones 'cared-for' to being 'the carers'. Gillette (2003:67)*,* for instance, suggests that there may be three levels of changes that are brought about for these volunteers "…one is their freshly-empowered role in society… Another is attitudinal… And a third is more technical: 'I've acquired experience and skills that enable me to continue as a more fully-fledged citizen.'"

While research such as that of Gillette (2003) recognises the agency of the formerly excluded volunteers, scholars critical of the promise of participation compel researchers to investigate *what* participation looks like in practice and the potential issues it may bring to the fore. For instance, Gillette's (2003) statement above seems to suggest that the transition of the excluded from being 'recipients' to being active agents is one-way. However, several studies identified the challenges and complexities of involving vulnerable groups in volunteer work.

One key issue is that of financial remuneration and incentives, and how they affect the motivation, participation and expectations of local volunteers. Studies have found that in environments where income is scarce and employment is limited, a voluntary job with little remuneration is considered better than no job at all (Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009; Lewis 2015). In the Korogocho slums in Kenya, local volunteers attached little difference between volunteering and a low-paid job. Both were sources of income. The effects of this overlap were several: locals considered stipend and allowances in choosing which project or organisation to

volunteer in; on occasions, they became suspicious when NGOs provided stipends lower than the assumed 'standard', and participation in local, low-funded organisations was reduced (Lewis 2015). In turn, this affected the reputation of formal volunteering schemes as community members became more suspicious about volunteers' roles, motivations, rewards and recruitment process (Lewis 2015). In Jenkins' (2009) study conducted in Peru, long-term women health promoters received a small amount of monetary incentive for 20-40 hours of work each week for more than a decade. As this did not constitute a living wage, the money gained was not labelled as *sueldo* (wage) or *ingresos* (income) but was referred to as *propina* (tip) or *incentivo* (incentive). These terminologies, according to Jenkins (2009:24), stamped women's participation as having a "non-work nature", thereby stripping it of its deserved economic recognition, as perceived by the women volunteers.

Scholars have also noted the gender dimension of volunteering among women who, as these programmes seem to assume, were sometimes more self-sacrificing, their income being only supplementary to that earned by the male breadwinner and work seen as merely an extension of their maternal role (Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009). In the Peruvian case study, the skills and expertise of women health volunteers seem not to have been framed as valuable and marketable skills but as 'innate' and 'natural' for women (Jenkins 2009). Therefore, their participation in the organisation was considered *volunteer* work and self-sacrifice that needed no remuneration, closely linked to the Peruvian concept of *marianismo* – the female version of *machismo* (Jenkins 2009). Yet surveys in Mexico and South Africa have shown that women volunteer only slightly more than men (Butcher 2010). In another cross-country study, there was no significant difference between men's and women's participation in volunteer work, although the majority of women volunteers served in social services and health, while men were in culture and sports (Anheier and Salamon 1999). Elsewhere, it has been observed that volunteer organisations tend to rely on women volunteers because they assume that "women have infinite time to participate in volunteer-based community groups" (Lind 1997:1208 as cited in Jenkins 2009:17).

In this section, I have shown that volunteering cuts across socio-economic status and contexts. I have described the web of challenges that volunteers in these contexts may experience, such as how volunteer work is entangled with the wider economy of work and gender inequalities/stereotypes within volunteering. Drawing from my discussions in the early sections of this chapter, it is also becoming more evident that framing 'who volunteers are' is influenced by how volunteering is defined in the first place.

1.5. Volunteering, learning and literacy: exploring the links

There is a growing body of research exploring the links between volunteering and learning. However, literacy seems rarely to be explored as part of this relationship. In 2013, Duguid, Mündel and Schugurensky brought together what they considered as a groundbreaking collection of studies exploring the links between informal learning, voluntary work and social action. This anthology of eight research papers – all based in Canada except for one paper in Mexico – collectively found that learning through volunteer organisations was tacit, often accomplished with a mentor and done while on the job. According to the editors, informal learning in/through volunteering was under-explored because of a dominant understanding that volunteer work is not 'real work' (i.e. when compared to the formal sector of the economy) and that learning in informal, non-school contexts is not necessarily 'educational' (Duguid, Mündel and Schugurensky 2013b).

While formal and non-formal learning exists within volunteer organisations, research has found that significant learning occurs unintentionally and informally, which cannot be readily identified by the researchers, the organisations or even the learners themselves (Duguid *et al.* 2013a; Elsdon 1995). This has presented methodological issues in terms of studying informal learning (Duguid *et al.* 2013; Rogers 2014). Informal learning has also been found to be 'under the radar' among many organisations. Ilsley (1990) comments: "Although most formal volunteer organizations offer training programs, we found that much of the actual learning in volunteer organizations is unplanned. Perhaps relatedly, learning – especially forms of learning other than instrumental/didactic – appears to be undervalued in most volunteer programs…" (as cited in Duguid *et al.* 2013b:28).

One of the key themes that struck me in this collection – and other literature in this area – is that a particular relationship between volunteering and learning is put forward: first, that volunteers apply what they have previously learned (e.g. in school and in professional work) to assist them in volunteer activities, and second, that volunteers learn *something* through volunteering. In terms of literacy, an individual's skill to read and write is often framed as one of these learning prerequisites and outcomes. Within this framing, literacy tended to be seen as uniform, singular or 'schooled' literacy – that can/must be 'mastered' to participate fully. As I will explain fully in Chapter 3, my perspective on literacy in this research sees literacy as multiple and embedded in social practices. Therefore, I am shifting the focus on to processes rather than outcomes.

If previous knowledge and literacy skills, for instance, are insufficient for volunteers to participate fully in the organisations, some literature poise training and skills enhancement programmes as means to remedy the gap. These programmes are some of the ways by which organisations professionalise and upskill their volunteers, to offer a competent and quality service. The contents of these deliberate, non-formal learning provisions are largely defined by the mission and operational needs of the voluntary organisation (Duguid *et al.* 2013b). However, this may have negative impacts on volunteer participation. Elsey's (1993) study of professionalised volunteer services in hospice care, for instance, found that this constant demand for learning became demotivating for volunteers. Volunteers in his study felt that the organisation demanded that they learn so much for an activity that they were rendering for free. There is also the issue of training vis-à-vis retention: volunteers who had been trained with specialised, organisation-specific skills were not bound to remain in the organisation.

Identifying what volunteers learn has been of interest to several scholars (Duguid *et al.* 2013a; Elsdon 1995, 2000; Elsey 1993; Ross-Gordon and Dowling 1995). Elsdon conducted a major study on the educational impact of volunteer organisations on their members. The 31 case studies ranged from community service organisations to specific interest groups (Elsdon, 1991, 2000; Elsdon, Reynolds and Stewart 1995). A similar central question informed the research of volunteer learning in Canada (Duguid *et al.* 2013a). Among the eight (8) case studies, one focused on a disadvantaged group: Chinese immigrants grappling with looking for work (Slade *et al.* 2013). Ross-Gordon and Dowling (1995) looked at adult learning among women volunteers in African-American women's organisations in the US. Exploring the question of *what volunteers learn from volunteering* led to producing lists that enumerated diverse sets of learning outcomes, from instrumental to 'transformational', gained through volunteering (Table 2). Along these lines, it has been found that learning is seen as a reward and/or motivation for volunteering (Gidron 1978), especially if it is associated with broader outcomes like increased employability (cf Moleni and Gallagher 2007; Slade *et al.* 2013) or becoming an expert in a particular field, thereby enhancing social status (cf Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009).

Table 2. Learning outcomes from volunteering based on three studies

Elsdon (UK)	Duguid *et al.* (Canada)	Ross-Gordon & Dowling (US)
– Social and Group Learning – Content Learning – Occupational Learning – Political Learning – Personal Learning and Development	– Instrumental Skills – Interpersonal and Communication Skills – Advocacy Skills – Political Efficacy – Self-Governance – Values and Dispositions – Social Awareness	– Learning internal group processes and tasks – External tasks (e.g. fundraising) – External relations (e.g. working with 'authorities.') – Context-specific and How-to knowledge – A greater sense of self

Several studies, however, while not explicitly looking at the learning dimension of volunteer work, have explored how learning, knowledge and skills impact or are impacted by wider social and development processes within the contexts where such volunteering occurs. In *Valuing Volunteering,* Burns and colleagues (2015), found that the position of local volunteers was unique compared to other development practitioners because they could be both on the 'inside' and 'outside' of a community – a position that allowed them to mediate between different realms of knowledges and cultures. Such positioning allowed volunteers to act as intermediaries of resources within and beyond the community. They could facilitate the merging of outside and indigenous knowledge that could encourage responsive solutions and new forms of collaboration. In India, women health volunteers were regarded as development experts, garnering the respect of community members and other paid development workers (Banerjea 2011).

In Peru, Jenkins (2008:139) found that long-term women health volunteers were perceived by community members and development workers to have a "particular brand of professionalism" in health promotion. This expertise was based on their years of accumulated experience and deep knowledge of local practices. However, she found that the women volunteers found themselves in a 'balancing act' – similar to what Burns and colleagues (2015) described above – because the title of an 'expert' in their community was often attributed to 'outsiders'. The volunteers did not want to be considered as outsiders because, on the contrary, it was their being an insider that gave them social status and expertise. Jenkins' (2008) study – and, to a certain extent, that of Burns and colleagues' (2015) and Banerjea's (2011) – offers a different and perhaps a more critical way of exploring the links between volunteering and learning. These studies move beyond a discussion of learning as the accumulation of skills and knowledge but explore how these intertwine with social status and identities – tapping into wider issues of power, voice, representation, labelling and identity

construction within volunteering practices. They offer a more complex look into what types of learning and knowledge are valued by volunteers and other actors.

In this section, I have argued that in studies exploring the links between volunteering, learning and literacy, a recurring theme is that learning (including learning literacy skills) is framed as an asset that volunteers could contribute to the organisation and an outcome that they could later gain through volunteering. A more peripheral theme was reflected in studies that looked at how learning, skills and knowledge interrelated with power dynamics in contexts where these volunteer activities take place.

1.6. Conclusion: shaping my research question beyond benefit and deficit

What can be inferred so far is that the links made between volunteering and learning/literacy seem to suggest that learning and literacy are 'packages' that volunteers *bring to* and later *gain through* volunteering. This framing is often built around a 'benefits' framework: *what learning do volunteers gain from volunteering?* While this question is important, it puts forward a static view of learning and volunteering, suggesting that the relationship is straightforward and one-way. As cautioned by Guijt and Shah (1998), oversimplifying the complexity of certain concepts may block their detailed examination – concealing critical issues of power relationships and intra-communal dynamics. Furthermore, Butcher and Einolf (2017c) observe that volunteering research often takes an exogenous lens – the lenses commonly used to understand volunteering are framed by dominant Northern perspectives. They argue, on the contrary, that "culture and context…are distinguishing factors that shape the face of volunteerism: motivations, forms and impact" (Butcher and Einolf 2017c:vi). These ideas echo what Hustinx and colleagues (2010) have already suggested: that current volunteering research needs to be complemented with more process-oriented accounts that may enlighten our knowledge, for instance, by problematising dominant assumptions. The in-depth accounts of volunteer work by groups that may be described as experiencing some form of disadvantage have begun to challenge some of these assumptions. They have highlighted, for example, how volunteering can counterintuitively accentuate inequalities, disempower the poor and/or worse, place them at an even more disadvantage (see particularly studies of Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2008, 2009; Lewis 2015).

The overarching research question that this thesis poses not only looks at what volunteers learn but focuses more centrally on the dynamics of such learning as it is embedded in their volunteer

work: *How do 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers engage with learning and literacy practices in/through their volunteer work?* In asking this question, I hope to bring attention to the wider power dynamics within which these learning activities occur (as in Jenkins 2008, 2009; Banerjea 2011 and Burns *et al.* 2015). By adopting ethnography as a methodology, I aimed to encounter volunteer, learning and development as they were experienced and engaged with by volunteers and other actors in these spaces.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the way volunteering has been understood in the literature is often influenced by Northern experiences. To create a much more context-based picture of what volunteering is, my first sub-research question explores: *How is volunteering understood by the volunteers and other actors? How do these discourses shape volunteers' practices and identities?* The second part of this question aims to elaborate the discussion further – not only by focusing on volunteers' and other actors' (including in policy statements) ideologies of volunteering but also how these translate into actions, influence their experiences and (re)shape their identities. The second sub-research question asks: *What kind of learning and literacy practices do volunteers engage with in their volunteer work?* Here, my preoccupation is not necessarily on the learning *outcomes* (as in several studies mentioned earlier) but on learning and literacy *practices.* Particularly, I depart from an understanding of literacy as a skill (i.e. to read and write) gained from volunteering as described above but on literacy as a social practice. In this thesis, *practices* refer not only to learning and literacy activities but also include broader cultural values and power relationships within a community (see Chapter 3).

The final sub-research question seeks to explore the implications of my research to policy and practice. I ask: *How can an ethnographic approach contribute to our understanding of the links between volunteering and learning both in academic and policy/practice contexts?*

While the 'benefits' framework may have the tendency to look at volunteering and learning by 'vulnerable' individuals in terms of *deficit*, I seek to highlight the *diversity* of discourses, identities and learning/literacy practices that co-exist within volunteering spaces. Through this, I intend to bring new insight into the links between volunteering, learning and development.

1.7. How I have structured this thesis (and why)

The first three chapters – this introduction, the context and background, and the conceptual framework – aim to provide an extensive contextual and conceptual landscape that shape the contours of this research. These starting points will also provide initial guides for the findings and discussion chapters. The fourth chapter outlines, in detail, the methodology of this thesis. As I have shared earlier, my research niche is not only defined by the kinds of questions I asked but also how I sought answers. I write about my ethnography not only in terms of what I did, but also – more extensively – as I reflected on some of the issues and challenges I faced (and how I resolved them or did not).

These preliminary chapters provide framing for my findings chapters – which I divided into four main themes. The contents of Chapters 5-8 mostly come from the data I collected and analysed. I chose not to intersperse the literature and concepts in these chapters so that I could place the robustness of these volunteers' stories and experiences centre stage. This is not to say, however, that these chapters are purely descriptive, for I present my data in an analysed format, bringing together emerging themes and guided by my conceptual starting points. I then tease out the key themes and deepen my analysis in Chapter 9 – discussing my findings more closely in relation to the literature and the concepts. I also present my main thesis in this chapter. Chapter 10, the conclusion, contains the main contributions of my thesis to the literature. It is also largely framed by my third research question and will, therefore, discuss the policy/practice implications of my research. I will also reflect on my methodology in light of these policy/practice discussions, particularly whether and how an ethnographer like me can find the links between research and practice in the field of volunteering and development.

Chapter Two
Context and Background

2. Introduction

Experience and research have taught me that the Philippines offers a rich landscape for observing various expressions of volunteering. The aim of this chapter is to describe this landscape by developing an account of my country's geographical and cultural context that is relevant to my research. I will also introduce the two case studies that I have selected. I have chosen these two organisations mainly because they engage with and/or are formed by volunteers who experience some form of vulnerability – a group whose experiences represent a research gap in the literature of volunteering (as discussed in Chapter 1). Further rationale for and the process of choosing these organisations will be discussed fully in Chapter 4.

The development space in the Philippines is concerned with a variety of development areas – from poverty alleviation and human rights to issues of climate change and conservation. However, I will be making regular reference to development aims and approaches surrounding adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) (particularly on HIV/AIDS awareness) and land tenure and housing, as these are the areas in which my two case studies are working. This chapter begins with a macro-perspective of the country's broader civil society space, including the various volunteering activities in the country. I will then explore the ways by which the state engages with volunteers, including policies that have shaped volunteering in the country. Finally, I will introduce the two case studies and how they fit within this wider development ecosystem.

2.1. The Philippines' civil society space

Located in the Southeast Asian region, the Philippines is an archipelago composed of 7,641 islands with a population of 100.98 million (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA] 2015) that is projected to rise to 115 million by 2025. I conducted my research in Iloilo – a province in the Visayas (central) region within Panay Island, home to 1.9 million inhabitants (based on the 2015 census, see Province of Iloilo n.d. online). Geographically, the HIV/AIDS organisation that I

worked with is located in the highly urbanised city of Iloilo, while the informal settlers' association is in a neighbouring rural municipality. Perhaps the country's most impressive socio-economic indicator is that of the literacy rates. In 2013, a government survey among Filipinos aged 10-64 revealed that 96.5% of the population was able to read and write and understand a simple message in any dialect or language (i.e. basic literacy rate) while 90.3% could read, write, compute and comprehend (i.e. functional literacy rate) (PSA 2015b). The education sector – including funding for state-run universities and colleges – continues to receive the lion's share from the government's budget, including that for 2020 (Rey 2020). I also observed that this sector – particularly basic education – is one of the more popular development concerns targeted by many local and international NGOs and groups in the country – generating activities focusing on provision (e.g. school supplies donations), curriculum development, infrastructure (e.g. building classrooms) and access (e.g. child sponsorship programme). Some have commented that the Philippines – a country where close to 17% of its population lives below the poverty line (Asian Development Bank [ADB] 2018) – has one of the most vibrant and dynamic civil societies in the world (Aldaba *et al.* 2000; ADB 2007).

In a historical mapping, the ADB (2013) noted that colonial occupations[7] have greatly influenced the development of the country's civil society space. The Catholic Church and other religious orders brought by the Spanish colonisation, established the first welfare organisations in the country such as orphanages, religious 'brotherhoods' and parochial schools. In a country where 80% of the population identifies as Roman Catholic (PSA 2015a), religion continues to be an influential driver for volunteering and Filipinos' wider political decision-making and participation (Cartagenas 2010). The American colonial rule introduced legislation that created boundaries between state provisions of public goods, religious philanthropy and private philanthropy. American NGOs such as the Red Cross and Anti-Tuberculosis Society also set up local offices during this time. This brief historical account is not to say that helping activities and community values in the country were non-existent prior to colonial rule. On the contrary, Filipino scholars argue that volunteerism in the country was founded on pre-colonial values (I will return to this in the next section). However, there is evidence to suggest that colonial occupations introduced policies that have helped structure the country's civil society activities and institutions.

Fast track to many decades after Philippines' independence, several commentators note that the dynamism of the country's civil society space can be traced back to when Martial Law was

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[7] Prior to the Philippine independence in June 1946, the Philippines was occupied by Spain for more than three centuries, by the Americans for nearly half a century and briefly by the Japanese for 3 years.

declared in 1972 (Aldaba *et al.* 2000; ADB 2013). Under former president Ferdinand Marcos'
dictatorship, development workers, advocates and volunteers were threatened, imprisoned or
killed because of their organising, campaigning and service provisions (ADB 2013). However, it
was the same social activism – now popularly known as the People Power movement – that
toppled the dictatorship and led to the mushrooming of various civil society groups. The
relationship between civil society and the state in the Philippines takes different forms: NGOs
may support and/or 'fill the gap' of state services but many – such as social movements in the 70s
and more currently, social activism against extra-judicial killings – also serve as 'watchdogs' to
make the government accountable and challenge corrupt systems.

In the mid-1980s, the years after the Marcos regime, the government developed policies that have
been supportive of the growth of non-state groups in the country: government permission is not
required to establish an organisation[8] and the state often had little control over foreign funding
(Clarke 1995). While these provisions may have helped encourage civil society activity in the
country, there are shortcomings in the persistence of what Clarke (1995) described as a 'weak
regulatory framework', particularly in terms of how these policies allow for NGOs to be easily
influenced and penetrated by external agendas. For example, looking at how several local NGOS
maintain financial viability, informal estimates are that they source close to 70% of their annual
budgets from overseas funders and some from government agencies (USAID 2019). Some have
noted that this funding environment creates anxiety among local groups who then channel their
energy often towards satisfying donor requirements instead of their constituents (cf ADB 2013).

In 2013, the Pork Barrel Scam saw some policy-makers appropriate large portions of their
development funds (called 'pork barrel') to bogus but officially registered NGOs as a strategy for
them to embezzle the money that was supposed to be for disaster response and rehabilitation.
This incident shook the sector and has severely impacted the reputations of NGOs (see Mendoza,
De Vera and Siriban 2014). Today, the civil society in the country continues to be challenged. I
conducted my research at a time when the volunteers in my study were operating during the
administration of President Rodrigo Duterte. Human Rights Watch (2020:463) called out his
administration for its "attacks on civil society", for instance, by red-tagging social activists. Their
report highlights that many human rights activists and campaigners considered his 'war on drugs'
as the extra-judicial killing of over 27,000 Filipinos – mostly coming from urban poor

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[8] However, organisations may choose to undergo registration with the Security and Exchange Commission to
become a 'legal entity', which carries with it several privileges such as accessing certain government funding
schemes.

communities. When human rights violations were investigated, the administration rejected foreign aid because some donors would enforce human rights regulations in exchange (Purushothaman 2017).

As a whole, the civil society in the Philippines continues to be strongly influenced by the wider political agenda and controversies in the country and globally. Despite the challenges outlined here, the country continues to see a vibrant civil society sector – from unstructured self-help groups, people's organisations (e.g. peasants' associations, trade unions, and cooperatives), mutual aid, social movements, local NGOs and international NGOs – working in a variety of development areas such as education, health, climate change and disaster preparedness and human rights. An important component and driver of these groups are volunteers.

2.2. Volunteering in the Philippines

Volunteering is said to have existed in Filipino communities for a long time. Like in many of the contexts discussed in Chapter 1, cultural values and practices have helped shaped volunteering understandings and activities in the country. It is associated with pre-colonial concepts of *bayanihan* (offering assistance to community members), *damayan* (helping one another in times of personal crisis or grief), *kawanggawa* (philanthropy), *paghinungod* (self-sacrifice), *bahaginan* (sharing of resources no matter how small) or *pakikipagkapwa* (extension of self for others) (Aguiling-Dalisay *et al.* 2004; Virola *et al.* 2010). These values are said to have formed the basis of many informal social actions within and between communities, such as house-building and disaster response – often regardless of socio-economic status. A survey found that non-material dimensions (i.e. spirituality, family relationships and a desire to do good) are considered by many Filipinos as a core component of their well-being (Asis and Luna 2000 as cited in Aked 2014). For some Filipinos, volunteering is imbued with religious notions of charity "where people give their time, talent and treasure to those who are less fortunate out of a sense of religious duty or social responsibility" (Aked 2014:9). Religious activities also provide opportunities for individuals to volunteer. A 1998 survey, for instance, found that a little more than 40 per cent of the respondents volunteered for their church and other religious activities (Abad 2001). While religion may be a strong motivation for people to volunteer, there were areas of work (such as sexual health, LGBTQ rights) that were strongly opposed and critiqued by religious institutions, thus constraining volunteering in such fields (I will provide an example of this later).

Policies on volunteering in the country chiefly frame volunteering as a formal, service delivery mechanism, echoing how volunteering has been dominantly framed and used within literature and policy spaces at the global level (see Chapter 1). Within relevant policies, volunteering has been conceptualised as a tool for socio-economic development, following the country's commitment to the agreements reached during the International Middle-Level Manpower Conference in Puerto Rico in 1962 (PNVCSA, n.d.). As a result, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) was established in 1980 to focus on the formalisation of volunteer activities in the country (Virola and Reyes 2011). The agency aims to promote and coordinate volunteer programmes and services at a national level (PNVCSA n.d.). In 2001, the office of the president released a memorandum order directing agencies to set up a National Volunteering scheme called the *Bayanihang Bayan*[9] Programme for Government Service to "engage the volunteer assistance of the private sector in the implementation of government programs and projects" (Office of the President 2001:n.p). Through this programme, agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, have created a pool of volunteers to render some of their government-related services. Prior to this, other government agencies had already integrated volunteers in their systems. For instance, the Department of Health has been mobilising *barangay*[10] (health volunteers) to deliver primary health care in communities and *barangay tanods* (community police) have been supporting communities as early as 1991, when many government services were decentralised.

In 2007, the Republic Act 9418 (Volunteer Act of 2007) was enacted, aimed at providing a 'conducive and enabling' environment for volunteers and volunteer service organisations (RA9418, Section 3) through: the recognition and incentivisation of volunteers; the integration of volunteerism in the basic and higher education curricula; the establishment of a national volunteer infrastructure, and a volunteer programme for national and local government. A close reading of the Philippine policy provisions on volunteering revealed a dominant focus on mobilising volunteers to augment government service-delivery (Congress of the Philippines 2007). In the previous subsection, I discussed how civil society organisations cultivate various relationships with the state – not only as allies but also as each other's potential invigilators. These policy provisions, however, seem to promote a certain kind of relationship between the state and voluntary organisations where the latter is framed as a supporter (particularly in terms of human resource) of the former.

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[9] Could be translated as National Cooperation
[10] Barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines

In practice, the relationship between volunteer organisations and the state can also be hostile and counterproductive. Volunteer responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have shed light on this. Recent news has reported several arrests of peasant organisations, humanitarian groups and local volunteers who were delivering relief goods to those affected by quarantine measures, because they allegedly violated lockdown and social distancing regulations (see for instance reports by Conde 2020a, 2020b; Talabong 2020). Many of those arrested have been released for reasons such as lack of evidence, possession of proper government-issued permits and/or because the police just 'over-reacted'. An arrested leader of a peasant's organisation commented that "it is both [the] right and duty of every Filipino to aid those in need," and suggested that their arrest was "an attack on activists carrying out humanitarian activities" (Conde 2020c:n.p.). While one could argue for the need for the government to coordinate volunteer efforts, abuse of power and corruption bring the risk that this, instead, comes in the form of vicious policing and co-optation. These tensions add another layer of complexity to defining volunteering that was not explored explicitly in Chapter 1. Here, volunteer work overlaps with closely linked concepts such as social activism, service and citizenship.

Many volunteer activities in the country move beyond the service delivery model. Informal volunteering, as already discussed, is vibrant in the Philippines – although poorly recognised and not integrated into policy frameworks. NGOs in the Philippines carry out a wide range of volunteer work alongside many helping activities that may not be associated with any organisation at all. These initiatives can be seen across various development sectors. In health, for example, volunteer organisations are at the frontline of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes in the country – including campaigning for comprehensive policies. In a recent feature by UNAIDS (2020), volunteers in the Philippines were instrumental in ensuring that people living with HIV received their medicines at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of housing, the 2014 *Bayani* (Hero) Challenge launched by the NGO *Gawad Kalinga*[11] (GK) gathered over 1.7 million volunteers for a period of five days to conduct varied activities – including house building – for 111 communities across the country (Oquinena 2014). This was a significant rise in number volunteers (80,000 in 2013 (GK 2013)) attributed to an increased "desire to reach out and do something for complete strangers in need" following Haiyan[12] in 2013 (GK 2014:n.p). There is also a wide variety of volunteer tourism programmes; some are operationalised independently by a group (e.g. bike tour of Manila slums) or are associated with NGOs (e.g. GK's Make A

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[11] "Gawad Kalinga," translated in English means to "give care"
[12] Haiyan was then the strongest Typhoon to have ever been recorded. It hit landfall in the central region of the Philippines causing thousands of deaths and loss of infrastructure

Difference (MAD) Travel). Based on my experience, there are various learning components in these volunteer engagements, such as leadership training camps, orientation programmes and mentorship, although these are rarely framed as learning initiatives.

A stronger link between volunteering and learning may be found in service-learning programmes in the country's formal education institutions. For instance, Philippine universities' trifecta of thrusts are: research, teaching and community engagement. Many Philippine universities have community extension offices with the goal of increasing their students' understanding of the needs of their immediate communities similar to Anorico's (2019) findings in his study of service-learning programmes of the University of Santo Tomas, the oldest catholic university in the country. There is a legal basis for these activities. The Republic Act 9163 established the National Service Training Programme that aims to "enhance civic consciousness" by "developing ethics of service and patriotism" through any of three pathways (Congress of the Philippines 2002:n.p). These pathways are Reserve Officers' Training Corps (for military training); Literacy Training Service (training students to become teachers of literacy and numeracy to school children, out of school youths, etc.) and Civic Welfare Training Service (for programmes and activities contributing to improved health, education, etc.). Accomplishing one of these tracks is a requisite for completing any bachelor's degree.

Another interesting volunteering expression that has come to the fore in the country is 'volunteer nursing'. An oversupply of qualified nurses who are unable to find work turn to 'volunteering' in local hospitals, many of which require a fee from the nurses to cover the training cost of such engagement (Pring and Roco 2012). The Philippine Nurses Association has long criticised this system as being exploitative of nurses who are already experiencing financial strains from lack of employment (cf. Pring and Roco 2012). This situation is also another example of my argument in Chapter 1 in terms of how certain societal circumstances (eg limited job opportunities) might *relatively coerce* individuals to turn to volunteering, despite preferring a paid job.

In this section, I have described different modalities of voluntary action in the country and many seem to be supported and/or constrained by operations of the state, funding agencies (including international aid) and other organisations. The way state policies frame volunteering as formal service delivery of development provisions further adds to my argument on the need to highlight and understand the wealth of volunteering activities that are more unstructured and community-based. Additionally, the policies and programmes that link volunteering, learning and literacy are in line with the dominant concern around learning outcomes and whether and how volunteering

could be a form of up-skilling and training (as discussed in Chapter 1.5). Tensions between state and volunteer spaces also illustrate how these various institutions interact with each other and what sort of development outcomes are produced in the process.

2.3. Where do the two case study organisations fit in?

So far, I have described the national context of volunteering policy and activities in the Philippines, including a brief background of the country's broader civil society space. In this section, I will introduce the two organisations that were the basis of my research and discuss how they fit in (or not) into this broader Philippine development landscape. The names of the organisations have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Both organisations are located in Iloilo, a province in the Panay islands in the central region of the Philippines. The language used by the majority of the participants in both case studies is Hiligaynon (a local dialect). However, many of the documents and texts they engage with (e.g. health classes materials, government forms, funders' reports) are in English and at times, in Tagalog (the national language), with no local translation. Many of the volunteers I engaged with in both organisations also speak and understand Tagalog and fewer speak and understand English. I am fluent in all three of these languages: Hiligaynon, English and Tagalog.

2.3.1. Claiming Space: Land4All Homeowner's Association (Land4All)

To understand the plight of the members of Land4All Homeowners' Association (which I will refer to in this thesis as Land4All), I will begin by investigating the wider development plan of their local government. Efforts to 'urbanise' the chiefly rural municipality where Land4All's village *Barangay Paglaum*[13] is located is strongly linked with the economic development plan of its neighbouring city and municipalities. The Metro Iloilo Guimaras Economic Development Council seeks to maintain Iloilo's status as one of the growing economies in the Philippines (Iloilo City Local Development Council and City Planning and Development Office 2019). Returning to Iloilo after a couple of years living abroad, I have seen how the city has transformed or – in the words of policy-makers and business circles I spoke with – *developed.* The urban space of Iloilo City, where I grew up and had worked most of my life, had changed dramatically

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[13] Paglaum is also used to refer to the Barangay which the community is part of. I will sometimes refer to the community as Brgy. Paglaum. Paglaum is a Hiligaynon term which means 'hope'.

over the years. I could no longer cross streets where I used to and slums had been replaced with high-rise buildings. The city – and the region – has seen a rise in both public and private infrastructure. Nationally, the current administration prioritises the Build, Build, Build project, which has seen $160-200 Billion spent on infrastructure (Lamentillo 2018). Critics of the project lament the eviction of hundreds of poor, informally-settling families (e.g. Racelis 2019). The same could be said about other infrastructure projects both private and business-initiated. While the exact reason was unclear, the members of Land4All became one of the communities that were evicted and left without a home.

Land4All – led by seven (7) volunteer officers – formed late in 2016 as a response to an ominous document: a notice to vacate. They were composed of representatives from about 50 households whose families – generations after generations – have been living on a piece of coastal land in a rural area in Iloilo for about 70 years. They may be considered as 'squatters' or informal settlers because on the land title, the land they were residing in was the property of a well-known, well-off family who decided to take their land back after many decades. Neither the community members nor the relevant government offices I spoke with knew exactly why the family had decided to evict the community. The most common rumour, however, was that they wanted to transform the seaside lot into a beach resort.

The association did not start out as a formal, legal entity as they are now. The original intention, according to its founding members, was to loosely organise (i.e. form a group) so that they could be more representative, for instance, in lobbying for support from the local government or represent each other in court. However, they later decided to apply for the Community Mortgage Programme (CMP) which necessitated that they register their group as a legally-recognised association. CMP is a government-funded mortgage financing programme specially designed to assist landless and informally-settling families, such as those in *Brgy. Paglaum*, to *legally own* the lots that they occupy or where they choose to relocate to (Republic Act No. 7279 Article 8, Section 21). CMP will allow Land4All members to access a formal credit system and purchase land as a community. Upon completion of loan payments (ideally within 25 years at affordable rates[14] but often longer), individualised land titles will be distributed to the members, therefore, ensuring land tenure. The CMP policy envisages that communities – through the formation of a legally-recognised association – are at the centre of the CMP process. However, CMP has been

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[14] For Land4All, the monthly amortization is approximately £13/month for every lot acquired (including site development expenses) or £17/month if including house construction.

framed and used as a programme for *urban* poor resettlement and has been rarely used in the case of a rural community such as Land4All.

When I began the fieldwork, it very quickly became clear that CMP is a highly complex, bureaucratic, legal process – which the volunteer leaders in particular needed to learn to navigate. Government offices involved with CMP conducted what they called 'orientation' sessions. During my fieldwork, they organised one of these sessions once. It lasted for about half-a-day and involved a series of presentations on the technicalities of the CMP and then a time for questions. Adding to the complexity of Land4All's circumstances were the series of legal procedures they underwent to fight against their eviction. Prior to my fieldwork, litigations had been ongoing for just over a year. Volunteer leaders needed to find and hire a lawyer, to liaise with government officials for support, to raise funds for litigation fees and to ensure that the community members were aware of the development of the case. When I started my fieldwork, they were nearing the last couple of months of a temporary restraining order against the execution of their eviction, which added a sense of urgency to their CMP application process. Then, the volunteer leaders' goal was to transfer to a new lot *before* they were evicted from their original dwellings, creating various levels of urgent processes. The same volunteer leaders who were organising the legal processes, in the beginning, became association officers. Part of their task was to engage with a diverse range of actors – lawyers, government officials, engineers, contractors, architects, landowners – at different lengths, to fulfil a wide range of documentation procedures. A big part of the data I analysed were about these complexities and how volunteer leaders of the association were at the forefront of navigating them (see particularly Chapter 7).

I would describe Brgy. *Paglaum* as a tight-knit community (see Figure 1). Pre-eviction (when they were by the seaside) and post-eviction (when they moved to the meadows), their houses were physically close to each other, grouped in clusters and separated only by narrow pathways. This arrangement made it more accessible, for instance, to ask a neighbour for spare rice or powdered coffee. There were plenty of communal spaces: open areas with benches and tables where they would stay and talk for long hours on lazy afternoons. It also seemed that everybody was related to everybody either by blood or by a ceremony (see Chapter 5) and this formed a basis of many of the helping activities in their community.

Figure 1. A cluster of houses in Brgy. Paglaum. Taken June 2017

Figure 2. What was left of the houses after evacuation. Taken September 2017

So, the eviction tore apart a community whose relationships had developed over decades, arguably, enhanced by their proximity. During our early conversations, community members would often begin by telling me how long their family had lived in *Paglaum*. *One of them said*

that her husband was born in Paglaum and he is now 52 years old. The other said that their
youngest brother, who is now 30 years old, was born there [Field Notes, 23/06/17]. In those
many decades, individuals and families seemed to have accumulated significant memories and
developed emotional attachment to the place and to each other. In fact, one of their options was to
get relocated to various far-flung areas for free under the auspices of their local government.
Many decided against this because of difficulty in transportation and livelihood, but also because
they did not want to live far away from those with whom they were familiar.

A majority of the households – including the volunteer leaders' – do not have a steady income. In
most families, both men and women contribute to household expenses. Men often work as
occasional construction workers and/or carpenters with incomes that are highly dependent on
whether there are requests for their services. Most of these jobs are in Iloilo City or other
provinces which involve a commute from 2-6 hours. Many commute every day as it would be too
expensive to stay in the city. Some women sell home-made treats, work as housemaids and/or
labanderas[15]. Children, especially those who have work, also contribute. As many of them
complained, moving to a new house means spending money they do not have and leaves many of
them in debt.

To summarise, Land4All has characteristics closely linked with mutual aid groups or even social
movements, where their operations as an association are less structured – especially at the
beginning. Their relationships as neighbours and friends across generations also precede their
being a legally-recognised association. All of the members are considered, particularly by the
programme, as landless and marginalised – characteristics that are pre-requisite to accessing the
CMP. Second, they work most closely with government institutions – and this relationship is that
of an applicant and an authority. The majority of the volunteer activities I observed and describe
in this organisation relate to their application to the CMP.

2.3.2. 'To reach one is to save one': Youth4Health

About 20 kilometres from *Brgy, Paglaum* is the office of *Youth4Health: Young people for*
HIV/AIDS Education and Adolescent Health, tucked in one of the multi-space buildings in the
heart of downtown Iloilo City – an area bustling with city life, far from the calm of rural area
where Land4All is located. On most days when the office is busy, their tight two-story office

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[15] Labandero/a is a person who hand washes other people's clothes for income

building no longer maintains its intended purposes. The laboratory becomes a meeting room and a lecture area, the labour room becomes a training room, and the counselling rooms became temporary accommodation for volunteers who stay the night. Youth4Health in Iloilo is a local 'chapter' of a national organisation founded in the late 60s that champions adolescent sexual and reproductive health through advocacy and provision of reproductive health services for Filipinos.

The work of Youth4Health in the region is summarised in Appendix A. I worked closely on their programmes on HIV/AIDS and ASRHR. Their motto is 'to reach one is to save one', so they target those whom they consider hard-to-reach: the poor, marginalised, socially excluded and underserved. Funding and local policy concerns arguably have shaped the growing dominance of both advocacy streams in Youth4Health's regional focus. Throughout my fieldwork, both the government and large INGOs were pouring money into Youth4Health – enough to financially sustain the organisation for the next two years – to implement projects across these two areas.

When I returned to Iloilo City for fieldwork, I noticed how concerns around HIV/AIDS – and associated issues such as sexual health and for many others, homosexuality – dominated mainstream media and the informal conversations I had with some NGOs and with policy-makers. I found that the Philippines had the fastest growing HIV epidemic in the South Pacific region – particularly in terms of per cent increase (Gangcuanco, 2019). While infections in all countries in the region have slightly declined, infections in the Philippines had sharply increased (UNAIDS 2020). In 2019, new cases rose by 207% (since 2010), and AIDS-related deaths increased by 338% (UNAIDS 2019). Seven per cent of the country's cases were in Western Visayas, the fourth highest prevalence outside the National Capital Region. Many local NGOs, like Youth4Health, work towards HIV/AIDS campaigning – including political lobbying which helped pass the HIV/AIDS Policy Act (RA 11166) in 2018. The policy includes provisions on improved HIV testing and service and lowering the age of consent for HIV testing from 21 to 15 years old (WHO, 2019). The battle over the state provisions of condoms, HIV/AIDS awareness programmes and other sexual health services has been longstanding. Returning to earlier discussions about how religious organisations may constrain volunteer activity, the Human Rights Watch noted that the long fight for this public service to be approved in policy has been highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church's resistance (Conde 2016).

A large part of both government run HIV/AIDS and ASRH programmes revolves around formal and informal health education and awareness – which Youth4Health was asked to co-implement by its regional government partners. Volunteers and staff conducted basic HIV classes in their office,

in communities, schools, clubs and parties. Often, these are offered alongside HIV screenings, testing[16] and/or distribution of condoms and lubricants. Regarding ASRH, Youth4Health's volunteers and staff roll out the Department of Health's (DOH) Healthy Young Ones (HYO) module (DOH 2016). It is a seven-topic[17] flipchart on sexual and reproductive health that has been designed explicitly for 10-19-year-olds. I will discuss the HYO community health classes in more depth in Chapter 6.

Youth4Health works with government institutions – the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Work and Development, Population Commission, Local Government Units (LGUs) – but in a different capacity as compared to Land4All. These government institutions are some of their major project funders and therefore Youth4Health must satisfy certain requirements in order to secure future funding. During my fieldwork, three of their major projects were funded by the DOH, their outreach activities in provinces were supported by the LGUs, and many of their sexual health provisions (e.g. condom distributions) were sourced from the government. Because these are government-monitored, these partnerships often come with strict documentation and reporting expectations. Apart from government funding, Youth4Health is also heavily funded by international NGOs. These partnerships require the organisation to fulfil another set of deliverables and reporting requirements that are *specific* to the INGO. I have noted however that these activities – while funded by and feeding into the reporting of different organisations and funders – are not sharply compartmentalised and, instead, are considered by volunteers and staff as being under one umbrella of 'Youth4Health activities'. There are also loose expectations around practices and ethical conduct among staff and volunteers, using manuals as a basis for their conduct and even dress code (i.e. provision of uniforms/T-shirts) in certain circumstances.

Influenced partly by donor requirements, Youth4Health's programmes on HIV/AIDS and ASRH are targeted at what they call the key affected population (KAP) – gay men, men having sex with men and transwomen, both as clients and/or volunteers. Youth4Health has diversified the ways it reaches these populations by going to boarding houses[18], clubs, plazas, *tambayans*[19], clandestine

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[16] HIV screening is done to detect whether there is a presence of HIV in a person's blood. This is less invasive and involves only a needle prick. When tested 'reactive', further tests are warranted to determine if client is 'positive'

[17] These topics included: puberty, reproductive system, menstrual cycle, SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression), reproduction and responsibility, STIs (sexually transmitted infections) and HIV/AIDS

[18] In the Philippines, 'boarding house' is a term used to refer to shared houses for rent often occupied by students and young professionals. In many instances, occupants also share the same bedroom

[19] *Tambayan* translates as 'a place to hang out'.

meetings of online gay and bisexual men's groups and by having a strong presence on social media such as Facebook and gay hook-up apps.

Youth4Health considers itself as a nationwide organisation of volunteers and one of the oldest and largest in the country. Youth4Health follows a *binary* structure of volunteers and salaried staff whereby volunteers set the organisation's general direction and create policies. The salaried staff *implements* the organisation's programmes and objectives. Furthermore, the organisation distinguishes between policy and programme volunteers. Policy volunteers are 'professionals' – nurses, doctors, social workers – who share their time and expertise for free. Programme volunteers, on the other hand, are women and men from Youth4Health's programme areas who volunteer to help in community organising, information campaigns and distribution of contraceptives to people in their respective communities. They are often called CBVs or community-based volunteers.

These neat distinctions seem rather simplistic when compared to the diversity of volunteer roles that I encountered during my fieldwork. For example, volunteers neither talk about nor presented themselves as 'programme' and 'policy' volunteers, but rather, more commonly, as peer educators or peer counsellors (Appendix B enumerates the 'types' of volunteers I encountered). The power attached to these roles were also not as distinct as the organisational structure desired it to be. For instance, the extent to which volunteers could shape the trajectory of programmes and policies depended on *which* volunteers one referred to. It is important to mention that there are programmes that provide monetary incentives to volunteers which, at times, influences their motivations, expectations and performance. This also creates tensions as certain volunteers more readily access these types of volunteering tasks as compared to others.

In summary, Youth4Health is a youth-driven NGO with volunteers that play a crucial role in HIV/AIDS awareness in the city, as well as popularising and easing access for HIV screening. The organisation seems to be far more structured when compared to Land4All, has a stronger training component, and the roles of various types of volunteers are far more delineated. It is also important to highlight that their relationship with the government is more fluid and complex than Land4All. They co-implement government programmes and receive government funding but also campaign and lobby for the improvement of government policy.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the wider civil society space and volunteering in the Philippines and introduced the two case studies that are at the centre of my research (and their position in that broader development system). I argue that the Philippines offers a good context to observe several of the issues outlined in Chapter 1 (e.g varying definitions and structures of volunteering, strong service delivery approach to volunteering), partly because of the ways in which people's organising and volunteering are deeply embedded in the country's political and social life. These activities have roots in pre-colonial values that have persisted, despite continued challenges presented by various forces – including the government. It is also important to highlight that the policies around volunteering – and volunteering and learning – echo the deficit discourses described in Chapter 1. Volunteering, within policies, continues to be framed as a service delivery model – often harnessed to assist government activities, despite the many informal helping activities already existing in many communities. As will be more apparent later in this thesis, the activities and experiences of the volunteers of these two organisations are not divorced from the wider operations of the state and the development world – primarily because the two groups work closely with external actors as part of their volunteering, even on a one-to-one basis. The complexity of the bureaucratic and institutional processes and relationships I have described will be a useful background for discussions in the findings chapters, particularly Chapter Seven.

Chapter Three
Conceptual Framework

3. Introduction

The overarching research question of my thesis – *How do 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers engage with learning and literacy practices in/through their volunteer work* – aims to move beyond the dominant exploration of learning and literacy as 'products' of volunteering. As explained in Chapter 1.6 (also in relation to how volunteering had been chiefly regarded in Philippine policies, described in Chapter 2), my research questions are an attempt to move beyond this deficit and benefit discourse. Guided by this aim, at the heart of my conceptual starting point is the framing of volunteering, learning and literacy as *social practices*. This view broadens the understanding of volunteering as being a service delivery mechanism to an understanding of volunteering as part of everyday helping activities and a form of participation in development processes. From a social practice perspective, learning and literacy are not just *outcomes* of volunteering but activities that are part of daily life and practices that are linked with the wider culture and dynamics of communities. Embedded in this conceptual stance are issues around power and identities, namely, how learning and literacy shape community relationships and identities.

This chapter aims to introduce my conceptual starting points which I used in analysing my research data. It is divided into three main parts. First, I briefly explore volunteering using various development theories as lenses before narrowing my focus to the concepts of community participation and development as a discourse and how they may expand understanding of volunteering as an activity that is part of wider helping activities in communities. Second, a social view of learning will be introduced, drawing on Lave and Wenger's concept of communities of practice – looking particularly at how individuals learn to become members of a community. Finally, I will discuss the concept of literacy as a social practice and how literacies are used in everyday life, including how texts and documents travel and how they mediate power.

3.1. Volunteering through a development lens

In Chapter 1, I signalled that my thesis discusses volunteering within the context of international development. Several studies have noted that volunteering has been dominantly framed and used as a global asset for achieving development outcomes (see for instance Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011; Burns and Howard 2015; Davis Smith 2000; Devereux 2008; Howard and Burns 2015). The dominance of such discourse highlights the importance of looking into the many other ways by which links between volunteering and development have been represented and studied. To scrutinise the ideologies behind such relationships, this sub-section situates volunteering within wider development approaches and theories, summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mapping Discourses of Development and Volunteering

Main Development Approaches	Volunteering Discourses and Practices
− Modernisation theories − Human Capital Theories − Neo-liberalism	- *Emergence of international voluntary organisations in the 1950s.* Programmes followed the skill-share, technical-delivery model. Volunteers from Global North share skills with Global South where these are 'lacking'. - *Volunteering as enhancement of human capital.* Provides and enhances competencies for labour-market access and re-entry - *Volunteering for enhancing neoliberalism.* A strategy for citizen 'responsibilisation': individuals are increasingly expected to be responsible for and not only active in own service provision. - *Measurement of the economic value of volunteering.* Metrics were developed by the International Labour Organisation to measure national and international volunteering. - *Professionalisation of Volunteering.* Driven by value-for-money rhetoric within the 'development industry.'
− Dependency Theory − World Systems Theory	- *Volunteering as a tool for maintaining dependency.* International volunteering as a way for former colonial nations to continually engage with former colonies. Short-term funding schemes tie volunteer organisations in the South to funding bodies. On an individual level, small stipends given by volunteer organisations may have created a sense of dependency among local volunteers.

– Post-colonialism – Post-structuralism – Post-development	-	*The fluid boundaries of volunteering.* Multiple and multi-level discourses about and around volunteering exist
	-	*Emergence of South-to-South volunteering as resistance to dependency.* Volunteer exchanges seen as mutual learning and service exchange among countries in the Global South.
	-	*National Volunteering Schemes as response to a call for local communities to participate in development processes.* Tightly linked with concepts of civic service and social responsibility.
– Basic Needs – Human Rights – Human Development and Capabilities	-	*Volunteering as enhancement of human development.* May enhance physical and mental health, self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. Increases motivation and aspiration.
– Participatory Learning and Action	-	*Volunteering as community participation and empowerment.* Can be a pathway for communities to identify and respond to their own issues. This may lead to local action or activism.
	-	*Volunteering among disadvantaged communities.* A way for the vulnerable to transition from being recipients to being key participants in the development processes.

Developed from: McCowan 2015; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015

To develop this table, I first identified different development theories and discourses (see column one) and then mapped out volunteering assumptions, approaches and aims based on the theories with which they may have been framed (see column two). The groupings of the main development approaches was based on McCowan's (2015:35) paradigms of development theory[20].

One key aspect that this table (and discussions in Chapter 1) reveals is that the deficit discourse, particularly the notion of 'development as economic growth and/or modernisation', persists within volunteering literature and practice (see also Chapter 1). For instance, the many studies and policy interests that measure the economic contribution of volunteering may be underpinned by a discourse of development as economic growth or modernisation (see for instance the Manual of Measuring Volunteer Work developed by the International Labour Organization [ILO] (2011), which has been applied to multiple regions in the world including the Philippines, as in Virola and Reyes (2011)). Partly, the limitations of these initiatives lie in their attempts to establish international indicators, despite the fact that cultural influences in different countries can only be

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[20] While certain theories emerged as responses to and critiques of some previous paradigms, they may all co-exist at present – so I did not intend the table to be understood as a timeline.

standardised up to a certain point. This paradigm also often fails to recognise other non-economic contributions of volunteering, such as well-being and social cohesion (Burns *et al.* 2015). Furthermore, by assuming that economic growth is the only and/or primary feature of development, this paradigm portrays institutions such as educational and political institutions – including, perhaps, the voluntary sector – as valuable *only if* they contribute to economic growth[21] rather than as having intrinsic value (cf McCowan 2015). This echoes the arguments of several scholars that the deficit discourse continues to dominate and drive many development programmes today (see for instance Aikman *et al.* 2016 who argued this in relation to international and comparative education; see also McCowan 2015; Rogers 2014; Willis 2011)

Table 3 also helped me to adopt a more critical view of the geopolitics of international volunteering research. Several reviews in the field have found that this literature has largely focused on the impact on/of the international volunteer (usually from the Global North) and the volunteer-sending organisation (Burns *et al.* 2015; Butcher and Einolf 2017d; Hazeldine and Ballie Smith 2015; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015). According to *Valuing Volunteering*, this trend may be partly attributed to the significant amount of funding given to INGOs to implement international volunteering programmes and to international volunteering's popularity in countries of the Global North (Burns *et al.* 2015:21). Baillie Smith, Laurie and Griffiths (2017), in their appraisal of South-South volunteering, have moved this discussion a step further by arguing that this skewed focus on the experiences of the volunteers from the North, perpetuates the dominant framing of the Global South as 'hosts' of services coming from 'more developed' nations (similar to the earlier skill-share model of international volunteering[22] as identified in Table 3). The main critique, as Devereaux (2008:358) put it, is that at its worst, "…international volunteering can be imperialist, paternalistic charity, volunteer tourism, or a self-serving quest for career and personal development on the part of well-off Westerners".

Another aspect of volunteering that is laid bare by this mapping is that volunteer organisations and groups are not disengaged from broader interests of states, non-state organisations and wider (national or global) development agendas. Against the backdrop of the strong development discourse on citizen accountability, for instance, Lacey and Ilcan (2006) commented that

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[21] Interestingly, in some policy spaces/fora where I participated, I observed increased attention to documenting the *unique* contribution of volunteering to development (eg the SDGs) – ie what can volunteering provide that paid staff cannot? One of the more prominent answers is that volunteers work for free and therefore offer huge economic savings!

[22] There are now many volunteer-involving organisations that challenge these service delivery models, for instance, through South-to-South volunteering programmes and mutual learning between local and international volunteers.

volunteering continues to be one way by which citizens are fashioned to be increasingly responsible for (i.e. 'responsible citizenship') and not only active in (i.e. 'active citizenship') service-provision. Apart from speaking to the idea of volunteering as a helping, altruistic activity, this "responsibilisation" agenda tightly links with the neo-liberal discourse that decentralises state responsibility for service provision to NGOs, voluntary organisations and civil society (Lacey and Ilcan 2006:39; Milligan and Fyfe 2005). This reliance (or others would argue, over-reliance) leads to the "McDonaldisation" of the voluntary sector where organisations are increasingly professionalised (like a corporation) to ensure quality and efficient service as part of a donor-beneficiary relationship that is dominated by value-for-money rhetoric (Milligan and Fyfe 2005:427). For Milligan and Fyfe (2005:421), this culture creates "corporatist" organisations that may counterintuitively foster *passive* citizenship by alienating and disempowering volunteers and local communities because of processes and decision-making that are non-participatory, bureaucratic and distant.

Going back to Table 2, I use the broken lines to show that the 'separation' between groups of theories are permeable and unfixed. So, while international volunteering may be underpinned by economic discourses and follow one-way, skill-share models, there is evidence that these programmes can likewise foster mutual learning between the international volunteer and the local community members (Burns *et al.* 2015). Additionally, while volunteering measurements continue to focus on economic contributions, several studies have looked at its impact on well-being and mental health (Kamerāde and Bennett 2018; O'Brien, Townsend, and Ebden 2010; Wilson and Musick 1996).

This section has demonstrated how different development theories may have framed previous research on and practices of volunteering. I have identified how a deficit discourse continues to be a dominant framing within several volunteer research strands (particularly the focus on measuring the economic contribution of volunteering and Northern-centric international volunteering research). By going to the heart of ideas about 'development', I suggest that dominant thinking about volunteering may fail to engage with issues surrounding volunteering in the South and informal, people-to-people volunteering activities, particularly among 'vulnerable' communities – the focus of my research. I turn to the notion of participation and how this may provide useful tools in understanding volunteering as a social practice.

3.1.1. Volunteering as participation

I discussed in Chapter 1 that the dominant way of framing volunteering within development studies is through the lens of a service-delivery model which has, therefore, eclipsed the many helping activities that are embedded within communities in their everyday life. To understand volunteering as a social practice, I will reframe the understanding of volunteering using (critical) theoretical lenses of participation in development.

As a development theory and practical approach, participation (i.e. participatory development) emerged in the 1980s following arguments that externally imposed, donor-driven, expert-oriented and top-down development approaches were ineffective and unable to achieve development outcomes (Chambers 2005; Gaventa 1998; Mosse 2003). This theory posits that development could be achieved by recognising, supporting and valorising local community perspectives, knowledge, priorities and skills. Surveying theories and practices of development, Willis (2011) describes participation as a catch-all term referring to the involvement of local communities in development processes. Cooke and Kothari (2001) bring a more nuanced insight to what this 'involvement' may look like. For them, participation is about changing social positions: 'the people' – particularly those who are socially and economically marginalised – must be (re)positioned to be at the centre of development processes, especially those that relate to interventions and decisions that affect their own lives. Gaventa (1998) and Mosse (2003) note that the concept of participation is not only confined to grassroots organisations and groups but has been increasingly embraced at the institutional and governmental level as well. A transfer of power is considered key to participation: transferring some degree of control over resources and processes to those who previously had no such power (Gaventa 1998; Guijt and Shah 1998). As discussed in Chapter 1, when seen through the lens of participatory development, 'vulnerable' and 'marginalised' groups are not only at the receiving end of development programmes delivered by volunteers (as in service delivery model) – but they can be (and should be) at the centre of development processes.

According to Chambers (2005:101), by the turn of the 21st century, participation became known as the new orthodoxy in development. Because participation appeals to 'the people,' several scholars have noted how it is often regarded as intrinsically a 'good thing' (see for instance Cooke and Kothari 2001; Mohan 2014) which, as White (1996:7) puts it, brings "warm glow to its users and hearers". For Cornwall (2002:7), this is partly because the literature on participation generally focuses on how participation is supposed to work and less about "what *actually*

happens" in practice. Participation can take many forms and serve many interests which, at times, do not necessarily favour marginalised communities. Participatory approaches – for instance, volunteering – when implemented uncritically, may further support illegitimate and/or unjust use of power by those who already hold it. For Gaventa (1998), bureaucratisation, co-opting grassroots agendas and threatening to dislodge from power those who have traditionally been the dominant decision makers – creates opportunities for the misuse of participation. At the heart of the problem is naivety towards the complexity of power and power relations not only between 'facilitators' and 'participants', or between 'donors' and 'beneficiaries' but also "historically and discursively as to what constitutes knowledge and social norms" (Cooke and Kothari 2001:14).

My conceptual stance in this thesis, therefore, follows a critical view when applying concepts of participation to volunteering, so as to unearth and problematise varying interests and actors that are at play in such participatory processes. I will now explore two particular aspects of development and participation that are relevant in my thesis: first, the need to make visible individuals' own understandings of development (and in this research, of volunteering and learning); and the need to situate participation in particular contexts and spaces. To do this, I use the concepts of 'development as discourse' by Escobar (1995) for the first, and 'spaces of/for participation' by Cornwall (2002) for the second.

3.1.2. Development as discourse

In Chapter 1, I noted the limited research-based understanding of volunteering in the Global South. I realised that countering these dominant narratives in the volunteering literature and practices would need a serious exploration into how local volunteers themselves – particularly those who are often labelled as 'vulnerable' – understand volunteering. However, my research concern is not so much about how volunteering is defined, but more about the discourses about/around volunteering.

Discourse, following Grillo (1997:12), may be understood as a term that "includes language, but also what is represented through language… [and] identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development [e.g., volunteering] as well as speaking and thinking about it". The concept of *language ideologies* also points to how language (and language use) is tied to "identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group…"

(Woolard 1998:3). The concept of language ideologies provides a helpful starting point to unpack the connections between language (written and spoken), the individual and the wider structures within a society. As Chomsky (1979:191) aptly puts, "questions of language are basically questions of power" (as cited in Grillo 1988:2). Analysis of language ideologies can reveal how language is sometimes a means of control and differentiation of certain groups over others (Grillo 1988; Blommaert 2006), for instance among minority groups and languages (see May 2006).

Language users have their own ideologies regarding a language and its uses (Blommaert 2006:241). These ideologies could become the basis for individual and institutional action and could impact 'language regimes' – such as what is considered as a 'socially desirable' and/or an 'ideal' language in a specific domain (Blommaert, 2006:244). For example, several scholars have noted that English, believed to be the language of 'global communication', has been considered by aid agencies and development actors as the *de facto* 'language *of* development' (Appleby *et al.* 2002; Robinson 2016; Robinson and Vũ 2019). Being able to understand and speak English is important to effectively engage with various domains of development (i.e. language *for* development[23]) such as within civil society groups (particularly those that work with international donors), conferences, trainings and workshops (Appleby *et al.* 2002; Robinson 2016). These development programmes then assume that English language competence provides more opportunities for one's social and economic development.

Returning to Grillo's (1997) definition above, discourse also includes the potential role of language in "producing and regulating" identities (c.f. Blommaert 2006:244) or how "society constitutes its members (or subjects)" (Grillo 1997:12; see also Blommaert 2006; Woolard 1998). This notion elevates my exploration from surveying volunteering 'speak' (i.e. how do people or institutions *define* volunteering and development), towards an understanding of how such definitions powerfully create certain kinds of 'subjects' and shape practices (e.g. what activities/discussions/thoughts are 'allowed'). For example, if volunteering is defined as unpaid, then such understanding could crystallise, for instance, into policies (e.g. no stipend for volunteers) and recruitment (e.g. preference over volunteers who already have a stable income).

Escobar (1995) further points to the pervasiveness of the power of discourses within the wider (and more global) development infrastructure. For Escobar (1995:41), the "system of relations

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[23] Appleby and colleagues (2002) also talk about 'language *in* development' where language is seen as a component of development and 'language *as* development' where learning a language – mostly English – is the end in itself

[e.g. between international NGOs and local groups] establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria and expertise". In fact, by looking at the historicity of development, Escobar (1995) argues that the Third World was discursively 'created' by global narratives that problematised poverty, promoted economic development as the antidote and upheld the 'Western' world as the model of such development. These ideas relate to (and allow for further exploration of), for instance, how some international volunteering schemes continue to reproduce the dominant framing of the South as 'lacking' development that volunteers from the North can provide (see Table 3). It is now becoming clearer that the plurality of discourses of/within development imply not only difference but also inequalities: certain discourses are more valued – and therefore – are more powerful than others, even in spaces that are deemed participatory.

Discourses not only shape what people do but also who people are, who others think they are or how they are represented to be. 'Labelling' is a term used to refer to this process of ascribing identities to others or the self. According to Escobar (1995:41), it was essential for the project of development to discursively create "client categories" with defined "abnormalities" – e.g. "illiterate", "underdeveloped", "malnourished", "small farmers", "landless peasants" or as in above, 'recipients' of services – so that, later, development has something to reform and treat. Escobar considers labelling as pervasive and argues that it remains an essential aspect in the functioning of organisations in development. Labels are not neutral, "they embody concrete relationships of power and influence the categories with which we think and act" (Escobar 1995:110). Labels are everywhere, constructed, for instance, within policy documents and through the utterances of development workers and volunteers themselves.

While I see the potential use of development as a discourse to gain insight into how dominant discourses interact with a wide range of other discourses (similar to Robinson-Pant's (2001a) application of the concept to her research on women's literacy in Nepal), I struggled to find analytical lenses within the concept to take into account of what happens if/when non-dominant discourses are in tension with dominant ones. Escobar's work has been critiqued as "overheated in its language" without offering solutions and alternatives (Grillo 1997:14). I was looking for more analytical tools to help me understand the possibilities and dynamics of counter-labelling. Escobar (1995:110) does suggest that "it is necessary to analyze closely how labels function as mechanisms of power in concrete institutional instances and to counteract individuating and imposed labelling processes…". Later in this chapter, I will review additional conceptual tools to assist me in this endeavour. Development discourses are pervasive and present even in the

smaller units of development organisations/groups – therefore, to critically encounter participation, it is important to situate it in particular sites. I will turn to this next.

3.1.3. Spaces of/for participation

Cornwall (2002:8), similar to Cooke and Kothari earlier, calls for a redirection of the research gaze towards the *micropolitics* of participation in development spaces. Drawing chiefly on the French space theorist Lefebvre as well as Bourdieu and Habermas, Cornwall (2002:2) applies a useful conceptual tool – *spaces for participation* – to critically explore participatory processes in development: "spaces for participation can be thought, then, in abstract terms as the ways in which opportunities for engagement might be conceived or perceived, and more concretely, in terms of the actual sites that are entered and animated by citizens".

This account illustrates how spaces for participation can be seen both in metaphorical (e.g. in terms of representation) and concrete terms (e.g. in terms of actual structuring of these spaces). Spatial imagery and metaphors have gained currency within development speak, especially in the way different development discourses frame the site and extent of development – i.e. Global North, Global South, local, global. More importantly, other spatial concepts bring in issues of representation and power, particularly, how certain individuals and groups are located with a particular space – i.e. 'inclusion', 'exclusion', 'displaced', 'marginalised.' Thinking about development in spatial terms suggests the existence of a 'centre' that people should aim to reach or be brought to. In a way, Cornwall extends the point previously made by several scholars about participation as the shifting of social positions, by looking into how these spaces of participation are produced in the first place.

It is to this end that I found the work of Lefebvre particularly illuminating. Outlined in his 1987[24] book, *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre departs from a view of space as a rigid territory that is simply 'there', a pre-created, neutral container waiting to be filled and inhabited. As the title of his book suggests and as his often-cited dictum proposes: "(Social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 1991). Central to his ideas is a relational conception of space and time and how these two elements are neither separate nor a priori concepts but, instead, integral aspects of social practices – both as social products and preconditions for social production (Schmid 2008). This

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[24] It was first translated to English from French in 1991

production is fertilised by historical elements (time) where spaces as seen today are created through the operations of its past. The focus on how spaces are produced remedies concerns such as those raised by Guijt and Shah (1998) who note the tendency within development to view community as a homogenous, harmonious collective and to do little to understand and engage with the complexity of power differences and internal dynamics within such spaces. Lefebvre and Cornwall's ideas dispel the 'mythical' attributes often attached to the term 'community' within development practices and literature, which, Guijt and Shah (1998) argue, is the reason why many development programmes fail.

Cornwall also emphasises that spaces for participation, when produced, do not remain static but are continually shaped by wider, ever-changing social practices and external sources – including the competing agendas of different (development) actors. Particularly salient in my thesis is Cornwall's notion of invited and created spaces for participation – the former are pre-established spaces that, for instance, invite the 'poor' to participate, and the latter are those that are created by the 'poor themselves.' She once again draws on Lefebvre's work, particularly the theorist's key conceptualisation of the relationship between the space on the one hand, and the social practices, symbols, interactions, meanings and subjectivities within it on the other, what may be best described as a dialectic. In other words, social relations both shape spaces and may be restricted by the very spaces they produce. The space that is produced is a space for thought and action, therefore, "…in addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (Lefebvre 1991). Cornwall (2002:7) reminds us that "new ways in old spaces can transform their possibilities, just as old ways in new spaces can perpetuate the status quo" and it is, therefore, crucial to ask "whether the process or institutions created to enhance participation challenge and reproduce existing structures and meanings." These insights compelled me to look into the degree, extent or quality of participation – a recognition that there is no single way to participate, and that individuals' involvement in development programmes may vary, for instance with regards to volunteering.

In this section, I have introduced the concept of participation and how such a theory of development, when critically used, may be helpful in understanding volunteering as a social practice. Concepts of 'development as discourse' and the social production of spaces make visible the power relationships that permeate and are at play in creating, shaping and maintaining spaces of participation and in ascribing certain identities (through 'labelling') to certain individuals and groups. These conceptual tools will be helpful in understanding not only how volunteering looks like as practised in communities but also to investigate to what extent can

participatory processes and spaces facilitate the 'transfer of power' from those at the centre to those at the margins. As White (1996:6) reminds us: "sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power."

3.2. Learning in communities of practice

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, to understand the learning dimension of volunteering, I needed a conceptual framework that placed its primary focus on the learning *processes* rather than (but as well as) the outcomes. Similar to my previous discussion on participation, I aim to put centre stage issues of power and identity, this time with regards to learning processes. I found the theory of communities of practice (CoP) useful because it is "an attempt to place the negotiation of meaning at the core of human learning, as opposed to merely the acquisition of information and skills" (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, and Wenger-Trayner 2016:145). The centrality of 'negotiation of meaning', for me, signals the theory's preoccupation on the *hows* of learning – including taking into account differences in meaning-making as part of learning practices.

Put simply, CoPs are "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learning how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:1). The concept originated from the earlier work of Wenger alongside anthropologist Lave (Lave and Wenger 1991) in studying apprenticeship as a learning model. They found that the learning that occurred within formal apprenticeship programmes was much more complex than the popularised master-student model. In this theory, learning may be best characterised as learning to participate in a community of practice. Newcomers begin as observers, and through sustained engagement (i.e. learning by doing), increasingly understand and perform these ways of working, often through the help of a more experienced other or peer in a process described as legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991). Learning within CoPs involves absorbing or being absorbed into a "culture of practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991:95).

The primary focus of this theory of learning is "learning as social participation" where participation is understood as "a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (Wenger 1998:4). In short, learning is an "issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities" (Wenger 1998:6) and, in the process, "forge new identities" from new and renewed perspectives (Wenger 1998:90). CoP is "a community that acts as a living curriculum"

(Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:4) where "there is very little observable teaching; the more basic phenomenon is learning" (Lave and Wenger 1991:92). As such, learning in CoP is not always structured nor intentional.

Related to this, I found useful Rogers' (2014:21) conceptualisation of informal, non-formal and formal learning as lying on a *continuum* "ranging from accidental/incidental learning, through task-conscious learning, through self-directed learning [all types of informal learning] to non-formal and formal learning [which are both planned, structured learning]". Rogers' (2014) work usefully highlights that learning activities/spaces can have varying degrees of formality or informality. For instance, in a CoP, one may 'learn to become a member' through non-formal training programmes but also through task-conscious (informal) learning, as one engages with everyday, real-life tasks. Informal learning may involve various processes from self-directed learning to situated/context-based learning and learning through social interactions with peers. When seen this way, learning then becomes an activity that is not only the reserve of formal education; rather, it can be observed in many spaces, including, arguably, spaces of participation (as discussed above) such as volunteer groups. I will now turn to two concepts within CoP that are most relevant to my research inquiry: the notion of social practice and its links with learning; and identity (re)formation and learning.

3.2.1. Learning and social practice

Social practice is central to this theory of learning. While "…the concept of practice connotes doing," Wenger (1998:47) clarifies, it does not refer to "just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do". Therefore, sharing in practices does not only mean sharing in activities. Practices include both the explicit and the implicit aspects – a shared repertoire of resources such as languages, tools, documents, symbols but also values, underlying assumptions, shared world views. Therefore, learning, within this theory is not only about learning workplace skills but also values, attitudes and ways of being. For me, this account also emphasises that practice is always situated, or as Wenger (1998) explicitly describes, practice is always a *social* practice.

So how do practices develop? For Wenger, it is through the negotiation of meaning through participation and reification. Participation refers to both "…membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (Wenger 1998:55) while reification refers to the

process of giving form to experiences of participation "by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (Wenger 1998:59). Participation and reification are a duality that complement each other – for instance, individuals discuss (participation) in meetings, and minutes of the meeting are created (reification) to remind people of key decisions. Reification comes in many forms, including literacy artefacts. Texts (and producing them) are, therefore, a fundamental aspect of negotiation and learning within CoPs (see Barton and Hamilton 2005).

For Wenger (1998:96), "learning is the engine of practice, and practice is the history of that learning." The ongoing process of reification and participation means that practices are neither static, pre-given, nor a "set of dictates for proper practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991:93). Instead, "practice is an ongoing, social, interactional process…; that members interact, do things together, negotiate new meanings, and learn from each other is already inherent in practice – that is how practices evolve" (Wenger 1998:102). In other words, newcomers do not learn pre-set practices, but their participation also helps shape them to a certain extent. These ideas relate to previous discussions on spaces of participation and how they are shaped by those that inhabit them in particular moments.

3.2.2. Identification and negotiability

Identity in CoP is "theorised with specific reference to changing ways of participating in a practice" (Farnsworth *et al.* 2016). Learning to become a member of a community of practice is also learning to become a certain kind of person – where a claim to competence transforms or feeds into one's identity (Wenger 1998: see especially 152–54). In short, learning is social becoming (Wenger 2010). Wenger (1998) suggests that identification is not only a solitary activity: it is *identifying* (and/or being identified) as something or someone (i.e. a category or a role within a community like an 'expert') but it is also *identifying with* something or someone (i.e. developing relationships that shape one's identity). This process of identification is coupled with what Wenger (1998) calls negotiability – an aspect of identity formation and meaning-making that takes account of power and hierarchies of knowledge and meanings.

Negotiability refers to "the ability, facility, and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration" (Wenger 1998:197). Central to the process of negotiability is navigating *economies of meaning* in different social contexts. Using the example of a government-mandated worksheet that needed to be filled out, Wenger describes

how various actors and institutions (i.e. the source, the claims processor, the client) attached various meanings to (and therefore leading to various uses of) this piece of document. In communities, these meanings have hierarchies and varying currencies (thus, the term 'economies of meaning' where one meaning is valued over another) that may complement and/or clash with one another and therefore are always subject to the process of negotiation. Identity formation within a CoP is also influenced by whether and how one is able to claim, "ownership of meaning" – that is, in the plurality and hierarchies of meaning, to what degree can we "make use of, affect, control, modify, or in general, assert as ours the meanings that we negotiate" (Wenger 1998:200). Tensions surrounding negotiability usefully signal that learning and identity formation are not neutral but power-laden, within which the 'learner' plays an essential role.

While CoP proponents maintain that power is a key concept in their learning theory (Farnsworth *et al.* 2016; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998, 2010), some scholars argue that power is undertheorized within CoP (Barton and Hamilton 2005; Barton and Tusting 2005; Cox 2005; Roberts 2006; Willmott and Contu 2003). For instance, Barton and Hamilton (2005) approach CoP through the lens of literacy studies and argue that Wenger's (over)focus on local activities of particular sites deflects from the analysis of broader structures that affect the group. In a way, the theory does not seem to provide analytical tools with which to investigate how one CoP might shape the power dynamics of another. Relatedly, Willmott and Contu (2003:287) have critiqued Lave and Wenger's characterisation of the term 'community' as it "tends to assume or imply coherence and consensus…" (see also Cox 2005; Roberts 2006). The negotiation of meaning I discussed earlier, for instance, may be misinterpreted as a consensual process, when in fact, such negotiation can be marred with misunderstandings and disagreements (Marshall and Rollinson 2004 as cited in Roberts 2006). The tendency to equate community with sameness "glosses over a fractured, dynamic process of formation and reproduction" which, in turn, may reproduce a hegemonic framing of community (Willmott and Contu 2003:287) – a view that I am intentionally avoiding in this thesis (see my discussion on shaping spaces of participation above).

Finally, I was grasping for a more in-depth conceptualisation of the links between identity, learning and power. Both 'negotiability' and 'economies of meanings' were helpful starting points but I felt that they did not provide enough analytical tools to help me understand, for instance, what happens when individuals do not have enough resources (e.g. literacy resources) to access and challenge dominant meanings. Yanow (2004), for example, has found that even among full participants, some 'local' knowledge is still less valued compared to what has been described as expert knowledge coming from elsewhere (as cited in Roberts 2006). Since identities

within CoP may be both self-imposed and ascribed, how can I better take account of the possibilities of these dominant identities to be challenged and reformed? In an interview (Farnsworth *et al.* 2016:146), Wenger himself clarified that the whole story of identity within CoP is not only about labelling – a product of reification – but also about "accepting or refusing that label and living that label…". It is the dynamics of this acceptance and refusal that I wanted to explore further in my research (see also earlier discussion on labelling within Escobar's work).

In this section, I have presented the key analytical tools that helped me explore learning as a social practice, through the theory of CoP – whereby learning is characterised as learning to participate in the practices of a CoP. The concept of 'practice' allows for a focus on how learning processes intertwine with social processes (including negotiating meaning, participation-reification duality) and an expanded view of learning outcomes (i.e. not only skills but also values, worldviews, etc.). CoP's sharp focus on how learning shapes identities also brought to the fore issues of power, particularly through the notion of negotiability. To augment the conceptual gaps, I will present later in this chapter a particular conceptualisation of power and identity that frames power as a relational concept and shows how identities can be challenged within social contexts. In terms of the seemingly homogenous characterisation of community, I plan to use earlier ideas of the constructed spaces of participation to dissect how communities of practice may be shaped by ever-evolving membership in these spaces.

3.3. Literacy as a social practice

Given my aim of departing from the common framing of 'literacy' as a learning outcome of volunteering, I needed a conceptual framework of literacy that avoided studying literacy-in-itself but rather, helps to explore how literacy might link with other aspects of social life. To do this, I use conceptual lenses from what has been described as a social practice view of literacy (Street 1984). With cross-disciplinary contributions from anthropologists, psychologists and linguists, this paradigm-shift in literacy studies started to gain currency in the 1980s when, according to Papen (2005a), literacy was dominantly understood and promoted as reading and writing skills.

To discuss the alternative lenses that a social practice view offers, I begin with the seminal works of Goody (1975), Goody and Watt (1968), Oxenham (1980) and Ong (1982). They understood literacy as context-free, detached from the society where it is used, fixed, and, therefore, cannot be directly questioned. A key aspect of this so-called 'autonomous model' is its sharp polarisation

between literacy and orality. Unlike orality, literacy is neither considered an event nor an action but, according to Oxenham (1980), a technology – an external tool that may be acquired. For Ong (1982), this framing assumes that literacy, through writing, captures and objectifies speech by making it visible and fixed. This polarisation is built on what has been referred to as Great Divides in societies that polarise between oral/primitive vs literate/modern societies and literate/illiterate individuals, where the key difference is whether one can read and write (cf Papen 2005a).

Anthropologist Brian Street (1984) analysed these 'autonomous models' of literacy and, in contrast, offered what he termed the 'ideological model' which conceptualises Literacy as *Social Practice* (LSP). Rather than polarising the 'technical' (chiefly highlighted in the autonomous model) and the cultural/power-related aspects of literacy, the ideological model "does not attempt to deny technical skill or the cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but rather understands them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power" (Street 1993:9). This means that the ideological model subsumes rather than rejects the autonomous model. The New Literacy Studies are chiefly ethnographic works that applied, challenged and revised the theoretical stances put forward by LSP by making visible the wealth of situated literacy practices in different communities (see for instance, Barton and Hamilton's (1998) study of local literacy practices of a Lancaster town; Kell's (1996) study in an informal settlement in South Africa; Maddox's (2001) research in a market in Bangladesh; Papen's study (2005c) of a community tourism programme in Namibia; Robinson-Pant's (2000) work on women's literacy programmes in Nepal).

'Literacy practices' and 'literacy events' are two concepts that, according to Street (2003b), can be used to carve out units of analysis when studying literacy ethnographically. Barton (2007:35), uses the term 'literacy events' to refer to "all sorts of occasions in everyday life where the written word has a role", for instance, filling out a bank form. The limits of taking literacy events as an analytical unit, however, is that it tends to represent these events as discrete, distinguishable moments that can be extracted from a particular context (Baynham and Prinsloo 2009). In contrast, Street (2003b:78) explains that the concept of "literacy practices… not only attempts to handle the events and the patterns of activity around literacy events but to link them to something broader of a cultural and social kind". The reference to literacy's links with broader culture means that some aspects of literacy practices – such as attitudes, values, relationships – are not readily observable (Street 1993). Literacy practices involve both internal aspects – such as "meanings and intentions [people] bring to [an] event" (Papen 2005a:31) – but also shape and are

shaped by social rules and processes. Taken together, when I speak of 'literacy practices' in this thesis, I not only mean literacy activities (i.e. what people do with texts) but, "include the ideas, attitudes, ideologies and values that inform [people's] behaviour in a literacy event and how they understand what is happening" (Baynham and Baker 2002 cited in Papen 2005a:31).

3.3.1. Literacy and power

Three inter-linked aspects of this model and the New Literacy Studies speak to my research. First, it departs from a single, skills-based view of literacy (as in reading and writing in the autonomous model) (Papen 2005a) and recognises multiple literacies in 'non-school' contexts (Street 2009) such as volunteering spaces. Second, it situates literacy as "something people do" (Barton and Hamilton 1998:3). Methodologically, such conceptualisation has guided me in terms of 'where (else) to look' in studying literacy in the organisations. Third, and most significantly, it rejects the neutrality of literacy and exposes power relations between individuals and institutions (Street 1993). As Barton and Hamilton (1998:7) put it, "some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others." For me, these ideas encourage questions such as: what are these 'dominant' literacies and what are the non-dominant ones (and where do they come from)? To what extent do they challenge, complement and/or subsume each other?

A key aspect of the ideological model is that it frames "literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society and recognize the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts" (Street 1993:7). Street (1993:7) avoided using "contested and loaded" terms such as 'cultural', 'sociological' or 'pragmatic' in describing his model and opted for the word "ideological" because the latter denotes "quite explicitly that literacy practices are aspects not only of 'culture' but also of power structures". This allows for an exploration into areas such as the role of literacy practices "in reproducing or challenging structures of power and domination" (Street 1993:7). Therefore, literacy as social practice struck me as a conceptual model of literacy that allows for an exploration not only into what sort of literacy people engage in within various tasks but also how these practices shape identities and disrupt/maintain power structures.

Studies have framed the relationship between literacy and power as the former (especially text) mediating, representing and exercising the latter. For example, Taylor's (1996) ethnographic study of the lives of drug users and criminals found that the state's power is operationalised

through bureaucratic texts – letters, notices and medical prescriptions. Her account of the power of an attorney's decision letter, for instance, shows how "bureaucratic texts are used to control the circumstances in which politicals live their everyday lives" (Taylor 1996:10). Literacy as a means of control is also evident in the experiences of Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, as state documents were used to 'manage' them and, in the process, exclude them from basic services in the host country (Bartlett, Jayaram, and Bonhomme 2011). Barton and Hamilton's (1998) study of literacy practices in a community in Lancaster also shows how bureaucratic literacy practices in organisations impede democratic participation. These studies seem to focus on what Bartlett and colleagues (2011:589) describe as the "the interaction between literacy practices, cultural practices, socio-historical frameworks, and political and economic structures" where power relationships are embedded. For my research, I wanted to capture "literacy-in-power" or "the intricate ways in which power, knowledge, and forms of subjectivity are interconnected with "uses of literacy" in various settings (Collins and Blot 2003:66).

3.3.2. Trajectories of texts and meanings

The focus of Literacy as Social Practice on *local* practices and bounded contexts and its avoidance of framing literacy as a technology, has been subjected to a certain amount of critique. In particular, the model is said to undertheorize the ability of literacy to "travel, integrate and endure" (Brandt and Clinton 2002:338). Brandt and Clinton (2002:343) take issue on the 'limits of the local' endorsed by the New Literacy Studies where the movement of texts across contexts may not be captured. For instance, tracing the life histories of agenda items in her ethnography of literacy in a shantytown in South Africa, Kell (2011:608) found that literacy activities and development issues in the 'local' were "carried through and mediated across" by different people from different contexts (e.g. in other NGOs, government spaces). Kell's (2011) insight on how external forces could shape 'local' practices and priorities may be related to Brandt and Clinton's (2002:338) concern that "something might be lost when we ascribe to local contexts responses to pressures that originate in distant decisions". This critique is reminiscent of Barton and Hamilton's (2005) analysis above of how CoP's overemphasis on the local veers away from an understanding of how external powers shape experiences within a particular CoP. In terms of Literacy as Social Practice, Brandt and Clinton (2002:343) wonder: "…can we not see the ways that literacy arises out of local, particular, situated human interactions while also seeing how it also regularly arrives from other places – infiltrating, disjointing, and displacing local life?"

In response, Street (2003a) argues that what Brandt and Clinton seem to be calling 'autonomous' carries characteristics of literacies that he terms as distant, new or hegemonic – which are all and always ideological. He calls for "a framework and conceptual tools that can characterize the relation between local and "distant" (Street 2003a:2827). Street suggests that the paired concepts of 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' (discussed above) could be one such framework as it differentiates between local events and the broader, distant forces that help shape these events. Reder and Davila (2006:175) agree but argue that while these concepts may be useful in understanding where the local and the distant may collide, they are not enough to explore how such interaction occurs (as cited in Kell 2011:609). Blommaert's (2001, 2004) and Kell's (2006, 2011) work may help provide such a framework.

Reflecting on how texts move in the modern world, Blommaert (2004:660) argues that "one feature of contemporary societies is the enormous and intense traffic of discourse across contexts in so-called text trajectories, and each stage of such a trajectory recontextualizes, reinterprets and re-creates the 'original' discourse in contexts and in spaces where different norms and conditions of uptake apply". This account points not only to how text travels, integrates and endures – cf Brandt and Clinton (2002) above – but that individuals from various contexts engage with 'external' texts in various ways. Returning to the concept of language ideologies discussed earlier, language also plays a role in how texts are dispersed and taken up in various contexts. Barton (1994) identifies two trends in the spread of languages in relation to literacy and texts: globalisation and diversification. Globalisation refers to the spread of a small number of 'world languages' such as English and French. Diversification is the emergence of more literacies as these dominant languages are adapted as they come in contact with other cultures (e.g. Singaporean English, Indian English, etc). It is not only texts and language that travel but also definitions of, beliefs about and ways of teaching literacy – which are sometimes imposed.

Kell (2006:151) further expands this notion by focusing not only on the text but also on the "meaning-making processes prior to and after their 'fixing as texts involving print'". For Kell (2006:165), literacy itself cannot travel but "when used as a mode of representation in a particular medium, it can enable a meaning to travel…". Offering a 'qualified yes' to Brandt and Clinton's (2002:343) question above, Kell (2006:166) argues that it is not "literacy that regularly arises and arrives, infiltrates and disjoints, it is purposeful sequential meaning making activities that are projected, at times taking written form, depending on the contingencies of the context". Within Kell's concept of 'meaning-making trajectory', text is seen as a single codified moment which is part of ongoing meaning-making processes. While the written text is central in his research,

Blommaert's (2004:645) analyses also go beyond studying text-in-itself and approach writing as "…intrinsically connected to domains of use and social value attributions in people's lives". This idea links closely with Kell's meaning-making trajectory and the LSP's notion of literacy as *valued* differently by different people.

In the ceaseless flows of texts and meanings, Kell (2011) alerts us to question what happens when meanings – coming from one context – are projected into a context where literacy resources (e.g. capacities, technologies and artefacts) are simply not available or similar to the context where they came from. In his study analysing the narratives of African asylum seekers in Belgium, Blommaert (2001:417) notes how administrative and bureaucratic procedures (e.g. the asylum-seeking process) seem to assume that the 'client' (e.g. the asylum seeker) has "complete control over the medium and communicative skills" that are required for these procedures to be carried out. As the asylum seekers moved from one literacy environment (i.e. their home countries) to the next (i.e. Belgium), Blommaert found that the literacy environments carry differing expectations. For instance, they are expected to be 'literate' in a way that is acceptable to the Belgian society, and the Belgian asylum process also expects asylum seekers to have access to a *standardised* variety of a language (e.g. Dutch, French or German). In a similar piece of research, analysing letters written by a Burundian asylum seeker as proof of his/her application, Blommaert (2004:657) noted that the applicant – and those that helped him/her construct the letter – not only struggled to remember accurately their experience (which Blommaert terms as 'structured remembering') but struggled to create a text that satisfied the generic requirements of "…official, literate, "on record" discourse." Blommaert (2004:658) points to different "economies of literacy" – different literacy norms, conditions, expectations, value systems, resources, etc. – that are present in one context and not in another. Therefore, a "move in space is also a move across different economies of literacy, involving differential allocation of function and value to texts as they travel across these economies…" (Blommaert 2004:661). His concept is starkly similar to Wenger's 'economies of meaning' described above; however, Blommaert seems to take better account of movements across different economies.

Taken together, Kell's (2006, 2011) and Blommaert's (2001, 2004) work provides additional conceptual tools to understand literacy as social practices, particularly, how literacy (texts and meanings) travel across different contexts and, in the process, can contribute towards the dynamics of inequalities in 'local' life. As texts and meanings travel across contexts, as Blommaert (2004:661 emphasis on the original) aptly puts it, economies of literacy "become objects not of difference but of *inequality*." Along similar lines, Kell (2011:609) highlights the

question of "communicative inequalities", particularly the semiotic and discursive resources that are necessary as texts and meanings are projected across different contexts, and the consequences when these resources are not available from one context to the next (as exemplified by the differing economies of literacy in Burundi and Belgium).

In this section, I have discussed the conceptual lenses offered by LSP as a means for understanding literacy as part of everyday activities and the wider cultural and social values within a community. This involves the ways in which literacy interplays with power dynamics and hierarchies in the community. In addition, because my aim was to look at how the wider development system affects volunteers' experiences (including literacy practices), concepts such as trajectories of texts and meanings and economies of literacy were helpful in understanding how text and meaning-making processes travel in and out of the volunteer groups I studied.

3.4. Further conceptualisation of power and identity

So far, notions of power and identity appear intermittently in the various conceptual frameworks I have reviewed. In this section, I will introduce two more specific theorisations of power and identity to complement the conceptual gaps I have identified in the various sections.

3.4.1. Microphysics of power

On the issue of power, I found the work of Foucault useful, particularly his focus on the micro-processes and micro-expressions of power and their links with the concept of subjectification.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power is a departure from what he describes as a readily accepted view that "great forms of power" are possessed by certain individuals and institutions who then have the capacity to prohibit, regulate, arbitrate and demarcate social activities (Foucault 1976:87). Foucault argues that, on the contrary, power does not originate from the pinnacle of a hierarchy but rather, is the "the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable" (Foucault 1976:93). This passage is particularly illuminating as it points to how power is not concentrated in a fixed position but rather, is something dispersed and situated, yet mobile. Using this analysis

of power as a conceptual lens enabled me to refocus my analysis from power*ful* individuals and institutions towards everyday practices and relationships of power.

This focus on minute practices and relationships is what Foucault refers to as the microphysics of power. Using physics – and its micro-operations such as "dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings" (Foucault 1977:26) – as a metaphor dynamises and animates power. Foucault suggests that power is not a 'property' that one possesses and passes on but something that is exercised through relationships. Moreover, Foucault describes microphysics as a "model of perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or conquest of the territory" (Foucault 1977:26). What Foucault seems to suggest here is that power is diffused and non-binary (for instance, between the oppressor and the oppressed, or between two sides of a contract). The microphysics of power can be deciphered by looking at the "network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity…" (Foucault 1977:26). Foucault refers to relations and networks – although he frames them as fluid and unstable – almost as basic units of analysis where one can dissect power dynamics. In other words, to understand micropower, one needs to look at relationships and their modes of action.

In focusing on the micro level, Foucault does not dismiss the existence of powerful institutions, states and laws. Instead, he thinks of them as the "overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement" (Foucault 1976:93). What Foucault seems to suggest here is that, first, the complex interactions of force relations (micropower) combine in various ways to form wider and larger social patterns of power, such as states and institutions. However, he goes on to clarify that these micropower structures are not the end base of all these micro-repercussions, as they are ever-evolving and part of a network of force relations. In other words, power is cyclical and not linear. Foucault (1980:99) is clear: to understand power – including its grander, global expressions – one must start small. It is in the little interactions, little things, little places and little spaces – perhaps in the *small-scale traffic of texts* (Kell 2011) – that power is expressed and encountered.

Within Foucault's complex understanding of power relations, the individual "is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus… on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike" (Foucault 1980:98). In other words, the individual cannot *wield* power and is neither seen as a source nor solely as the target of power but also as a vehicle, an element of power's articulation (cf Heyes 2011). Foucault posits that the individual subject is 'created' by power relations – even in the way one acts, talks and/or desires:

> [the individual] is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. (Foucault 1980:98)

In other words, power relations are inextricably linked with identities. What Foucault seems to suggest here is that being intimately positioned within a web of power relations – including exercising such power – encourages individuals to be considered (and consider themselves) as certain *kinds* of people (Heyes 2011): for instance, 'cool high school student', 'vulnerable woman', 'an out-of-school youth'. Foucault (1982:777–776) describes this as the process of subjects being objectified through dividing practices, where the subject is either divided inside him/herself or divided from others. Additionally, being framed as a particular subject (i.e. being a certain kind of person) influences what one is capable and incapable of doing – a subjectification based on limits. This is how power manifests and maintains itself – by creating a certain kind of individual subject: "conformist, docile, self-monitoring… subject to much closer yet seemingly benign forms of management" (Heyes 2011:354).

The main critique against Foucault's notion of subjectification is how he seemingly undermines and/or even eradicates the subject – referred to as the 'death of the subject'. The "docile bodies" that are interspersed into a web of power relations seem to be framed as "manipulable bodies with internalized self-disciplining guides that direct our own behaviour" (Alcoff 1990:72). In other words, the individual seems to be stripped of any agency to resist such micro- and macro-powers. For Lynch (2011), Foucault's agentless power analytic does not imply lack of agency; rather, it is a bid to encourage us to focus on the relationships rather than the individual actors.

3.4.2. Positional Identity

My conceptual framework also includes the concept of 'positional identity' coined by Holland and colleagues' (1998:19) as part of a sociocultural and practice theory of self and identity, drawing chiefly on the work of Bakhtin and Vygotsky. In their wider theorisation, Holland *et al.* situate the processes of the production and (re)production of identities and agency in sociocultural contexts that they refer to as 'figured worlds.' Their work also puts a prime focus on how concepts such as identity shape and are shaped by the social enterprises, culture and valuations of the specific context(s) within which the processes take place. The conceptual stance

on identity within Holland and *et al.*'s work seems to be congruent with Foucault's notion of 'subjectification', Escobar's 'labelling', Wenger's duality of 'identification-negotiation' as part of learning practices. Holland *et al.*'s concept of 'positional identity' helped me to further understand the relational aspect of identity formation and the resistance to ascribed identities.

Positional identity is the term used to refer to an individual's understanding of his/her social position in the lived world. While the process of identification may be individual and may be abstract and narrative-driven (which they term as 'figurative identities'), the shaping of one's positional identity has to do with "the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance – with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the world" (Holland *et al.* 1998:125). This passage highlights the importance of social relations; engaging in speech conversations, interactions, or using Wenger's ideas of participation and cultural artefacts (which includes text and symbols) invariably constructs one's social position. The relational aspect of identity is clear in their theory:

> The dialect we speak, the degree of formality we adopt in our speech, the deeds we do, the places we go, the emotions we express, and the clothes we wear are treated as indicators of claims to and identification with social categories and positions of privilege relative to those with whom we are interacting. (Holland *et al.* 1998:127)

They further explain that these social positions constrain and/or expand one's activities, movements and actions. And while one's social positions (which could later develop into one's positional identity) could demarcate what one is able to do and perform in a space, I found useful Holland and colleagues' reminder that these social positions can be 'claimed' through speech, actions and artefacts. This highlights the role of agency and power as this can lead to conflict and/or the disruption or galvanisation of certain dominant positions. In their book, Holland *et al.* share the example of Shanta, a six-year-old Nepali girl who was scolded and beaten because she playfully touched the plow her older brother was using on the farm. Her father and other brothers joined the beating and the scolding – an act that she was later told was justified because she "ventured into an activity to which she had no right"; as a girl, she was not allowed to engage in acts such as plowing, that her brothers could freely perform (Holland *et al.* 1998:126). While this example shows that Shanta's act of 'claiming' a position not assigned to her because of her gender, did not lead to a shifting of power dynamics, Holland and colleagues maintain that:

> ...there is no guarantee that those upon whom they [e.g. social positions] are imposed will not try to refuse the implicit positioning... There is no guarantee, in fact, that everyone

will have been brought sufficiently "into" the "language" of the relational markers to understand the would-be impositions and take them seriously. (Holland *et al.* 1998:135)

Claiming and rejecting social positions could be facilitated by engagement, speech, cultural and/or literacy artefacts, etc. For instance, Holland, *et al.* (1998) speak of the concept of (re)authoring the dialogic self, wherein the process of discourse and being constantly in dialogue with others and with one's environment, allows for a reshaping of one's social positions and, over time, positional identity. These ideas frame individuals less as docile bodies unwittingly subjected to expressions of power (as in Foucault above) but more as active agents who are also able to challenge, refuse, disrupt power relationships and ascribed identities.

Taken together, Foucault's (1976) notions of micropower and subjectification and Holland *et al.*'s (1998) notion of 'positional identity' are useful analytical tools to understand how power manifests in various contexts, including how to (trans)form identities. To understand power, I am compelled to look at the micro-processes of everyday life – for instance, in the "small-scale traffic of texts" (Kell 2011:607) or in how people learn to become a certain kind of person in a community of practice (Wenger 1998). These lenses also point to how claiming and resisting social positions – and the micro-powers that engender them – help to shape one's identity through engagement in everyday life.

3.5. Conclusion

My overall aim of understanding the learning and literacy dimension of volunteer work led me to scholars who highlight notions of social practice, identity and power in their various conceptualisations. These concepts allowed me to take a different conceptual starting point from the dominant service delivery model within volunteering and the deficit/benefit framework in linking learning and literacy with volunteer work (see Chapter 1). This alternative conceptual framework situates volunteering, learning, literacy and their interactions within a particular social context. Key to this framework is the concept of social practices which is influenced by the works of Wenger (1998), Street (1987), Cornwall (2002) and Escobar (1995). The term 'practices' in this thesis does not only refer to activities – e.g. 'doing volunteering', 'doing literacy' (cf Barton and Hamilton 1998), or 'doing learning' – but also a recognition that these acts are part of wider cultural values and power dynamics within a space.

In terms of volunteering, concepts of participatory development and Cornwall's (2002) spaces of participation, situates volunteer work in my thesis not necessarily as a discrete activity only happening in certain spaces (e.g. in organisations) but also as understood, expressed and embedded in daily life in various spaces. Cornwall's (2002) conceptualisations of spaces of participation as 'constructed', enables me to approach volunteering spaces as porous and malleable. Questions around power come to the fore: who creates these spaces? Who gets to be invited, by whom and under which terms? How are certain spaces impacted by other spaces and by the wider development ecosystem?

Escobar's (1995) development as discourse and, partly, Cornwall's (2002) spaces of/for participation, connect practices, discourses and identities. The issue of identity is particularly important in my research, and there is an abundance of conceptual tools to help me analyse identity not as a static outcome nor as fixed property, but rather, as a messy, ongoing process. While Escobar's (1995) concept of 'labelling' helped me to identify and problematise dominant labels attached to volunteers – e.g.'vulnerable', 'marginalised', 'heroes' – and their sources, Wenger's (1998) 'negotiability' and particularly Holland and colleague's (1999) concept of 'positional identities', allowed me to explore how these labels were taken up, reproduced, resisted or rejected by the volunteers. Foucault's notion of micropower was also useful in investigating how power disperses in the small interactions and encounters within these groups, and in exploring how they affect wider practices.

Wenger's (1998) concept of learning in communities of practice and Rogers' (2014) notion of learning continuum was helpful in exploring how volunteers learned informally, with others (or with each other) as part of (or beyond) their tasks and activities within and outside the volunteer groups. As these conceptual stances recognise the multiplicity of actors in this space, I am aware that while my focus was on the learning of volunteers, a great deal of learning was occurring for others too, an area I did not have the space to explore. Street's (1984) literacy as a social practice was helpful in exploring literacy as more than skills that volunteers learn but as practices that influence and/or are influenced by, social activities. Kell's (2006, 2011) and Blommaert's (2001, 2004) works enabled me not only to look at how individuals 'do literacy' but also how texts and meanings travel, particularly how power (mediated through text) flows from the distant to the local.

Chapter Four
Methodology

4. Introduction

When I first saw a physical copy of Escobar's book, I was immediately struck by its title: *Encountering Development.* For me, it evoked an image of a traveller who, one day, encountered development – an abstract concept – in the 'flesh', in real-life. He was able to look at it closely, observe it, dissect it and in that interface, see it as beautiful and at the same time deeply flawed. I will use this image now as a metaphor for what I have written in this thesis so far. I have attempted to map out an exploration of many abstract concepts – identity, power, learning, literacy, participation – and situate my research aims within such a map. This chapter is a story of my own encounter – for I have witnessed these abstract concepts, in various forms and expressions, through my ethnographic research.

To address the research gaps I identified in Chapter 1, I have sought to go beyond the dominant deficit discourse that has seemingly framed much of the literature on volunteering, learning and literacy (and their links). This intention, in part, has framed my conceptual starting points (Chapter 3) and, as I will aim to elucidate in this chapter, also my methodological orientations.

I begin by explaining why I used an ethnographic approach to explore volunteering, learning and literacy as social practices, before charting out my ethnographic journey, particularly the strategies I employed to identify the research sites and gaining access. I then describe my data collection methods, reflecting on particular ethical challenges I encountered. I close this chapter by paying particular attention to two pervasive issues I faced: the tensions in navigating my fluid and ever-changing roles and positionalities as a researcher returning home to carry out fieldwork – a place and space that turned out to be both familiar and strange – and my attempts to 'give back' to the organisations, whether and how this was possible, in what form and to what extent.

4.1. My research orientation and adopting an ethnographic approach

The overarching research question in my study is: *How do 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers engage with learning and literacy practices in/through their volunteer work?* My sub-research questions are: (1) *How is volunteering understood by the volunteers and other actors? How do these discourses shape volunteers' practices and identities?* (2) *What kind of learning and literacy practices do volunteers engage with in their volunteer work?* (3) *How can an ethnographic approach contribute to our understanding of the links between volunteering and learning both in academic and policy/practice contexts?*

These questions required a process-oriented and context-based research design grounded, ontologically, in a constructivist worldview that views reality as socially constructed and as having various meanings to different people (Mertens 2010). Within the constructivist paradigm, "social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman 2012:33). I agree with this viewpoint, particularly because it recognises the centrality of interactions in meaning-making and how these are continually revised – such as for instance, how volunteers construct meanings around/about volunteering. Epistemologically, I lean towards the interpretivist paradigm where the central research endeavour is to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2007:23). These viewpoints frame my research participants as 'active knowers' and position me, as the researcher, as part of, rather than detached from, the work of co-constructing such knowledge (cf Assalahi 2015).

Central to my research questions (particularly the first two sub-questions), is the aim to 'encounter' volunteering, learning and literacies (and their potential links) as they are embedded in everyday life, taking into account issues of power and identity. Because of this, I found it fitting to use ethnography as my methodology, as an "ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context" (Tedlock 2000:455). This methodology also seems to be congruent with my conceptual stances that employ a social practice view. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:3) put it, ethnography may be characterised as an in-depth study of people's actions and accounts "in everyday contexts" and involves "interpretation of meanings, functions of human actions and institutional practices, and how these [actions and practices] are implicated in local, and perhaps also wider contexts".

I also chose ethnography because I wanted to explore whether and how the data it generates can illuminate and/or move forward debates within volunteer research and policy-making (my third

sub-research question) as they are steered away from the usual focus on cross-country comparisons and cost-benefit analyses (see Chapter 10). In Chapter 1, I referred to Butcher and Einolf (2017d), who have argued for the use of an 'endogenous' lens in volunteer research, focusing on the cultural and contextual realities of the South, as opposed to using an 'exogenous' lens (i.e. using theoretical lenses influenced by chiefly-Northern practices, such as international volunteering), to study the experiences of volunteers in these contexts. My positionality as an ethnographer researching 'home' where I have lived and worked before conducting this study, including as a volunteer, has also influenced my decision to adopt an endogenous lens (I will discuss this in detail later). These ideas have led to shifts in both the theoretical and *methodological* aspects of my research not only in terms of the conceptual lenses I have used or in the ways I have recast the kinds of questions I have asked, but also in how I sought answers to those questions. Employing an endogenous lens compelled me to look at the epistemologies of volunteers themselves and the practices they engaged with in the everyday. It is to this end that ethnography usefully lends itself as a methodology: as Agar (1980:9) puts it, ethnography is about "learning from them [i.e. a group], their ways of doing things and viewing reality".

4.2. Charting out my ethnography

I conducted my ethnographic research with two organisations in Iloilo, Philippines – a choice that was partly influenced by my personal and professional links with the city. Additionally, as I argued in Chapter 2, I believe that the Philippine civil society space offers a useful context within which to explore my research aims and some of the issues I outlined in the introduction chapter (e.g. the historically bustling civil society space that pervades and persists, even at the grassroots level, despite external challenges). I will explain in this section how I identified the two organisations in which I conducted this research (and why) and the challenges I faced in gaining various forms of informed consent.

My fieldwork lasted for 11 months: the first 1.5 months were dedicated to scoping the research and site selection, followed by an intense seven months of field visits and a final couple of months conducting impact activities and other community projects. I returned home to Iloilo several times since returning to the UK after fieldwork and would make an effort to visit the organisations each time. These visits were more to maintain the friendships and for following up community projects, with no additional data collection activities planned. I found no explicit guidelines regarding the 'correct' length of fieldwork to be considered ethnographic (cf Jeffrey

and Troman 2004). I also had logistical limitations as I needed to finish my PhD within 4 years (3 years with funding), as per institutional regulations. For me, Hicks' (1984:198) reminder that "the length of time spent living in a community does not, by in itself, ensure copious information or contribute to theory…" highlighted the importance of *how* I spent my time in the field (see discussion on methods below). At some point during my fieldwork, I felt that I had reached what I would describe as a data saturation stage where themes were emerging (and following a pattern). At this point, I felt that I had collected enough data to write the thesis and it therefore 'felt right' to finish my fieldwork.

4.2.1. Identifying the two case studies

In this research, I employed a comparative ethnographic case study approach. In using the term 'case study', I follow Stake's (2005:443) conceptualisation that "case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied". My methodological choice is ethnography. In other words, I study the cases ethnographically. Following Stake's (1995) notion that cases are bounded systems, I had to make a decision as to what to include/study in each case. In a way, both organisations could be seen as bounded as they are functioning systems of relations with a particular structure. Still, I later had to focus my observations, for instance, among the volunteers (in Youth4Health among HIV/AIDS volunteers) and the staff that they closely worked with (see section on participant observation below)

In choosing the case studies, I did not opt for a 'representative' or 'typical' case; instead, I followed Mitchell's (1984:240) notion of "telling cases". For Mitchell (1984), telling cases have characteristics that can make theoretical connections that were previously less visible, more apparent. In choosing two cases that were different, I wanted to capture what Mitchell (1984:239) describes as case studies' capacity to "establish theoretically valid connections between events and phenomena which previously were ineluctable". In a way, I chose organisations that could "maximise what [I] can learn" (Stake 1995:4) about my research questions while considering practical issues, especially access.

I conducted scoping visits and interviews after arriving in Iloilo City on 6th of June 2017. By early July, I had spoken to nine organisation/group leaders and two government officials. In populating my list of potential sites, I cast my net widely. For instance, I spoke with a local chapter of an INGO, self-help groups, local groups with South-South collaboration and social

movements. When it was time to pare down the list, I decided on two organisations with the hope that having more than one organisation (with different characteristics) would expand the issues/insights that I might find out, while still allowing for in-depth engagement (as ethnography requires) within my time constraints. In choosing the two cases, I used three categories: organisational structure, nature of participation and the learning component.

In terms of organisational structure, I had aimed to choose one 'formal' and one 'informal' structure, drawing on Milligan and Fyfe's (2005) work on how volunteer organisations' structures affect the development of active citizenship. The formal organisation has a strict and bureaucratic governance system and a steady flow of funding. The informal organisation is non-hierarchal, democratic and much less structured. However, as I began speaking with different organisations, I found that dichotomy to be limiting because

> *...as it turns out, there was really no simple distinction as to what counts as a 'formal' and informal organisation or what even is a 'typical' volunteer organisation considering how several groups are hybrids of different characteristics often assigned to both formal and informal. Instead of having this framing at the outset, I'll tease out criteria and indicators based on my interviews and map the different organisations against these.*
> – Reflection Notes, 29/06/17

This reflection succinctly captures how my strategy for selection developed – from purely being literature and concept-driven, to also being context-driven. From the interviews, I began to see patterns which formed the basis of the categories that I then used to organise my data for each of the groups, so as to be able to see points of comparison.

My second consideration was the nature of volunteer participation, influenced by Cornwall's (2002) categorisation of invited and created spaces of participation (see Chapter 3). 'Invited spaces' are pre-established organisations where volunteers are invited to participate. 'Created spaces' are more organic, created by volunteers themselves, like self-help and mutual aid groups and social movements. Related to this, I also considered the relevance of the organisation's development focus. I felt that this would mean that the findings of my research might have some local relevance if it also dealt with contemporary issues (see also my discussion earlier in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 10 regarding my policy/practice-oriented research question).

Who participates was also crucial in my research. Identifying which organisations engage with or were created by 'vulnerable' volunteers was both a sampling issue and an ethical concern.

Originally, I planned to consult government statistics on regional poverty incidence, to identify key areas with high poverty rates and observe volunteering practices there. I thought that attributing indicators such as 'poverty' to a geographical area (instead of an individual) would not only assist in my selection but would also acknowledge that volunteers living in these contexts may not consider themselves as 'poor' (cf Sime 2008). However, one community cannot provide the comparative perspective I hoped for. As an alternative, I looked at organisations that explicitly express their engagement with 'vulnerable' volunteers. As discussed in Chapter 3 with regards to development discourses, categories such as 'the poor' are already used in spaces "made for them by development agencies" (Cornwall 2002:6). This turned out to be the case during my scoping period. Most of the organisations I spoke with explicitly described many of their volunteers as not too "well-off" or, if they did not, there was a desire to make volunteer participation more "inclusive".

The final consideration was the learning component and practices within the group. My stance on learning and literacy as occurring in everyday life meant that I could observe these in any group, but I wanted to work with organisations that engaged with a wide range of learning modalities. My scoping research showed that many of the organisations were 'training heavy': from quick orientation programmes to week-long, housed seminars and workshops.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the two organisations and their location within the wider context of the Philippine civil society and volunteer space. Below is the summary of some of their characteristics based on the criteria I have set out. Under the criteria of 'Learning Component', 'For Volunteers' refers to training programmes or events where the volunteers were participants or the 'learners', while 'By Volunteers' refers to those where volunteers facilitated or delivered to others (which would sometimes include themselves).

Table 4. Comparing the two cases: a summary

Criteria for selection	Youth4Health (HIV/AIDS focused)	Land4All (Land tenure focused)
Structure and power distribution	- More formal structure, a more established organisation that has had a long history as a development institution. - Hierarchical in power distribution - Receives a relatively steady flow of contract-based funding from external institutions such as big INGOs and state agencies.	- Less formal structure - Power distribution is more democratised (or at least attempts to be) as most major decisions need to be voted upon by all members - Core funding comes from monthly contributions of registered members. At times, they receive financial assistance from the government.

Basis for voluntary action	- An organisation that invites volunteers to participate. - They have a ready set of advocacy streams and development goals and invite those who share the same advocacies with them or have experienced the 'marginalisation' or 'vulnerabilities' of the population that the organisation chiefly targets.	- Like self-help and mutual aid groups, the organisation was created by volunteers themselves to address a shared issue and vulnerability – eviction and landlessness.
Who were the volunteers they engaged with	- People living with HIV (PLHIVs), mostly adolescents and young people. - Individuals identifying as gay men, transgendered women and girls - Youth and adolescents come from low-income households and/or live in urban poor communities	- Informally-settling individuals facing urgent eviction and relocation. - No stable income.
Development issue addressed and relevance to wider development ecosystem	- HIV/AIDS – and associated issues such as Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health – is a key issue in the Philippines. The country has has the fastest growing HIV epidemic in the South Pacific.	- Iloilo City is considered to be one of the growing economies in the Philippines. The city and the region has seen increases in both public and private infrastructure, some of which have led to the eviction of informal settlers.
Learning component	- For volunteers: youth leadership training, training and workshops before volunteers can become peer counsellors; when an organisation conducts a training for example, they contact Youth4Health and Youth4Health looks for trainees from their pool of volunteers. Modules come from Youth4Health, some in relation to the Population Commission. - By volunteers: reproductive health awareness campaigns, HIV testing awareness campaigns, health education, prenatal care, family planning	- For volunteers: Community savings, leadership trainings conducted by community mobilisers; information sessions conducted by housing and land use regulatory board, LGU and Socialised Housing - By volunteers: Unclear

From the comparison, the two organisations might be seen as occupying different ends within the spectrum of the criteria that I have set out. This was intentional as I saw the potential insights and richness a comparison could generate – particularly what varying issues the two different organisations might raise. In terms of structure, Youth4Health is more formal and Land4All is more informal. In terms of the basis for participation and voluntary action, Land4All can be considered a 'created' space and Youth4Health as an 'invited' space. Across the two organisations there are strong learning components, although non-formal and structured ones are more dominant in Youth4Health. Learning in everyday life and volunteering can be observed in both organisations but they are within two different domains: legal and health.

4.2.2. Gaining access: 'a constant seeking of permission[25]'

I secured institutional access by seeking formal, written approval from the organisation, through its leaders (i.e. my gatekeepers). I used a letter, translated into local dialect, to outline my research activities and what was expected of the organisation. During my scoping period, I had already spoken with the director of Youth4Health who was enthusiastic about my research and had given me verbal permission even before I decided to conduct my research with them. With Land4All, it was also straightforward. I accompanied the president of an urban poor association to attend one of Land4All's early community meetings. I was introduced to Susan, the association's president who immediately agreed. When I got back to them three weeks later, they seem to have treated the letter – which I had to produce as part of the university's research ethics protocol – only as a formality.

Following the leaders' suggestion, I then attended a community meeting (Land4All) and a staff and volunteer meeting (Youth4Health) where I explained my research activities to a wider group. I felt that these were useful opportunities to recruit participants and, more crucially, manage expectations at the outset. In Land4All, for example, I had to emphasise that I was not an inspector for the CMP and that my research was not in any way related to their CMP application. As I met more people, talking about my research and managing expectations occurred more frequently, usually through one-to-one, informal conversations. For instance, Susan's mother once asked me if I would also be able to sponsor a Christmas party for kids in their community, just like the Nigerian researchers from another *barangay* she knew about. While I did not find this impossible (e.g. I knew that I would be able to raise funds for a small gathering), I took this as an opportunity to explain that I was not working for an aid agency and had little resources as a student. These examples also illustrate that institutional access was not tantamount to blanket consent. I had to ask consent one by one or in groups, as the need arose.

Although I had the informed consent forms and participant information sheets translated into local dialect, most consents were secured verbally. In Land4All, I was told by the leaders that if I kept on asking them to sign, community members might think that I was part of the government, 'spying' on them as part of the CMP application. They said that a signature would make things look 'too official' or bureaucratic. In Youth4Health, several volunteers confused my informed consent with the other consent forms that they were already filling in as part of their work (e.g.

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[25] This quote was taken from Linda Tuhiwai Smith during her keynote at the annual The Sociological Review lecture in Goldsmiths, London, 16th October, 2019.

consent for HIV testing). A senior staff member also advised against me giving volunteers and community members 'additional paperwork'. When I began my fieldwork, I did not envisage that I would be speaking with minors (those below 18 years old). However, I became quite involved with and interested in, the work of Pip, a 17-year-old adolescent[26] living with HIV and had wanted to invite him for an interview. To do this, I wrote to our school's ethics committee, with the guidance of my supervisors to include an addendum to my original ethics application. Pip gave me verbal consent to participate as did his immediate guardian. Similar to Shamim and Qureshi (2013), I realised that 'written' consent, while considered as the gold-standard by international ethical guidelines, may arouse suspicion in some cultures (such as in Pakistan in their study) and must therefore be 'negotiated' to be relevant and respectful to local practices.

Tuhiwai-Smith, during her keynote at the Sociological Review Lecture said that consent is a constant seeking of permission[27]. She was describing how Maori scholars in her institution instructed their students to constantly seek permission from people and the environment as they 'entered' the field: every person, every tree, every stone. For me, this highlights the relational aspect of consent. My experiences mirror some of Shamim and Qureshi's (2013:478) insights about informed consent being a complex process of negotiation in which researchers like me need to navigate between the requirements set in institutional ethical guidelines and the "local culture the research participant is an embodiment of." While I recognise and follow the guidelines set by my institution, I understood informed consent as an agreement between two individuals that they honour – knowing fully well that they can reconvene and change – rather than a condition made static upon the stroke of a signature.

Constantly seeking consent, however, also brings some challenges. Whenever I asked if I could observe or join an activity in Youth4Health, for instance, some would respond – perhaps tired of my repetition – *Oo eh, daw sa* others *ka* (Of course yes, it's as if you're an 'other'). Depending on the circumstances, this expression, for me, had two meanings. On the one hand, it was a recognition of my membership in their community (therefore dismissing the need for me to ask for permission). On the other hand, it sounded like frustration: it felt as if they were wondering why I thought I was so different – as if I was distancing myself from them. I did not want this to affect our relationship so I had to make the decisions on a case by case basis. Often, when I felt like it was not clear, I simply reiterated that I was joining not only as a volunteer or a friend but

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[26] In the Philippines, an adolescent is someone aged 15-19. All adolescents included in this thesis, apart from Pip, were 18 years old and above.

[27] See video of the lecture here: https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/decolonising-methodologies-20-years-on-the-sociological-review-annual-lecture-by-professor-linda-tuhiwai-smith/ (Last accessed: 25/11/2020)

also a researcher. These circumstances relate to how I continually shifted between being 'insider' and 'outsider' in the organisation (cf McNess, Arthur, and Crossley 2016) and how at times, my researcher identity could get lost in the familiarity established with the context and the people.

4.3. Research Methods

In this section, I discuss the methods I used to collect data during my fieldwork and reflect on my experiences in using them. I chose these methods because they complement and 'speak to' each other. For instance, some interviews were arranged because of a particular observation that I wanted to follow up. In turn, there were interviews that compelled me to refine or expand my observations. I also draw special attention to the ethical challenges that I experienced in implementing these methods.

4.3.1. Participant observation

My main method of data collection was participant observation, whereby I gathered data as I participated in and observed daily life in the organisations. In the beginning, the flurry of activities in both organisations left me wondering what and when should I observe. They were also located in two different areas so I needed to arrange site visits strategically. To assist me, I had originally hoped to make some sort of observation guide, for instance, the one suggested by Burgess (1984:84). However, I realised that the organisations' activities were not as bounded as a literacy class or a school classroom (as in the example of Burgess' observation checklist in a school). Feeling slightly overwhelmed, I allowed myself several weeks just 'wandering' around, exhaustingly alert, fearing that I might miss something important.

I tried to take down notes of as many things as I could – from the physical structures (e.g. the way the walls of Youth4Health's office building were decorated with certificates), key events (e.g. staff meeting or a birthday), activities (e.g. Land4All's treasurer filling out a tax form) and conversations (e.g. two women in Land4All talking about their blood pressure while clearing out weeds under the heat of the sun). I also decided to visit the sites certain days every week. During busier days, I would follow where the activity was. For instance, I could start with applying for tax exemption with Land4All volunteers in the morning and then with conducting HIV testing with Youth4Health volunteers in the evening. I also spent 'down times' in both organisations, where we just 'hung out' in the office or on someone's porch. The way I organised my time in

visiting the sites gave me plenty of things to observe, across different times of the day, often also with different people. Carrying a green notebook (which later developed its own reputation, as volunteers knew I was writing down notes in it), I would jot down memory joggers and/or 'scratch notes' during the day which I would later write-up into extended field notes at home (Sanjek 1990). At times, I would also voice record conversations and meetings. That was how I was able to capture a lot of 'speak' from the participants, even in my fieldnotes. The preliminary accounts were useful because they drew an initial picture of the social life in both organisations and, similar to what Burgess (1984) described, served as a background for further observations.

A few months after my initial observations, as I organised my fieldnotes, I felt less pressure to observe *everything*. This was partly influenced by my ongoing data analysis (which I will discuss fully later) that made visible emerging patterns and themes and my seemingly natural tendency to follow up on certain observations that intrigued me (only some of which linked with my research questions). Both generated further queries such as *why are so many Land4All members so suspicious?* or *these youth training camps that they always talk about - what do they look like?* Like Burgess (1984:80), these questions allowed me "to move from a detailed description of a particular setting towards making a series of observations that had a particular focus".

I have so far written more about the 'observation' aspect of this method and will now discuss the 'participant' aspect. Being a participant observer meant that I also took part in the activities that the volunteers engaged with. So, for example, while I was observing and hearing the two ladies complaining about their high blood pressure while working under the sun, I was also feeling the headache, the shortening of breath, the quickening of the pulse, as I participated in the same tasks as them. To some degree, I understood what Burgess (1984:65) meant when he said that in participant observation, "the researcher… is the main instrument of social investigation." Being immersed in the two organisations for an extended period of time gave me a unique vantage point from which to investigate volunteers' experiences. I was invited into spaces that would otherwise be out of reach if I did not 'participate' as a community member (for instance, the online chat group of gay men and transgirls where I was invited to join). There were, of course, issues and limitations in these often intense engagements with the organisations.

As I had hoped, my participation over time allowed me to develop what Ottenberg (1990:144) described as 'headnotes' – memories of field research, impressions, scenes, feelings that were beyond what one could possibly have recorded in text. For example, I can still vividly remember the day I was walking alone through the demolished houses of Land4All. I have records of my

observations and emotions, but I know, even as I am writing this passage now, that 'frustration' does not quite capture what I felt, neither does 'anger' nor 'paralysis'. I agree with Sanjek (1990) that while fieldnotes and headnotes speak to each other, the latter allows for the recording and remembering of aspects of social life in these communities that are perhaps unique to me, as the ethnographer who conducted research in these settings. The sense of familiarity that headnotes provided influenced my data collection approaches during fieldwork and has continued to do so in my analysis and later writing up.

As a participant observer, I also inevitably took on double roles: as a researcher and as a volunteer. In Youth4Health, my volunteering role was chiefly related to documentation functions (i.e. writing reports, minutes of meetings) to fulfil donor requirements. I was also an implementor, trainer and facilitator – and have devised several training programmes for volunteers and other service users. I assisted in logistical needs during community activities, usually during HIV testing in various venues. In Land4All, my volunteering role was chiefly as an assistant to the officers in fulfilling their CMP application: filling out forms, organising application documents and liaising with different government offices. I have also been considered as a confidant by the volunteer leaders and they have asked me for advice regarding leadership decisions.

The dual role also resulted in some ethical issues – particularly in getting informed consent – as there were several times when my researcher role was not known to those outside or new to the organisation. For example, I would usually accompany the volunteer leaders of Land4All to meetings. Once, we visited the house of a landowner for a meeting and

> *...we were greeted by a woman who immediately introduced us to the landowner. She seemed a bit confused why we were there but she was quick to offer us a place to sit. Susan introduced me to the landowner as 'researcher namon' (our researcher) and I asked if it were fine that I take some notes of the meeting. She agreed.*
> Field notes, 11/009/2019

This meeting – which was to negotiate with the landowner that Land4All's evictees could temporarily squat on her property – was extremely important but also highly sensitive. Government officials both from the local jurisdiction and from the land use office were present to help mediate the discussion. I remember being invited to attend by Susan (the president) because she wanted moral support and because she perceived me as someone who understood the government loan process. But my role was not only that of a supporter or mediator – I was also (and even primarily) a researcher. Although I had made my researcher role known to the

landowner (as per the excerpt above), I had very little chance to ask for everyone's consent. In this particular circumstance, I had to ask for consent retrospectively.

Additionally, similar to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:87), I felt that in being given the role, for instance, of an expert, I struggled to "suspend [e.g., personal assumptions, judgments] for analytic purposes." From time to time, I needed to step back (for instance, I went for a two-week break for a conference) to allow me to go back to the field with fresh eyes.

4.3.2. Interviews as 'conversations with a purpose[28]'

In my research, I approached individual interviews as conversations. Burgess (1984) differentiates this approach from standard interview procedures where the researcher comes with pre-set questions, expecting answers akin to a spoken survey or questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews, when conducted as a conversation, become more of a relational activity – whereby key interviewing 'steps' such as building rapport, Burgess (1984) suggests, become part of the wider relationship-building that is central in ethnographic fieldwork. For me, building rapport was not a distinct stage; rather, it was an ongoing process that built up but also faded out, depending on time, circumstances and the individual.

Different from casual conversations, my interviews could be best described as conversations with a *purpose* – often, a research purpose. My interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I often came only with a short list of topics that I hoped I and the interviewee could talk about. The questions I asked were often foreshadowed by an observation that I wanted to follow up or explore, for instance, a past experience or event that predated my field observations. I followed Burgess' (1984:87) advice to use this approach to interviewing not in isolation but to complement participant observations to "obtain details of situations which the researcher did not witness". These meant that I had to follow a purposive sampling strategy in selecting my interviewees. Many of the interviews I conducted felt more like an interaction between me and the participant. I was visible in the transcript, not only as the one asking questions but also sharing my thoughts and opinions about a topic. Additionally, there were several instances when the direction of the conversation was steered by the participant. Often, I would let it run for a while and then try to manoeuvre towards what I wanted us to talk about – this was where my topic list was helpful. I did have interviews that were more structured than others. For instance, during the early stages of

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[28] This was lifted from Burgess (1984:84)

my fieldwork, I had sit-down interviews with volunteers in Youth4Health who I had observed were more active than others. These interviews were more targeted – for example, I tried to understand these volunteers' trajectory into participating in Youth4Health's work.

Most of these interviews were voice recorded following participants' verbal consent. To make things look more like a conversation, I recorded them via my cell-phone – which looked less intrusive (i.e. more familiar) as compared to the recorder that I had. In some of these interviews, I did have the chance to take notes, although I avoided this on the whole so as not to distract the participants. When I went back home, however, or when I was alone, I would often write down my thoughts about the interview – often taking notes of insights that struck me during or in the immediate aftermath of the interview.

The note-taking that often accompanied the voice-recorded interviews was helpful in the process of transcription and translation. These notes served as indexes and memos, pointing me to key insights that were discussed in a particular recording. I realised that transcribing whole interviews was time-consuming and so I made a decision, following Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007:150) strategy, to treat recordings as if they were a document (which I could index and summarise), "transcribing only what seems essential." Interviews were also a mix of English, a few Tagalogs and many in local dialect Hiligaynon – all of which I am fluent in. So, in the process of transcribing, I was also translating. There were several words and expressions that were difficult to translate literally into English. In these cases, I wrote them in Hiligaynon and Tagalog and explained what they meant in the context of the conversation through a footnote or in brackets.

4.3.3. Documentary Sources

The third set of data that I collected were documentary sources. It struck me how both organisations had to deal with texts quite heavily. So, collecting essential documents was important as they seemed to be "integral features [*sic*] of their life and work" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:122). Similar to observation notes and interview questions/topics, the kinds of documents I collected changed as I narrowed my research focus. However, unlike the former two, it was easier to try and collect as many documents as I could (often I photographed them and stored them securely in my computer) and decide later whether they were relevant. In Youth4Health, many of the documents I collected were related to their health teaching – such as visual aids – and HIV/AIDS screening/testing – such as patient's form, interview questionnaires

and attendance sheets. These forms sometimes contained personal data so I would only collect blank ones to ensure confidentiality. In Land4All, these documents often related to their CMP application – such as certifications, application forms, tax documents, financial documents, etc. I also collected policy and programme texts related to the organisation's field of work – some of which were virtual (e.g. websites). Additionally, I gathered documents that volunteers in the organisation themselves created – such as letters and reports.

4.4. Analysis and writing-up

In my research, data analysis did not come as a distinct research stage; rather, it could be best described as an ongoing "study [of] the emerging data" which fed into the overall research direction (e.g. focusing of research questions) and data collection methods (e.g. selecting interviewees, focusing of observations) (Charmaz 1996:36; see also Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Early analyses happened while I was in the field. I wrote up my fieldnotes, listened to interview recordings and arranged them using Microsoft OneNote – a computer software that I found was flexible in storing texts, pictures and recordings. I was overwhelmed as I saw all my data in one place – there were so many interesting aspects to pursue, so many 'missing links' to tie up. It was exciting but, speaking with my supervisors, I was reminded that I needed a system of 'making sense' of what I was recording: in other words, an attempt at preliminary analysis.

To do this, I adapted Hughes' (1994) ON-TN-MN strategy whereby I separated observational notes (ON) (descriptive and/or factual accounts); theoretical notes (TN) (my impressions, analyses of a specific observation) and methodological notes (MN) (my reflections on my methods, including ethical issues). I elaborated the strategy further by 'naming' my TNs no matter how crude – for instance I would use headings such as "Motivation to volunteer" or "Volunteer as advocate" (see Appendix C). In retrospect, these headings were helpful in identifying emerging patterns and themes (some of which were more dominant in one organisation than in the other) focusing my observation, sharpening my interviews and narrowing the list of documents I needed to collect. This way of organising notes was very time-consuming and one that I struggled to accomplish after a whole day (or evening) of field activities. So there were certain days when I would prioritise inputting my ONs and took time to write down my TNs at a later time.

In analysing documents and texts, I was guided by the analytical lenses I used in understanding literacy as social practice. In Chapter 3, I explained that literacy in this thesis is seen not only as

reading and writing but more as something people 'do'. While I did collect these documents and analysed them based on their content, I also looked at how the volunteers engaged with them, how they interacted with them, talked about and talked around them, and challenged them. For instance, while I did look at what words and phrases were used in a certificate, I collected in Youth4Health, much of my analysis focused on how this certification was used in the organisation, what meaning people attached to it and how it helped to shape certain practices in the group. A majority of the texts that I have included in this thesis – particularly in the next couple of chapters – was analysed based not only on their content (i.e. linguistic) but more in terms of how they were (mis)used, encountered and shaped as part of social interactions.

What also helped me in the analysis was the agreement I developed with my supervisors that I would send them monthly reports which they would comment on. In the beginning, we decided that I would send excerpts from my field notes and interviews. By the middle of my fieldwork, they encouraged me to write more succinct reports: pages of fieldnotes were replaced by one-pagers, bullet points outlining key themes and some evidence to support/illustrate them. This process forced me to sift through my data early on. Having read through my emerging themes, they also pointed me to relevant literature that usefully lent conceptual lenses that suggested what (else) to observe and ask. For instance, they introduced me to the work of Blommaert and Kell which offered fresh insights in how I understood and observed the way some of the documents I saw were interpreted across different contexts.

I returned to the UK and I continued this strategy for analysing my data. I coded them using NViVo – a qualitative analysis software which I found intuitive. I transferred my fieldnotes to NViVo and proceeded with coding my data. In doing so, I made use of the key themes and patterns that emerged from my 'in the field' analyses (e.g. 'Motivation to volunteer', 'engaging with bureaucracy'; see also Appendix C). However, I also allowed myself to employ more 'open' coding leading to new themes and/or specifying others (e.g. 'Motivations to volunteering' led to sub-themes such as 'Solidarity', 'Incentives' and 'Giving Back').   Most of the themes were developed from the data of both the organisations. However, I also found that one organisation would highlight a particular issue more strongly than the other. There were also a few issues that were present in one and not the other. I thought that this was the advantage of being able to develop a comparative perspective of two organisations that were more different than similar (as in my discussion earlier regarding selection).

4.5. Ethnography as a written product

Ethnography has been considered not only a research process but also a written *product (*Bryman 2004). Since both case studies were tight-knit communities, I was aware of the possibility that they might recognise each other in my published accounts. To avoid this, I used pseudonyms and fictionalised less significant characteristics. For example, instead of saying the exact age, I chose a number that was still within a particular range (e.g. anywhere between the age range of adolescents). I also used more vague terms in describing some positions – e.g. volunteer social worker instead of their official titles. I was also aware of my ethical responsibilities in managing and protecting raw data. I converted all my raw data into electronic forms (except for my field notebooks which I keep safely). Voice recordings, typed-up field notes, photo/scans of documents, pictures were kept in an online folder that is password-protected and under the UEA IT infrastructure.

As I began writing up the data, it was clear that this product was not necessarily an objective account of the social world but rather, an interpretation and representation (which were mainly my own) of observed social processes documented in text (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Burgess' idea that the researcher is an essential data collection instrument also carries with it limitations, because while I did gain a unique vantage point from which to view the data, such a vantage point may be constrained by my own biases and assumptions. The "crisis of representation" continues to challenge ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:19) and involves issues around the risks of reproducing "projects of domination" through textual representation, of under- or mis-representing participants' voices and of concealing the processes involved in research knowledge production (Wright and Nelson 1995:48).

Aware of these risks and in a bid to minimise them, I shared some of my early analyses with the participants during my fieldwork which gave them an opportunity to confirm and challenge some of them. For example, I shared an observation that volunteers in Youth4Health usually do not get to see or process the data they collect for the organisation (e.g. through interviews with young people) therefore engaging in a process without being part of the outcome. After my presentation, a staff member came up to me and shared that, *"…the burden should no longer be given to the volunteers. That's why they are no longer told of the results." For her is the health care providers that should think of the interventions.* [Field notes, 10 April 2018]. In these interactions, I attempted to employ what Burgess (1984:167) described as "respondent validation" to check some of my interpretations and add further data.

However, many aspects of what I presented have changed in the course of writing this thesis – this is why I also chose to write my findings mostly in the past tense, to recognise the temporality of my observations and not claim for its timelessness. I also realised that many of the decisions of what went into this thesis, including how they were (re)presented and written about, were mine. These decisions have been influenced by the relationships, experiences, headnotes that I developed during my fieldwork – these have continued to be important arbiters of what I decided to include and not to include in the final paper. In writing this thesis – particularly the empirical chapters – I tried my best to make myself (and the partiality of my interpretation) visible.

4.6. Reflecting on my ethnographic research process

Conducting this ethnography was both a fulfilling and challenging task. I dedicate this section to teasing out two specific challenges because of their significance and pervasiveness in my research process. I am making these tensions and complementarities visible because they had many implications in various components of my research, such as identifying research sites, ethical decision-making and writing up.

4.6.1. Can you ask me about the water? Positionality and reflexivity in researching 'home'

I have been explicit in several parts of this thesis that conducting my research in Iloilo City meant that I was researching 'home' – which afforded me a sense of familiarity that was both worrying and pacifying. I appreciated, for example, that I did not need to learn a new language or know which places were generally safe. I also had very personal connections with the area within which the two organisations operate. My family was also a 'victim' of eviction. We squatted a piece of land for over 20 years (where I spent most of my adult life), only for our house to get demolished in 2013 because the owner decided she wanted the land for her children. In a way, I could empathise with the uncertainty, anxiety but also hopeful optimism of the volunteers of Land4All. I grew up as a 'restricted' young gay man in Iloilo City and was familiar with the 'gay community' – the main movers of the HIV/AIDS advocacy in the city – although only from a distance. I could empathise with the struggle of the volunteers of Youth4Health to be heard and taken seriously in a highly Catholic society. In a way, my life history meant that I was not really entering these spaces for the first time but have been dipping in and out in various capacities throughout my life, the difference being that this time, I came as a researcher.

With so much that was familiar to me, I was afraid that I might take things for granted, for instance in deciding what to observe, because 'I've seen them before' or 'that's just how things work here'. Some scholars have commented that ethnography works best if one studies a culture different from his/her own (discussed in Roberts *et al.* 2001). Earlier anthropological texts, according to Street (2001a), suggests a metaphor that a fish is so immersed in the medium that you cannot ask it about the water. However, I also realised that many things were very unfamiliar. I did not have to learn a new language, but I did have to be aware of certain ways of 'speaking' (like what the volunteers often called 'gay language'). I knew the territory, but I needed to operate on 'new' maps – for instance, knowing where the HIV hotspots in the city are or traversing how houses are arranged in a rural community. I realised that

> *… although I am familiar with many development projects in the city, my month-long scoping period introduced me to NGOs and local grassroots organisations that were completely unknown to me – like a slum-tour organisation just a few meters away from my house, a youth-led HIV/AIDS* organisation *and a group of volunteer parole officers! To a large extent, it felt like I was traversing an 'unknown' field.*
> – Reflective Notes, 21/06/2019

Recounting this experience always reminds me of a message a mentor sent me from the Philippines, quoting Heraclitus: No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. So, perhaps in response to the metaphor of Street above, yes, I could be asked about the water. I would describe my positionality as beyond the essentialist view of an outsider versus insider researcher, but rather as McNess *et al.* (2016:21) suggest, a research identity is "multiple, flexible and changing such that the boundary between the inside and the outside is permeable, less stable and less easy to draw." In a way, I dwell in the hyphen in the common phrase 'insider-outsider researcher' (cf Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Additionally, I caught myself essentialising what 'gay culture', 'squatter mentality', '*Ilonggo* culture' meant – as if there were blanket characteristics that apply to everyone who identifies as part of these groups (including me). Robinson-Pant (2016) warns against this essentialist view of culture in light of the insider-outsider debates: culture is neither fixed nor similar, even if I and my participants come from the same city, socioeconomic status, gender identity, etc. This insight helped me in thinking of my research site both as a "place of cultural sameness" and a "place of difference" (Gupta and James, 1997:32 as cited in Banerjea 2011), thus requiring continuous negotiation of being at a distance (to sense what may be taken for granted by local actors) and proximity (being immersed to gain in-depth knowledge) to the organisations (Roberts *et al.* 2001).

While I have an expanded view of what fieldwork relationships could look like (i.e. more than researcher-participant based), I also recognise that the 11 months I spent in the field was primarily for knowledge production that led to this thesis. Robinson-Pant (2016) suggests that micro-level relationships – influenced by ever-shifting insider-outsider roles – are not just about the researcher and participants 'getting to know each other' but also about the 'dialectic construction of knowledge'. Taking this cue, I emphasise the impact of these roles and their tension not only in relationships but also the kind of knowledge produced in the process of doing ethnographic fieldwork – including what could count as data:

> *...during lunch, one of my participants shared a piece of personal information with me that was extremely sensitive (and may potentially place the participant in a negative light) but would possibly be useful in my research. When I asked her if it is okay that I record and write about it, she agreed, saying that she believes I will not name her anyway. If I only base my decision on institutional ethics guidelines, all I needed to do was ensure anonymity. However, at this moment, I felt like she related to me as a friend and not as a researcher and therefore I had to think again whether I would want information like this included in my thesis – and therefore in the public domain. In the end, I did not take any notes of her words. For me, that was the ethical thing to do.*
> – Reflective notes, 28/06/2019

Dilemmas like this challenged my note-taking during the fieldwork and my writing-up back in the UK – and are illustrative of how the sort of relationships that I have built and maintained influenced my decisions as to what to include and not include. During the research process, I have practised reflexivity or what has been described as an ongoing practice of understanding how my personal experiences, values and ideas influence the site and my research (Burgess 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Roberts *et al.* 2001). Street (2001a:93) describes it as the ability to reflect critically "on the way in which one's own cultural background and standpoint influence one's view of other culture". Reflexivity may lead to the "'anthropology of anthropology' – a critical awareness of the metanarratives we construct, our representation of culture and difference, [and] how we give them textual authority…" (Wright and Nelson 1995:48).

For a while, reflective practice seemed to me like an individual pursuit. As a practice, it often involved me writing down my reflections about how the research was going, anything that surprised me and any biases that were playing out and/or emerging. However, I also found that reflection could be a collaborative and reflective process where the practice is not only thinking 'about' but thinking 'with' research participants (Millora, Maimunah, and Still 2020). For me, these included *thinking with* my supervisors through our monthly correspondence, often about an

extract from my field-notes or a methods issue from my reflective notes. These exchanges were helpful to gain an 'outsider' perspective too and gave me fresh ways of looking at my observations (I discuss this further in Chapter 10, particularly in relation to my previous experience as a development worker and then having to transition into being a researcher). I also had to *think with* some colleagues and 'critical friends' back home, many of whom are also part of the development and learning sector. Reflecting *with* rather than *about* was really helpful in monitoring my own biases and thinking of other ways to understand my research.

4.6.2. The ethics of reciprocity

Early into this research project, I was aware that the stories and experiences within which this thesis has been built – those that I organised, analysed and have written up – were not my own. I had access to them because I was allowed into private spaces, thoughts and experiences of the organisations and the participants. Knowing that this thesis would lead to me earning a doctorate degree which would benefit my career, I was conscious about whether and how I – as a PhD student with limited time and resources – could counter what Bridges (2001:378) described as the "imbalance of benefit."

I took guidance from the methodological reflections of Swartz (2011) researching vulnerable youths in South Africa for her PhD (I also discuss these alongside colleagues in Millora *et al.* 2020). Particularly I found useful what she termed as the ethics of reciprocity – the purpose of which was to "give back both ownership of knowledge and material benefit to those participating in research" (Swartz 2011:49). During my fieldwork, my attempt to give back 'ownership of knowledge' was to share my early analyses with my participants. The length of time I was there provided such opportunity and many times, this happened over informal conversations. For instance, I shared with a long-term volunteer in Youth4Health how religion was not a common motivation for people to volunteer. He agreed and shared that the way he saw it, most volunteers they worked with considered volunteering as a stepping stone to a future career or as a validation so they feel that they have 'purpose.' In a way, I tried to take their own perspectives on the data analysis with the hope that their views "are not misrepresented through shallow, monocled gazes" (Swartz 2011). However, these exchanges became more difficult when I was writing up. I did attempt to share parts of my writing with volunteers back in the Philippines, but I usually would only get short replies. They had no time to engage in fuller conversations and it felt too demanding to ask for it.

How to give back 'material benefits,' was also unclear and challenging. I had several strategies around this. One was to take on roles in the organisation that were otherwise outsourced (and paid). For example, I designed a module and wrote up a report that would otherwise have been for a paid consultant in Youth4Health. In Land4All, I also would turn down their meal offers (covered by their group's subsistence allowance) whenever we went to a government office as part of the association's errands. While I understand the importance of reciprocity, I became slightly uncomfortable as I realised that these practices might be framing our research relationship based on a transactional exchange – a warning I read from Bridges (2001). To navigate these strategies, I took on what Nama and Swartz (2002:295) described as a "local ethics of immediate need", encouraging me to look at the wider social situation in deciding for ethical actions in the field. My arbiter became the social norms and cultures that were present in these organisations – and that, in my extended engagement, I have known and understood. For example:

> *while I was on my way home from the HIV/AIDS organisation, I chanced upon a young volunteer who was also about to leave. He then told me that he did not have any money for transportation because his allowance ran out. Having worked with this volunteer many times, I did not hesitate to lend him some money for a ride back home. Institutional ethical guidelines might discourage the practice of giving money to participants, but, in these particular moments, I felt that I was doing this as a member of a community – something I'd do to a friend or a neighbour – and not necessarily as a transaction between a researcher and the participant.*
> – Reflective Notes, 28/06/2019

What would a community member do? This is something I often asked myself to frame my strategies for reciprocity, particularly giving back material benefits. This also applied when I was on the receiving end. For instance, although I would not want community members of Land4All to spend resources on me, some would sometimes prepare food, for instance, when I stayed in the houses too late in the evening. As a community member, especially in a tight knit community such as theirs, it would be extremely rude to refuse an offer such as this.

I did however manage to resource some funds particularly for the purpose of 'giving back'. I applied for fieldwork funding from a UK institution. Part of my approved budget proposal was funding for reimbursement of food and transportation costs and also refreshments for gatherings or meetings. I successfully secured £400 for funding two projects of the organisations' choice. The volunteers were free to decide how to use the funds with very little restrictions and expectations. In doing this, the funding was not only framed as a material benefit (i.e. a token) – which, under certain circumstances, may be patronising – but also a tool for participation, as the

volunteers were given the freedom to use the resources on their *own terms.* The HIV/AIDS group used the money to organise a workshop on mental health for the youth volunteers. Unlike other topic-specific training conducted by NGOs and government agencies, this workshop followed no pre-defined module. Youth volunteers and staff designed the day. Following a community meeting, the informal settlers' association decided to use their budget in two ways. They installed two mechanical water pumps that eased water access following their house demolitions and the rest of the budget was used for a leadership training and team building activity.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:217) noted the tendency that "researchers investigate those who are less powerful than themselves, and for this reason are able to establish a research bargain that advantages them and disadvantages those they study." Therefore, the issue is also about positionality and power. I became aware that my strategies for reciprocity might enhance and/or flatten (and not eliminate) power inequalities embedded in the field research. As Swartz (2011) stressed, representation and *reciprocity* are the main ethical outcomes favoured by postcolonial research. While it is important not to overestimate how my research can 'change' the situations in these communities, I tried to focus on addressing the micro-politics of everyday interactions where power inequalities also pervade.

4.7. Conclusion

More than simply describing my field activities, what I hope to have made clear in this chapter is how ethnography as a methodology fitted with my research aims/questions, my theoretical starting points (as discussed in Chapter 3), my ontological and epistemological orientations and my personal aspirations of the kind of research I hoped to conduct as I transitioned from being a development worker to a researcher. I appreciated the rigour that ethnography required and how part of this was making visible (challenging or maintaining) my own personal assumptions. In writing this thesis, therefore, I had to find a voice – and although the volunteers' stories, experiences and practices are the ocean, I needed to ensure that my voice did not drown in them. The rigour of the theoretical analysis, for instance, should not reject but rather should engage with my own biases.

I have explored here the ethical challenges that I have encountered, and I must say that the process of negotiating them, was, at times, not only between me and the participants but also, the institutional ethical guidelines that I needed to adhere to as a PhD student (see also Millora *et al.*

2020). While these guidelines have their own limitations, I also appreciate their usefulness, particularly in providing foundational principles and thinking points, for instance, before beginning fieldwork; although in my experience, the main arbiter would often be the practices and culture within the organisations – both of which I have gained knowledge of because of my extended and in-depth engagement with the participants.

A final point. When I started my PhD, my dominant understanding of 'fieldwork' was that it is a particular, distinct stage of the PhD process when I am expected to collect data. My fieldwork experience, however, expanded this view. It was limiting to think about the relationships I created and the experiences I had during my fieldwork as purely research-driven – many of the people I met and researched with have become my friends, colleagues and confidants. Reflecting with fellow PhD students, we wrote how our PhD fieldwork was part of a 'life project' – whereby the fieldwork is not a discrete chunk of time but one that has (dis)continuities from the past and into the future (Millora *et al.* 2020).

4.8. Reading the empirical chapters: key individuals and some textual conventions

The next four chapters will present my main research findings. Certain individuals will recur regularly in many of the chapters and I thought it would ease the reading if they were introduced here, as a group. All names are pseudonyms:

Land4All
- *Susan* is the president of the association. She works as a sales agent.
- *Mila* is the treasurer of the association. She and Susan often do errands together. She works as a manicurist.
- *Vivian* is a board member of the association

Youth4Health
- *RJ* is a long term, full-time volunteer in Youth4Health.
- *Tito, Anita and Pip* are three youth volunteers who were active in the organisations. HIV/AIDS activities. Pip is an adolescent living with HIV.
- *Seth* is a volunteer social worker.
- *Luisa* is Youth4Health's most senior staff member in the group. I refer to her as a 'senior staff'.

- **Tomas** is Youth4Health's project officer and a former volunteer. Tomas is a person living with HIV.

There will be several others who appear once or twice in the chapters and I will introduce them then. I have devised textual conventions for a clearer presentation which are as follows:

- I use *italics* for extracts from my fieldnotes and interviews; and for emphasis.
- Under each indented excerpt, I place the method by which such excerpt was collected followed by the date [which follows the DDMMYYYY format]. These extracts could be *Field Notes* (mainly observation notes – see above); *Reflection Notes* (mainly theoretical and methodological notes, some of these written after the fieldwork) and *Interview Excerpt.* When I use excerpts in text (i.e. not indented), I *italicise* them and place the data source followed by the date in brackets [ ].
- Certain words and/or phrases in excerpts may need further explanation or translation. This is done via brackets [   ] and also means that these texts were not in the original fieldnote.
- Quotes within excerpts will be in single quotations ' '.
- Three dots […] means that some words/phrases from the excerpt have been omitted.
- All vernacular words will be in *Arial* italics font.
- I use single quotations ' ' in the text to refer to words that might have contested meanings

As I have explained earlier, I conducted analyses across both organisations' data sets – therefore, I will use excerpts from either of the two organisations to illustrate/evidence a particular theme or finding. For those findings that I found much more significant in one organisation over the other, I will indicate this explicitly.

Chapter Five
"We probably know, but we can't explain":
understandings of and motivations for volunteering

In the middle of our conversation about how she would describe volunteering, Luisa got even more emotional and began to cry. The pain she was feeling over their situation [late funding download and therefore, late salary] *was palpable. 'I pity them* [the staff and the volunteers]*'. She said that with the amount of experience they had so far, they could have just left and looked for work somewhere else.*
I asked her why she thinks they are staying.
She said, 'I don't know' with a smile – but immediately interjected... 'We probably know, but we can't explain.'
– Field Notes, 09/10/17

5. Introduction

How did the volunteers understand and perform volunteering? Why did they volunteer in the first place? These were some of the early questions that puzzled me during my fieldwork. As the account suggests above, they seem to also have perplexed Luisa, one of Youth4Health's most senior staff, despite over two decades of managing the organisation. This chapter will explore these questions, particularly how volunteers and other actors framed volunteering based on what they said and what they did – in other words, their discourses about/around volunteering. I chose the account above to open this chapter (and be included in the title) because cooked into my conversation with Luisa are two key insights that pervade the discussions that will follow. First, similar to many of the conversations I had, the ways individuals spoke about or defined volunteering were often linked with discussions around motivations. In a way, volunteering has been dominantly framed based on one's reasons for volunteering. Second, the account articulates the methodological challenge in capturing these understandings of volunteering, including how they may, at times, be incongruent with the way they 'do' volunteering (e.g. in the account above, volunteers remained in the organisation despite the challenges that they faced and other alternative opportunities). As Luisa suggested, these discourses may have been known to the various actors but were difficult for them to explain.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section explores understandings and drivers of volunteering that relate to notions of solidarity and mutual aid – perhaps the most

recurring motivation I recorded. The second section looks at some more intangible motivations to volunteering – those that relate to volunteers pursuing and developing a sense of purpose, responding to a 'calling' and receiving some form of spiritual gain. The third section, which forms a large portion of this chapter, teases out issues surrounding the common understanding that volunteering should be unpaid – paying close attention to the implications of such discourse among volunteers who were experiencing some form of financial vulnerability.

Originally, I thought of listing these definitions and motivations. However, such presentation risked portraying them as static, monolithic entities that volunteers either had or did not have. Furthermore, such a presentation might eclipse my many observations of how meanings of and motivations for, volunteering changed and transformed, whilst not necessarily 'disappearing'.

5.1. "We are all related here anyway!": Volunteering as hidden solidarities

Many expressed that they volunteered because they wanted to help 'others' without necessarily expecting 'something' in return. To do so means that they, as volunteers, were exhibiting some form of selflessness, self-sacrifice, generosity and/or compassion. Altogether, these understandings seem to point to the virtuous spirit of volunteering and/or its perceived 'good' nature and ethos. At times, I felt that this statement was thrown around so much – in conversations, speeches, testimonies and sharing – that I developed a curiosity about how the volunteers understood and constructed who these 'others' were. There were two key ways that I observed the 'other' was constructed in both organisations. One was on the basis of difference – volunteers frame these 'others' as those needing support, including those who, for instance, were in a similar situation as them (e.g. as evictees). I will discuss this aspect in Chapter 8 as it links more closely with identities, the focus of the eighth chapter. The second, which will be the basis of this subsection, was framing the 'other' in terms of commonalities: the 'other' may be different but he/she was believed to have experienced similar situations to the speaker and they were, to a certain extent, the same.

Notions of family and solidarity in the face of *shared* problems and challenges also strongly frame volunteers' motivations. Many volunteers and community members, especially in Land4All, framed 'others' as a family in a broader sense – not only as their kin (e.g. distant relatives) but also as those they have connected with through a ceremony like marriage (i.e. brother-in-law, father-in-law, witnesses) or baptism (i.e. godfather, godmother). Many volunteers

expressed that giving to 'others' is like giving to family. A common phrase I heard when I spoke to them about why they volunteer for each other was *Magpalarentihanay man lang kami na di tanan* [We are all related here, anyway!]. I found that these ties were the bases for many helping and volunteering practices within the community. For instance, during the months when community members needed to rebuild their houses from scratch following the demolition,

> *Distant relatives of the community members – some coming from other parts of Iloilo – came to help and volunteer. Mila's brothers and nephews spent three weekends in Paglaum to help them construct the house. Mila organised their transportation, food and tughong (a local term that translates to 'refill' but they use to refer to alcohol). Another community member who lives alone with her 10-year-old grandson – was supported by her brother and nephews as well.*
> – Field Notes, 17/08/2017

Accounts such as the above were common during the few months spent on housebuilding. It seems to illustrate how volunteering practices can be engendered by familial relations (in a broader sense), as distant relatives gathered from miles away to help their evicted cousins, aunts, nephews and sisters to build their house over a few weeks. I found that this was not difficult for many households to organise, despite (or perhaps because of) the urgency of the situation. For some households, receiving help from family members almost seemed expected, especially for the likes of the community member above who was in her mid-70s and lived alone with her young grandson. Logistically, the 'receiving' households needed to prepare food for their distant relatives and friends and provide them with some space to sleep. Despite staying in semi-constructed or unfinished houses, this did not seem to be an issue. Those days appeared more like a grand family reunion – distant cousins cooking together, friends catching up during afternoon breaks and ending the day sharing a bottle of cheap gin. The community members themselves rarely labelled these practices as volunteering (although Susan did refer to it as volunteering in an account below) – rather, they were considered more as helping practices expected of family members, relatives or friends to extend to those who were in need. And such helping practices extended between households too:

> *A community member's brother was working on their house. I remember that he is recovering from recent hospitalisation due to tuberculosis. It was obvious that he was struggling to bury the bamboo firmly into the soil to form the house's skeletal frame. It was also their house that I see very little progress since I arrived. Mila and Susan commented that he is pitiful because he is sick and weak yet have to work. Later, I saw Mila bringing one of her nephews to help the man. The former took the materials and*

tools and helped him finally put up the foundation. Susan whispered to Mila, 'What is that? Only volunteering?' Mila smiled and said, 'I'll take care of him. That's fine'
– Field Notes, 17/08/2017

In asking her nephew to help out her neighbour, Mila may have shared the similar spirit of familial solidarity to someone who was not their kin. While the brother was framed as a disadvantaged 'other,' the volunteering gesture by Mila and her nephew seemed to recognise that they and their neighbour shared similar circumstances yet had different resources (in this case, manpower). Mila was willing *to take care of it* – which meant that she was not expecting that her neighbour would pay or give something in return, following her nephew's help. Volunteering time and resources were part of the wider helping communities within this tight-knit community.

One way of analysing these helping activities is through understanding such practices as part of a so-called indigenous Filipino trait, *bayanihan,* which I introduced in Chapter 2. *Bayanihan* is a system of mutual aid, help and concern among communities in the pursuit of a common goal that is otherwise difficult to achieve with *kanya-kanyang kayod* (each one fending for himself). I suspect that without Mila and her nephew's help, Vivian's brother would most likely not have been able to successfully establish the foundation of their new house – which will provide a roof over the head for three other members of their household. Tagged as the "backbone of the Filipino family and village life" (Ang 1979:91), *bayanihan* is most commonly illustrated as a group of people transferring a community member's mobile house from one place to another. Images that I took during my fieldwork were spitting images of such values-in-practice:

Figure 3: Filipino painter Fernando Amorsolo's work entitled *Bayanihan*.

Figure 4: A group of men in Brgy. Paglaum collectively putting together a bamboo frame for a community member's house.

Being part of the 'Youth4Health family' also appeared to frame volunteers' and staff's motivation to help each other both within and outside the confines of their organisational tasks. In Youth4Health, I found that the notion of family was even broader. Family was neither based on kinship nor ceremony, but on sharing some sort of experience or characteristics: like being part of the same organisation; sharing in a similar identity (e.g. part of the LGBT community) and/or having experienced dealing with a similar disease such as HIV/AIDS (i.e. having a friend/relative with HIV/AIDS or being persons living with HIV [PLHIV] themselves). In Youth4Health, I was introduced to the notion of 'blood brothers' during the testimony of one of the staff members who happened to be a PLHIV. He used the term to plead for help for 'his brothers' who, like him, had been experiencing HIV. I always thought that it was so powerful to frame such relationships that way: using the familial concept of 'brother' when there was no biological connection except for the virus that runs in their blood.

Several volunteers – particularly young gay men and transgender young people and adolescents living with HIV (ALHIVs) – in Youth4Health seemed to be motivated to participate because they felt a sense of belongingness to a family/community that understands their situations. Through interviews, I found that many of them experienced some form of stigma and discrimination, even among their own family members and friends. Several expressed that this isolated them even in their own home. Pip, for instance, emotionally shared during one of our conversations how even his cousins and uncle blamed him for getting HIV. To that, he added a much bigger worry, *how much more if others knew about my situation?* [Interview excerpts, 12/02/2018]. Seemingly, however, young Pip found 'blood brothers' in Youth4Health:

> They [Youth4Health volunteers] *asked me to bring my grandma and my aunt to the clinic so that they can help me reveal to them my status. Three of them were with us – Tomas, Peter and Argie. I can't describe how happy it made me feel to have people who can understand my situation… They say, 'Don't worry; we are the same. Look at me now; I am strong and healthy… I understand how you feel.'*
> – Interview excerpts, 12/02/2018

Tomas, Peter and Argie were three of the leading officers in Youth4Health working in HIV/AIDS and had all revealed to several volunteers and to me that they were HIV positive. When Pip told me about this experience, it created an image of the three of them – whom many volunteers respect and look up to – supporting a young blood brother during a significant moment of his journey. It almost felt like Pip was embraced in a group where – unlike in other spaces he knew – he was understood and accepted. The words and phrases that were being used by the volunteers

exuded a sense of empathy (i.e. *I understand how you feel*) and hope (i.e. *look at me now, I am strong and healthy…*). But most significantly, they seemed to establish a sense of sameness and familiarity in their relationship with Pip (i.e. *we are the same*).

In fact, this sense of family seemed to be so crucial in keeping the volunteers and the Youth4Health community together that it was picked up by HIV/AIDS leaders as a strategy to organise volunteer and client groups. They formed what they referred to as *pamilyas* (families) where they, as volunteer leaders, stood as *nanays* (mothers) or *tatays* (fathers). *I don't want them to be shy in talking to me*, RJ shared during an interview, explaining why he considered a dozen clients – more than half of those were PLHIVs – as his children. He continued, *If they get allergies, they tell me 'Nay* [mom]*, I don't feel good, can you come here?'… I had this son, I was at his side when he started his medicine, and now he's afraid to stop taking them because his nanay will get angry at him!"* [Interview excerpt, 03/16/2018]. This environment of solidarity and closeness was also helpful in keeping volunteers and clients close to the organisation and, for instance, made it easier for the volunteers to track if they were following their treatment regime. As they were embedded in the wider 'family' of Youth4Health, they then continued to fulfil tasks that were also beneficial to the organisation. As RJ emphasised during our conversation, *my kids? They exactly know how to access young people! Friends of friends, social media – they help me reach my target. I am good to them – and you know that saying, when you are good with someone, they also good with you!* [Interview excerpt, 03/16/2018].

These narratives lay bare a key finding in this thesis: that when local volunteering is studied within the context of wider helping activities in these communities (see Chapter 1 regarding my research niche and direction and Chapter 3 regarding my conceptual starting points that allow for such a shift), the contours of what counts as volunteering are porous and bleed into narratives, for instance, of helping as part of familial obligations and expectations. Notions of solidarity strongly framed many volunteering activities in both organisations. The term 'hidden' solidarities may be a helpful construct in describing these motivations, as volunteers themselves have not always considered these as volunteering, partly because many of these discourses intertwine with familial (e.g. brothers, relatives, etc.) and communal (e.g. neighbours and friends) expectations. These accounts seem to illustrate that volunteers constructing their relationships with other actors on the basis of family, solidarity and brotherhood also frame a sense of accountability and responsibility to each other in the face of a shared issue.

5.2. Intangible motivations for self and others

The other set of motivations that emerged were more abstract. They seemed to be coming from a particular history or experience, an aspiration and/or related to notions of self-worth and belongingness. They seemed to be located in volunteers' emotions and feelings: how volunteering was enjoyable, made them feel happy and light in the heart. Motivations such as these were challenging to observe and describe. They seemed to be powerful and could override various issues present within these groups. I will take this interaction with RJ as a starting point:

> *...RJ told me that he felt like volunteering in this work is like his calling. He has problems with his family, but it seems like he cannot leave Youth4Health. He took his phone as if looking for something and showed the screen to me. We were too far away for me to see but he shared that one of his clients messaged him one night telling him that he is alone in his room and thinking of putting a gun into his head. 'I was reading on Facebook, and I was crying'. He said that he talked to him on Facebook. 'I messaged him, and this is the best part of my work – I get to change his perspective'. I said that it seemed that he saved that guy's life. He paused and nodded, 'I think I did'.*
> – Field Notes, 12/08/2017

In this account, RJ seems to frame his motivation for volunteering as spiritual in nature. He seemed to understand his work as more than, for instance, the fulfilment of instrumental tasks but as a response to a 'call' which presumably was coming from a personally-constructed higher being. The way he spoke about his work as *changing others' perspectives* seems to also suggest that he considered himself as a conduit and/or facilitator of someone else's positive transformation or change, therefore, answering the 'call' that motivated him to volunteer in the first place. As I suggested in our conversation, volunteering for Youth4Health allowed RJ to participate in a life-saving mission – a sentiment that he agreed with. It turned out that this notion of fulfilling a mission towards, for instance, making someone's life better, formed many of the volunteers' motivations to be part of Youth4Health. For others, it appeared that it was their experience with Youth4Health that ignited and/or helped shape this sense of purpose in the first place. For example, Anita shared that:

> *The best experience I've had was during my first medical mission… It was my first time to give out medicine. They* [patients]*appeared like they don't have money to buy medicine… because of volunteering here, I can see that I can also help them… I can give them medicine… It is a small thing but already significant contribution to them and generally.*
> – Interview excerpt, 16/12/2018

It is this first experience of 18-year-old Anita that began her almost three years of volunteering in Youth4Health. Her account shows that engaging in volunteering expanded what she thought she could do and contribute (i.e. *I can see that I can also help them*), which has been a revelation for her. Often, volunteers framed activities such as participation in a counselling session with a 'troubled' teen, engaging in a conversation that led to a sharing of HIV status and delivering a community lecture among adolescents, as part of their 'contribution' towards helping 'change' another person's life and their community.

While many of these accounts seem to suggest that the contribution was directed towards the betterment of other people's lives, their community or to a sense of greater good, I also found that the 'sense of purpose' and 'contribution' was also directed towards the volunteer:

> ...[volunteering] *gives them something to do because that will maintain their sanity... Before a lot of us go into depression... they felt useless, inutile but if they have something to be busy about... or maybe receive some form of allowances... then our situation becomes a bit better... although it may not have been explicitly perceived as that... give them an opportunity to be a productive member of society.*
> – Interview Excerpts, 26/02/2018

> *.... I told myself, I need to live because I still have a purpose in this life. It was a challenge for me to change my lifestyle through volunteerism. it comes to the point that I get depressed, but I just try to make myself busy... that's why I go there... to the clinic... If not in the clinic, I'll be in school. I volunteer because I want to be part of the Youth4Health community...*
> – Interview excerpt, 12/02/2017

These two different perspectives illustrate how volunteering could also shape one's purpose and benefit oneself. The first is from Tomas, one of Youth4Health's chief programme leaders, sharing the rationale behind engaging PLHIVs as volunteers in the organisation. In the interview, Tomas used the pronoun 'them' to refer to PLHIVs, but since he was also a PLHIV, it was noticeable how he shifted to use *I/us/our*. He also spoke about the depression that he navigated when he was diagnosed with late-stage AIDS in 2013 and how his engagement with volunteer activities was crucial in helping him deal with emotional challenges. For him, volunteering was about *giving them something to do* and incentivising them (i.e. *giving them some form of allowances*) which would then ameliorate their situation to a certain extent. He further explained that volunteering, from his perspective, allowed them (presumably including himself) to be *productive* members in the society. It seems to me that he was implicitly suggesting that volunteering served as a powerful antidote to the depression and isolation that some PLHIVs experience.

The second account was from Pip, who I introduced earlier in this section. The lifestyle he was referring to included playing computer games in internet shops until late and partying with his friends for up to four nights a week. Considering his diagnosis, his statements above suggest that he could no longer sustain this lifestyle (or this lifestyle could no longer sustain him) and that volunteering became a way for him to change this routine. Similar to Tomas, Pip shared that volunteering allowed him to keep himself busy, which, as this account suggests, was crucial for him as he navigated through bouts of depression. In a way, Pip attached another meaning to 'purpose' as compared to how it had been regarded earlier (i.e. purpose towards the fulfilment of life's work/mission) – that is, purpose as contributing towards his reason to live. I think that it is inaccurate to assume that Pip considered volunteering as his sole purpose for living. However, what his narrative and my observations suggest is that volunteering became a key part of his 'new' life's routine. These intangible motivations for volunteering discussed here (perhaps alongside other motivations) tended to find a way to 'pull' volunteers back into volunteer work whenever challenges occurred – such as for example the concerns of Luisa in the opening of this chapter.

As my discussion in this chapter about intangible motivations hints at, these motivations can also be framed as intangible *benefits* of volunteering for the volunteer. The latter had been rarely considered by volunteers based on my interviews and observations. Partly, this was because the discourse of self-sacrifice was so strong in many of their narratives (see Chapter 8) that they often tended to eclipse how volunteering benefited them as well. When they did, these benefits were often framed in 'intangible', abstract terms as opposed to material ones.

> *It's a big merit to help a person… spiritual merit. If it's just money and material? We will all die anyway* – Interview excerpt, 12/12/2017

> *If you're happy about what you do, it's okay without having anything in return – there are things you receive in exchange that money cannot measure up to – like happiness and enjoyment!"* – Interview excerpt, 16/12/2017

The accounts above represent a common discourse among many volunteers that sharply polarised between intangible and material motivations/merit. In the first account, the volunteer appeared to be devaluing material benefits altogether, based on his belief that it is only spiritual merits that are accounted for after death. In the second account, the volunteer seems to suggest that there were merits to volunteering that cannot be quantified and therefore, were more valuable. The most common representation of such material benefits seems to be money. Since this thesis looks at the volunteering experiences of those who come from vulnerable backgrounds – including

economic vulnerability – the role of money in volunteering takes on a more complex face. This is what will be explored in the next section.

This section has dealt with motivations that were abstract and related to notions of purpose, self-fulfilment and spirituality. The way volunteers spoke about these motivations gave me the impression that they powerfully drive volunteer retention and participation despite the many challenges they faced. In the latter part of this section, I have also signalled that these motivations may be framed as the personal benefits of volunteering – a framing that was rarely spoken about but implicit in some of the ways volunteers described their motivations.

5.3. Volunteering is done for free? Unpacking the 'unpaid nature' of volunteer work

> *Rita, almost whispering, told me that RJ has changed and that he always talks about money money money. She said this forcefully, and I sensed a slight repulsion in her voice. 'It's as if the volunteerism is gone' she continued.*
> – Field notes, 17/10/17

A dominant understanding I found within the two organisations was that volunteering is something done by an individual who does not expect any form of compensation or incentive in return. There was also a recurring theme across several of my conversations and interviews that money gained through volunteering was not their primary motivator for volunteer participation. Others' views were situated within a more normative discourse: money *should not be* a major motivator for volunteering. In fact, it felt as if money and volunteering had been highly problematised in both organisations. I often felt as if I was walking on thin ice whenever I brought up the issue of money, for instance, in relation to volunteer motivation. Rita seems to subscribe to this normative view as per her above statement. As Youth4Health's finance officer, she received much of the complaints whenever volunteers and staff members did not get their incentives and reimbursements on time. Her account above pointed to how RJ's persistence in getting his money negatively impacted the sense of volunteerism in his work. For her, it seemed as if the inclusion of money within volunteering distorted the altruistic 'essence' of volunteer work; money poisoned authentic voluntary service. The key aim of this chapter is to unpack this normative discourse by exploring the link between volunteering and monetisation.

To assist the discussion in this section, I will now introduce the many names by which the monetary components were called in both organisations: incentive (most common), *bayad* (payment), allowance, reimbursement, stipend, per diems. In Table 5, I present a brief description of these components within the two organisations.

Table 5. Different ways by which volunteers receive money in the organisations

Organisation	Source(s) of Funding	Name/Form of Volunteer financialisation	Description and amount (based on fieldwork)
Youth4Health	Multiple sources but chiefly donor-driven (i.e. INGOs, local NGOs, private businesses) and state-provided (ie. by the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development)	Allowances / Per Diems	- Given to volunteers who assisted during community activities outside Iloilo City usually for a couple of days. The standard allowance was £2.86/day, which is a little more than half of the minimum daily wage (Department of Labor and Employment, 2018).
		Incentives	- Given to volunteers after reaching a particular quota. For instance, every person they referred to the clinic for HIV test, they received 75pence incentive. Higher incentives (up to £2/person) were received for more complex procedures such as birth delivery and contraceptive implants. These were not consistent.
		Payments	- Extra, project-related payments for ad-hoc tasks, for instance, facilitating/documenting a training.
		Reimbursements	- Depending on the task, volunteers sometimes claimed reimbursement for transportation costs incurred related to organisation tasks (e.g. bringing the client to the clinic for testing).
Land4All	Funding comes from the individual, monthly required contributions from all members (which is currently 75p/member/month)	Reimbursements	- Volunteer leaders are entitled to reimburse food and transportation expenses incurred during the conduct of the association's task as long as these are liquidated. Often volunteers incurred these expenses first and then were reimbursed.

It is apparent from the table above that there was more potential for financial benefits or reimbursements in Youth4Health offered than in Land4All. Since most of these schemes are donor-driven, Youth4Health had very little control over whether these budget lines existed in the projects they implemented. If they did, I noted that they were not available to all volunteers, and the management usually decided which volunteers accessed which programmes and, therefore, had

more opportunities to 'earn'. In Land4All, the funding came from the members themselves, which I found added an additional layer of pressure for the volunteers to accurately account for them.

Looking at these various forms of incentivisation alone, I already sensed their potential to create hierarchies and inequalities among the volunteers. For example, certain forms of monetary gain were only applicable to certain volunteers. The reimbursement scheme – both in Land4All and in Youth4Health – also had an implicit assumption that the volunteers had the resources to spend in the first place. I explore the implications of this further in this chapter, especially how the difficulty in reimbursement processes led to volunteers incurring costs in the process of volunteering. When seen in the light of volunteers' economic vulnerabilities, the role of money seemed to take on a different face. It is precisely how money played out in the intra-communal dynamics within these volunteer organisations, that is the focus of this subsection.

5.3.1. Volunteers and breadwinners: the many economic roles of volunteers

In my conceptual chapter, I explained how looking at volunteering through the lens of 'spaces of participation' allowed me to explore how they might exist and interact with a multiplicity of other spaces with which they may be intertwined. At the same time, it allows me to consider the *multiple, other* spaces that the volunteers occupy – in many ways, simultaneously – outside these organisations. A critical observation I noted was that many of the volunteers I worked with were either expected to contribute to their family's household income or were considered the primary breadwinners.

The volunteer leaders of Land4All all had paid jobs, and three of them were expected to bring most of the income into their households. I learned that many of the youth and adolescent volunteers in Youth4Health – some as young as 15-17 years old – were already expected to contribute to the household income. If not, they were given responsibilities to fund their own needs for school allowances, school projects and fees, clothes, shoes, leisure and other personal necessities. The incentives, allowances and reimbursements many volunteers received from the organisations – no matter how little – appeared to be considered as significant income:

> *On my way back to the office, I found Tito was still waiting downstairs. He looked tired. I sat down beside him and asked how he was. He said he's still waiting for his incentives – around £2. He needs the money for a school project and for transportation to school the following day – 'Mama has no money to give me'. A few minutes more, Rita, arrived and*

said that the money is still not available – but she gave Tito 70 pence. On my way home, Tito asked me if I have 28 pence so he can ride a jeepney back home instead of walking.
–Field Notes, 19/12/17

Circumstances such as these often occurred during my fieldwork, especially among young people at Youth4Health. I realised that Tito, and other young volunteers like him, often considered the money they received from Youth4Health as chief source of income – and not an alternative – to fund their school needs. Learning more about Tito's family further supported this interpretation. Tito was the second youngest of 12 siblings. Seven of them lived with their mother, who was widowed in 2013 and earned her keep by occasionally babysitting at their neighbours. Tito studied in a public school where they paid a little more than £15/year for tuition – an amount raised through contributions from his siblings. However, it was the daily transportation and school projects, according to Tito, that his mother could not readily provide. Tito used the incentives and allowances from Youth4Health for these expenses.

For other volunteers, these finances also benefited other members of the family. For example, 27-year-old RJ – one of Youth4Health's 'full-time' volunteers – was responsible for sending himself and his sister to university. Apart from this, he occasionally gave money to his parents and lent money to his other siblings – *they call it lending, but really, they don't give the money back!* [Interview notes, 16/03/18]. According to RJ, this responsibility began when he graduated from high school at around 18 years old. He decided not to pursue his studies, concentrating instead on working various jobs so he could finance his sister's studies. As I reflect on his circumstance, I realised that the many ways by which he could 'earn' through volunteering (see Table 5) allowed RJ to volunteer and, at the same time, fulfil his financial obligations at home. As with Tito, I saw a pattern in how these small income streams were also significant resources for him. During an interview, he told me – and now as if answering Rita's comment above – *that is why if you've noticed, I always push to get my money on time… that's because I need it for my sister's tuition fee* [Interview notes, 16/03/18]. During fieldwork, RJ's sister finally graduated from university.

While the money they gained through volunteering was significant, these were not the only sources of income for many volunteers. Therefore, to satisfy both responsibilities, many volunteers balanced their volunteer work and these other income-generating activities. I observed this more strongly in the volunteer leaders of Land4All, partly because unlike the volunteers of Youth4Health, they did not have similar income-generating streams as part of their volunteering (see Table 5).

5.3.2. Negotiating between volunteer work and 'real' work

A good example illustrating the negotiation I just described was Susan's predicament. Susan was the president of the Land4All and worked as a sales agent whose commission depended on whether she hit a monthly sales quota. She worked mainly in Iloilo City, which was two hours away by public transport from her residence. Her workplace was relatively close to all the major government offices, which made it strategic when they needed to liaise with these institutions with regards to their CMP application. Her flexible work schedule was also an advantage. Having a quota-based job meant she could organise her time as she wished – as long as she hit the target. She would then spend several hours away from work to facilitate the application, fill out forms, visit government offices and attend meetings. Susan would typically meet me at 10 in the morning, just a couple of hours after she got to work at 7:30 am. She would then spend about 3-5 hours in meetings and visiting government offices and then go back to work. On other busier days, she would meet me again in the afternoon or evening.

At times, I found it frustrating when Susan would move or cancel our appointments at the last minute because something came up at work. When this happened, she usually sent Mila – the treasurer – and/or me to organise the errands on her behalf. Still, I found myself to be in no position to complain because I witnessed first-hand how she was doing a great deal of juggling to manage her time for her sales job and for her volunteering work. Once, we were scheduled to meet at a government office, but I went to the wrong place; hurrying, I saw that

> *when I arrived, Susan was tucked in one corner of the* [government] *office appearing preoccupied. When she saw me, she asked how long I have been waiting but immediately explained that she is working on her real job. Susan described how the CMP encroaches over to her real work, where she gets daily subsistence for her family. She arrived late at work the past two days because in the morning some community members go to her house and ask questions about the application which she feels she really needs to address right there and then. She is worried because she was not able to hit her sales target this month and spends lots of time in Iloilo City to process papers (she works in Iloilo City and then goes home at night) instead of working. She is on probation, so this was not acceptable*

– Field Notes, 16/07/2018

This account made me realise Susan's personal struggle to balance her responsibilities as a volunteer leader and as an employee with a sales target. Her response seemed to suggest that she saw volunteering as an activity that was the opposite of her 'real' work and placed more importance on the latter because this was how she earned her keep. Yet the tasks required of her

as a volunteer leader appeared to be just as demanding: at times, people would knock on her door and visit her own home for a query or concern (as in the above), taking up much of her time. This situation became particularly problematic – as she briefly described in the account – because she was under probation and was worried that her contract would not be renewed because she was not able to hit her quota. Being unemployed, she often told me, was not an option, because of the mounting expenses from their house relocation. Susan's husband was then unemployed and she had two children – one was just about to enter university in Iloilo City. She and her brother also provided for their mother who lived next door.

Often, I observed that these personal problems seemed to be overshadowed by a much bigger issue concerning the dwellings of 49 other households who were under Susan's leadership. The urgency of the situation they found themselves since September 2017 (when the demolition order released) required that they process the documents as fast as they could in an attempt to ensure that the members of the association – including Susan and her fellow officers – would have a place to move to before the demolition. It is this sense of urgency, I realised, that drove Susan – and a couple of other volunteer leaders – to wrestle between prioritising their own needs as earning mothers, fathers and family members and furthering the association's application. Even the day-to-day operations of the association required increasing time and attention from the officers:

> *While Mila and I were discussing, her son came towards us, shouting that 'Someone needs a manicure.' Mila murmured that she does not have the time. When the woman arrived, Mila greeted her and apologised. She said that she is still working on some documents and cannot attend to her at the moment.*
> – Field notes, 21/09/2018

In my months of volunteering for the association, I observed several of these missed opportunities for income. What Mila earned from manicuring seemed to be significant because her husband did not have a steady source of income, being a project-based construction worker. Therefore, she needed to spend time either going house-to-house or queuing in an office building or school so that she got more sizeable earnings. Her work as a treasurer, however, impacted the time she had for these services. I remembered that there were weeks when she did not have time for a single client and relied solely on what her husband contributed to the family's budget.

These situations seem to suggest that in the tension between these two responsibilities, although both were considered as important, it was the volunteer work that was mainly prioritised. However, this was not always the case. In Youth4Health, I often observed volunteers favouring

'paid gigs' compared to volunteer work. I gathered that this was partly driven by the unfulfilled volunteers' expectations as bureaucratic processes related to donor funding seemed to have made it difficult for Youth4Health to give some allowances to the volunteers on time:

> *One of their midwives asked RJ why he looked so stressed or sad. He replied, in a loud, dramatic voice 'You just don't know how much I have sacrificed!' To that, the midwife replied, laughing: 'stop complaining, we all have that problem here!' Replying to RJ's lamentations of not eating since yesterday, Nelia, the medical technologist, was telling him that he should make sure he keeps candies in his bag, so he doesn't get hypoglycemic. That's when I found that RJ has diabetes. RJ appeared worried. Nelia then made light of the situation by telling RJ to consider lack of food as fasting.*
>
> *RJ: 'Ma'am, fasting is only 8 hours!'*
>
> *Nelia: 'Well, it took Moses 40 days…'*
>
> *RJ: 'That was in the past! In the past, if you fast for 40 days, you become a saint. So what? You want me to become a saint?'*
>
> *We all burst into laughter, but later I told RJ that perhaps things might get better, financially for him, as soon as his money arrives. Nelia agreed, but RJ retaliated saying, 'Maybe when it arrives, my eyes have turned all white.' Nelia repeated, almost trying to console RJ, that he should wait a few more weeks and maybe the money will arrive.*
> *– Field Notes, 18/09/17*

The laughter and light-heartedness of this conversation seemed to glaze over a pressing problem that RJ was experiencing (i.e. not getting the allowance he was promised) that already had implications for his health and his attitude towards volunteering in Youth4Health. In some way, this was similar to Tito's situation above who did not receive the allowance promised to him after waiting the whole day. However, as the midwife pointed out, complaining did not seem to be a productive option because everyone had that problem – almost as if it was accepted and barely challenged. These unfulfilled expectations seem to have impacted some volunteers' participation in the organisation. Many of them intentionally did not come on time for duty, cancelled at the last minute or, at times, did not show up at all. At some point, it appeared to me that they were 'rebelling' against the management for not giving them the allowances on time. For instance, here is an excerpt from a meeting where staff and youth volunteers were finding ways to deal with increased absences from volunteers who had previously committed but were now not turning up:

During the meeting, several pointed out that the reason for non-attendance was last-minute 'job bookings': 'Will we choose this [volunteering] over a make-up job? Of course, we go to where we earn more!' They could easily earn 3-4 times as much for about 2-3 hours of work.
– Field notes, 16/01/2018

This reasoning made me realise that the negotiation between volunteer work and paid job depended not only on levels of security and certainty (as in the point above) but also depended on where they could earn *more*. This negotiation, driven by monetary gains and not necessarily by word of honour, seemed to be deemed acceptable by many staff members and other volunteers. The response was often 'we understand, and we cannot blame anyone', which seemingly arose from an understanding of the volunteers' and their family's financial situation. So, the remedy was not necessarily to make them accountable for their commitments, but in finding ways to address these logistical, 'staffing' issues.

So far, I have shown that the volunteers I worked with navigated around a broader set of social expectations, including, as discussed here, their economic roles within their families. I hope to have shown here how volunteering responsibilities intertwined with these other roles and under which circumstances one would be favoured over the other.

5.3.3. Volunteering as a 'cost.'

In Table 5, I touched upon the organisations' various sources of funding to support their activities. The main difference was that Youth4Health chiefly relied on external funding while Land4All collected internal member contributions. Both organisations struggled with funding but in different ways. While Youth4Health appeared to be a widely-networked organisation with multiple partners, funding was often short-term. The management needed to constantly look for alternative sources or perform satisfactorily according to donor-requirements, to maintain existing ones. In Land4All, many members had difficulty in paying association fees. Most members had irregular and low-income jobs which, as shared with me by association members, were often not enough for their family's needs.

Against this backdrop of challenging financial situations, I will discuss now how, under certain circumstances, volunteers themselves shouldered costs related to volunteering tasks. I alluded to

this earlier when I discussed RJ's lack of food provisions to carry out his job. This situation, I had observed, was more of a rule rather than an exception and, often, there seemed to be an implication that the volunteers needed to provide for these needs. Despite their relatively steady stream of funding, there were logistical requirements needed by volunteers that seemed to have been overlooked and therefore, indirectly transferred to the volunteer. For example, volunteers were preparing to conduct HIV testing in a local bar when

> *...at about 7:30 pm, RJ asked, looking very shy, if I also eat canned sardines. I said, yes, of course! Then he apologised saying that he couldn't feed us despite volunteering tonight because he doesn't have money. He said that things would be better once he already gets his project budget. He said he'll buy two cans of sardines and rice. I said that I could buy some drinks for us. So he came back with five packs of rice, two cans of sardines and a 1.5-litre bottle of cola. While serving the sardines on a bowl, he quipped 'As a volunteer, this is the difficult thing. You get embarrassed with your fellow volunteers because you cannot even feed them. And then, they [Youth4Health] demand so much from me!' He asked me to take a photo of our meal because he will send it to their manager - so that he feels guilty.*
> – Field notes, 16/08/2017

All who were involved in this situation were volunteers; no paid staff was present. RJ was a full-time volunteer, had no other 'formal' source of income, and led one of the HIV projects in Youth4Health. In this account, he pointed to the pressures he had been receiving from the organisation, yet, in his opinion (as in the account above), they did not consider his needs to accomplish these deliverables. It seemed that he was indirectly made responsible for the provision of these needs. It also comes out quite strongly in the passage how he felt responsible – as the leader – for feeding the volunteers and was willing to spend his own money.

I would also like to emphasise how RJ chose an informal, indirect strategy to let the organisation know the issue he was dealing with: by sending a photo of our dinner to their manager, so he would feel 'guilty'. In the many meetings I attended in Youth4Health, these concerns were rarely discussed – solidifying the midwife's sentiment earlier that complaining was futile. When tackled, there appeared to have been limited concrete steps taken to address them. In this regard, some volunteers spoke against these systemic issues in 'non-official' spaces, like during afternoon chats, online chat groups or by joking about them (as in my conversation with RJ, Nelia and the midwife above). In both Youth4Health and Land4All, I noted minimal conversations about how volunteering incurred unreimbursed costs to the volunteers – and the implications of this.

Making volunteers indirectly responsible for meeting the needs that enabled them to perform their volunteering activity had a different face within Land4All. There, the issue of funding use was highly sensitive, and volunteer leaders were often made accountable for how they used the association's funding. To avoid suspicion, some volunteers chose to pay themselves. For example, during one of my trips with Susan to a government office to run errands for the association

> *Susan asked me if I wanted to get lunch. I said, yes. We went by the road and waited for a jeepney to arrive – which took so much time. After a while, under the heat of the sun, Susan appeared very impatient. 'We might faint if we wait here this long! Let's get a taxi' she said, almost irritated. 'The association will pay for this. I think this is too much sacrifice, and I need to get back to work soon.' She hailed a taxi, and it took about 10 minutes to get to our destination, she got the receipt from the driver and said to me, 'Difficult to not have proof. Otherwise, I'll have a hard time reimbursing this – so many 'stories'' During lunch, I told her to no longer pay for me so that the association will not be charged. 'No. We do not pay you to help us; we could at least feed you.' She said jokingly. But I insisted.*
> – Fieldnotes 03/10/17

In the account above, I noted that there seems to be an unspoken rule that volunteers spent as little as possible whenever we went on errands on behalf of the association. As the officers often shared, they did not want anyone to be suspicious about how the association's money was spent. In this account, for instance, they first attempted to ride a *jeepney* rather than taking a taxi – the latter costing the association ten times more. Later, however, Susan needed to make a decision – either we took a taxi, or she would miss her work over their lunch planning. Such rules seemed to have been put in place to better account for the association's funds – which turned out to be a particularly sensitive aspect of leading the group. As one community member once told me *"We don't just pick our money in the streets… so difficult to look for money… they* [the association leaders] *should take care of it."* [Field notes, 07/16/2017].

As discussed in Chapter 2, a majority of the households do not have steady sources of income although, in most families, both men and women contribute to the household expenses. The members' financial situation made handling funds within the organisation sensitive not only because strict bookkeeping was required for the CMP application but also to maintain or enhance the trust of members towards the volunteer leaders. Adding to this complexity were the financial reporting and documentation required as part of the bureaucratic processes of the government programme they were seeking to access. Ever since they have been a 'government-accredited'

association, they have been subject to strict financial management rules and making reimbursements was not straightforward. As Susan pointed out, it was 'difficult to not have a proof'. While this rule was seemingly simple, there were many instances when getting 'proof' of purchase was complicated. Volunteers often went for cheaper options, for instance, they usually ate in *karinderias*[29] where 'official receipts' were rarely available. These situations – as Susan implied in her statement – made it difficult for her to be reimbursed for the costs she incurred during her volunteering. In many cases, Susan simply chose not to seek reimbursement.

Related to the previous subsection, volunteers were not only exposed to pressures in balancing their volunteer work and other income-generating activities to survive, but they were indirectly given the responsibility to spend for their project-related needs. Reflecting on these, it seems to me that thinking of volunteering as 'free' labour made the expenses incurred by the volunteers invisible and therefore, at least in these organisations, difficult to address.

When seen in the light of volunteers' other economic roles and responsibilities, this section has highlighted the seemingly blurred boundaries between volunteer work and what some described as 'real work' or a paid job. For many volunteers who came from economically insecure backgrounds, the money gained through volunteering was considered a significant contribution to their family's income and/or financing their personal needs. In other words, volunteering was framed and used as an income source. Additionally, working with government and donor systems meant that volunteers dealt with instrumental tasks (e.g. pre-defined deliverables, targets, and quotas) and bureaucratic practices and discourses (e.g. reimbursement process, receipts as proof of payments). I have also given examples of how volunteers' negotiations between paid work and volunteering work connects with a neoliberal discourse in that the decision seemed to be based on where the volunteer would earn the most.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have unpacked how volunteers and staff in the two organisations understood volunteering, based on how they spoke about it – including their motivations for participation – and how they 'did' volunteering. I have shown that the most commonly-held understanding

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[29] Karinderias are small stalls that sell home-made food often open the whole day. They have small seating capacities and are often located in markets, roadsides or small communities

among these individuals was that volunteering should be done for free, without expecting anything in return. I argue that intangible notions of community-building, sense of 'family', expressed altruism, self-sacrifice and selflessness (*we know, but we can't explain*) strongly framed many of the volunteers' motivations. Specific to the research gap I have identified (i.e. experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers), this chapter has shown how certain vulnerabilities (e.g. in terms of family income, health issues and discrimination brought about by an HIV diagnosis) were considered as 'shared problems' and were therefore a powerful impetus for voluntary action. These notions interacted or (more commonly) clashed with the discourses around and 'realities' of, benefiting from volunteer participation, particularly in terms of monetary benefits. The economic/income vulnerability that many volunteers were experiencing troubles the more simplistic framing according to which 'volunteers should be unpaid'. The many ways by which incentivisation and monetisation interacted with volunteers' other roles and commitments point to how volunteering tends to take the form of 'free labour' for the organisations or 'cost' for the volunteers – thereby contributing towards/enhancing these vulnerabilities.

I have also explained in this chapter how volunteering discourses and practices were tightly linked with the broader, formal economy of work which, at times, was incongruent with more informal, person-to-person helping activities founded on solidarity and community – an aspect that will recur in the following chapters. I argue that this further points to how volunteers were navigating around different 'cultures of working', for example, learning to work in a 'certain bureaucratic way'. Such cultures seem to have been new to them, requiring not only new forms of learning, literacies and practices (see next chapter) but also (re)shaping their motivations and future aspirations.

This chapter has also provided some insight into the power relations embedded within these ways of working and knowing. Failure to navigate around bureaucratic processes (for instance, a system that strictly requires valid receipts for reimbursements and expects volunteers to have money to spend first and then be paid back later), meant volunteers incurred costs and were made responsible for provisions that otherwise should have been shouldered by the organisation. There are also early insights here of identities and power, as it came across that these volunteers felt that they needed to 'follow' these procedures rather than question them, and if they did , they did not have the space to voice their concerns.

Overall, this chapter shows that volunteer understandings and motivations were neither static nor monolithic, and that the quest to understand them should therefore not be limited to asking

whether volunteers had motivations or not. Instead, these understandings and motivations are malleable, in response to various discourses, practices and lived realities between these two organisations. Comparing volunteers' motivation to a force field, this chapter makes a strong case for how certain circumstances and discourses push volunteers towards or pull them away from volunteer work.

Chapter Six
"This is no longer just about helping":
learning to work in a certain way

6. Introduction

> *'This is no longer just about helping, RJ', the programme officer said. It was unclear if RJ understood the point – he looked disappointed – but the programme officer kept on explaining that this is a 'project.' This is not like before where they would just go and conduct an activity then go home. This time, they need the number; they need to accomplish the targets. RJ reached out his backpack for his notepad and started to take notes… I think he was writing how many people they need test and counsel…*
> – Field notes, 25/10/2017

In the previous chapter, one of the key findings I highlighted was how volunteers' discourses around volunteering intertwined with wider discourses around more formal work. Apart from influencing volunteers' motivations and activities, I argued that such dynamics point to different 'cultures of working' that volunteers learned through volunteering. This chapter will look more closely into such processes of learning – particularly learning to work in specific (often bureaucratic) ways that were influenced by the wider expectations and processes of the external institutions they worked with.

In the account above, the volunteers were preparing for an HIV testing activity for an NGO working with abused children. RJ wanted to hold a musical show to raise awareness, but a more senior staff pointed out that they needed to use that time to conduct more testing. The account above encapsulates the expectations surrounding the aims of RJ's (and other young peoples') volunteering. Their volunteer activities were now part of a wider project that carried with it certain commitments that they needed to fulfil, including, presumably, the broader aims of institutionalisation and scalability. These ways of working may have been different from those that they were used to and might have clashed with those motivations, driven by a sense of community and self-direction, as discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter will be exploring how (and what happens when) more 'formal' ways of doing things clash with non-formal, community-driven practices.

I begin by looking at volunteers' discourses around learning in/through volunteering. Similar to my exploration in Chapter 5 (i.e. discourses around volunteering), I investigate how volunteers talk about and 'do' learning as part of their volunteer work, paying close attention to the values that they attach to certain forms of knowledge. In the second section of this chapter, I will present strategies and practices in terms of how volunteers and other actors learn from each other in performing volunteer-related tasks, focussing on learning processes more centrally instead of the learning outcomes. Several of the learning processes I present in this chapter involve texts and so I will be analysing these through the lens of literacy practices. As I have laid out in Chapter 3, my preoccupation with literacy goes beyond reading and writing per se to how volunteers engaged with these texts as part of their broader social activities.

6.1. Learning in/through volunteering: discourses and motivations

Volunteers held and engaged with various discourses and beliefs around learning in/through volunteering. These discourses were influenced by several aspects, such as what they believed they could learn through volunteering, what such learnings could 'do' for them, how do these learnings compare with the learning gained in other spaces; and how certain forms of knowledge were more valuable compared to others and why. Most of the findings discussed in this section emerged from my data with Youth4Health with only a couple of examples from Land4All. I suspect that this was because many of the volunteers in Youth4Health were in school or had attended school recently, had therefore been exposed to more formal learning settings (apart from everyday learning) and were able to compare this with their experiences of volunteering. Another reason, perhaps, was because Youth4Health was a 'training-heavy' organisation that implemented a wide range of non-formal education opportunities for its volunteers. In this regard, I observed more explicitly in Youth4Health how these various forms of learning (e.g. in multiple settings) and the assumptions and values around them, could co-exist, clash and complement each other.

6.1.1. Valuing learning: responsive, relevant to 'real-life'

> *I learned a lot here* [in Youth4Health]. *Books can teach you principles, but that does not always apply to real life. The approaches our teachers share might be applicable, but it is your skills that will help you deal with actual challenges. For example, when you reveal to a client that he is HIV reactive, there is really no textbook procedure on how to do that.*
> – Interview excerpt, 12/12/2017

This excerpt from my interview with Seth (a volunteer social worker) is an insightful starting point to unpack how volunteers attach specific values to certain kinds of learning gained/experienced in a certain context. His sharing illustrates a commonly observed polarisation between learning in/through formal institutions (i.e. school) and learning in/through volunteering. In his account, he considers what he learned through his schooling experience as inadequate in responding to 'real-life' and context-specific situations – such as facing a client whose positive HIV result had just returned. Although he recognised the possibilities of applying textbook principles and taught approaches in fulfilling his tasks as a future social worker, Seth seemed to rely on the skills he developed over time, perhaps through volunteering in Youth4Health, to deal with 'actual challenges' in the future. It struck me that for Seth, what counted as valuable knowledge depended on whether such knowledge was relevant and responsive to 'real-life' situations.

I have noted that young volunteers in Youth4Health who were in school or those who had recently left school polarised more sharply. I suspect that this was partly because they were simultaneously navigating various settings of learning (e.g. volunteering to conduct a community health lecture after class or, as below, skipping classes to attend a volunteer training), where content, approaches and experiences of learning can be starkly different. This interpretation was also influenced by specific conversations that I had with Tito, a 19-year-old student who was also an active volunteer in Youth4Health. In fact, I often saw him in the office wearing school uniform, placing his backpack on one of the sofas and then proceeding to input data in the computer or arrange some heavy boxes in the stock room. During my fieldwork, he was in his first year of senior high school, although he had left school a couple of times due to financial problems. Having struck me as an active and committed volunteer who, at some point during my fieldwork, was volunteering four days a week (including weekends), we once chatted about the interplay of his responsibilities at school and in the organisation:

> *I asked him whether his volunteering affects his attendance in his classes. He said that sometimes when there is training, he does not really have a choice but to skip classes. He said that is fine because he wants to learn outside school 'In school, what they teach is only basic education… but outside school? That is where the battleground is. It is outside that you learn to see reality.'*
> – Field Notes, 09/12/2018

In this account, Tito highlights the importance of and his preference for, learning outside school. For me, this view rationalised why he continued to attend training programmes even though, at

times, it put him in a situation where he did 'not really have a choice' but to give up class hours – a crucial predicament, he later shared, because he had already left school several times. While his account echoes Seth's dichotomy between 'textbook principles' and 'challenge-responsive skills', Tito elaborated the dichotomy further, as he seemed to imply that learning/knowledge about/relevant to 'reality' was *solely* located in the 'battleground' – that is, outside the confines of the classroom. He also seemed to relegate learning in school as lower in value as this is *only* about *basic* education. In contrast, being a peer counsellor, for instance, exposed him to a variety of real-life 'case studies' that he seemed to draw significant learning from:

> *He shared that one client confessed to him that he has had sex at the age of thirteen. 'But he didn't want to have sex… he was persuaded' I asked him if he thought that was rape. He paused for a few seconds, thinking. 'Maybe, you can call it rape because he was forced.' He immediately steered away from the topic and commented on how it is so surprising (in a bad way) for young people to have sexual activity by the age of 13 or 14. So I asked him how old he thinks someone should be before engaging in sex. He said that ideally, it should be after marriage 'but today, it's a fad to engage in premarital sex.' He then shared that he noticed how before, first sexual activities of people he knew and met here [in Youth4Health] would be around 18, now it would be about 13 or 14 years. 'The generation now is so intense, elementary school students, grade five, they are already in a relationship!' I asked him how he feels about it. He replied 'We have to be responsible. We have to know that young girls can get pregnant and young boys are capable of making them pregnant.'*
> – Field Notes, 09/12/2018

This account seems to elucidate what Tito may have meant by the 'reality' he significantly learned about through volunteering. He appeared to be referring to the broadening of his awareness of the current youth culture, particularly in terms of relationships and the implications for adolescent sexual and reproductive health. For example, by drawing from and analysing his counselling experience, he seemed to exhibit an understanding of what might count as rape in relation to consent (i.e. that rape is forced). Interestingly, he also appeared to have revised previously held beliefs and assumptions in response to the realities he had been exposed to. His view that sex *should* only be had after marriage was tempered by the fact that he observed that premarital sex remained common among young people, with some having romantic relationships as early as 10-11 years old.

While the 2012 Philippine reproductive health law calls for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education in the school curricula, it was only in July 2018 that the Department of

Education released policy guidelines on the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education across the entire Philippine education system (Department of Education, 2018). Young people like Tito seemed to be informed about sexual health in informal spaces like the internet, conversations with peers and social media. Therefore, my analysis here does not claim that volunteering alone led to this change of perspective as there are likely to have been other factors. It could also be that Tito's understanding was shaped by his conversations with his classmates or friends *in school*. However, what is striking here is that he firmly attributed these critical learnings to volunteering and not to schooling.

Tito's and Seth's insights were not isolated and were echoed in the accounts of other actors in the organisation. For instance, during a speech (which I recorded) delivered by Luisa during a staff meeting, she had this to say with regards to the kinds of volunteer they seek to engage:

> *The trend now is different. Before, our volunteers must be at the top of their class or at least they must be in school. We even had a panel interview. So, volunteers needed to be student leaders with impressive qualifications. Now, the millennials listen to experiences. For example, if you have HIV, when someone talks to you about HIV, you can speak about it. When you are a PLHIV and a young person, it is easy for you to reach out to your peers. This strategy is also what we advise our partners: refrain from always recruiting volunteers from schools because they have little idea about local issues. So what if you are top of your class if you do not even know what is happening, say, with the young people who live in the cemetery? For us, if you are a teenage mom, then we will be happy to welcome you because you have more to share and you can help more people who are experiencing the same situation as yours.*
> – Field notes, 10/03/18

For me, the way that Luisa polarised the value of learning in school with learning in other contexts was even sharper compared to previous accounts. She even framed these various forms of learning as mutually exclusive, suggesting that awareness about broader social issues on youth and sexual health *could not* be achieved within formal institutions. She gave this reason for advocating *against* the recruitment of volunteers who were in-school. Her account also seems to point to the importance of the relevance of knowledge to contextual needs, echoing some of Seth's sentiments cited earlier. This means that, for her, certain forms of knowledge were more valuable as they were needed in the context of the organisation's work. Her account also sheds light on how these different discourses about learning did not only remain as 'speak' but also affected practices within the organisation (see next subsection). Her high regard for the lived experiences of potential volunteers – and their accompanying skills, knowledge and attitudes –

was a strong basis for volunteer recruitment. This reinforced my earlier assumption that because Youth4Health seeks to serve 'hard-to-reach' populations, they aimed to recruit volunteers who were either part of these sectors and/or were embedded in local communities where these populations may be located. For instance, almost all of their HIV/AIDS volunteers were gay men, several of whom were PLHIVs themselves.

Interestingly, despite discourses that polarised what was learned in school versus learning through volunteering, the obtaining of a formal qualification (for instance, a university diploma) persisted as an important and aspired achievement among several volunteers. Tito, for example, still desired to finish university. For me, the way that they viewed learning in/through volunteering and its relationship with getting a formal degree, changed over time. A good example would be RJ's narrative. During the first few months I got to know him, he told me that, for him, "*It's better to volunteer because I learn a lot not like before when I was at school, I didn't have any motivation to finish or to learn*" [Field Notes, 12/8/17]. Here, I saw a clear parallel between RJ's view and those of Tito, Seth and Luisa. However, this did not mean that he disregarded schooling altogether. A couple of months before I left fieldwork, his opinion took a different turn, when he told me "*I want to go back to school… If I get some degree – even if it's ladderised[30] – it's easy to find work. I can see myself staying in Youth4Health, but I want to have a rank… however, with my status, I doubt if I can do that. If I get to university, I think I'll be more confident.*" [Interview excerpt, 03/16/2018]. Here, RJ alludes to how a university diploma continued to be considered as an essential asset to further his career whether that was within or outside Youth4Health. I will explore these perspectives further in the next subsection.

Not all volunteers framed various forms of learning as binary opposites; rather, they attached values to certain kinds of learning and knowledge, placing them in a hierarchy. Glenda was a volunteer midwife in Youth4Health who, at the beginning of my fieldwork, had just graduated from a two-year midwifery course. Without a job, she decided to volunteer at Youth4Health, going on duty for straight 24-hour shifts in the organisation's birthing clinic. During our earlier conversations, Glenda had mentioned that she planned to take the midwifery licensure exam, and that her volunteering experience had helped her in preparing for it.

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[30]Ladderised is a term use to refer to an education system in the Philippines whereby learners are allowed to progress between TVET training and higher education (and vice versa)

...she said that she feels like she was learning a lot at Youth4Health. She plans to take her licensure examinations this year, and she said that this [volunteering in the birthing clinic] is her way of practising. She said that what she experiences here at Youth4Health is 'closer to real-life' compared to what she could learn in a review centre – 'Here, I am actually delivering a baby! Not reading about it!'
– Field Notes, 12/08/17

The midwifery licensure examination is a paper-pencil test that is the sole pathway for midwifery graduates such as Glenda to get a license to practice their profession. It is composed of five subjects (e.g. obstetrics, fundamentals of health care) and is spread over two days of examination using a multiple-choice questionnaire. There has been a booming review centre industry where exam-takers pay a hefty fee to practice and prepare for the tests. Glenda chose not to avail herself of such popular services and instead, considered her 'real-life' experience in Youth4Health as preparation for this critical examination. Her account highlights that learning in Youth4Health was not solely about increased awareness of social issues but also had an instrumental component (something that Tito attributed only to schools). For Glenda, assisting in actual birth delivery might have prepared her, for instance, to memorise normal blood test values during pregnancy (obstetrics) or how working with various government hospitals for referral and recording may have acquainted her, every day, with the neonatal health care delivery system in the Philippines (basic healthcare). Her account provides a more nuanced understanding of how these forms of knowledge co-exist within the context of volunteering – as opposed to others that can be exclusively located in specific learning contexts. Therefore, what Seth referred to as 'textbook principles' could also be learned within volunteering spaces.

Drawing chiefly from the narratives and experiences of Youth4Health volunteers, this section has shown how certain knowledge and learning experiences were valued over others. The key finding here is that for many volunteers, the main criteria for framing certain learning as valuable was whether and how (and to what extent) the learning was responsive and relevant to real-life situations. In their binaries that polarise learning in school with learning in real life, there seems to be an assumption that certain forms of knowledge could be understood exclusively in specific contexts and not in others, although some volunteers did not necessarily pit these two against each other but placed diverse knowledges into hierarchies of importance.

6.1.2. "Volunteering is my edge": learning, knowledge and future aspirations

Against the backdrop of the volunteers' and other actors' differing value judgements around various forms of learning and knowledge, I have noted that they recognised how their volunteering experiences could potentially contribute to their career aspirations and/or shape their career trajectories. I gathered that many volunteers were made aware – especially by more senior staff and longer-term volunteers in Youth4Health and government officials and community organisers in Land4All – of how volunteering could potentially lead to an enhancement of their social capital. This was not only because they were engaged in valuable learning experiences (as discussed above). It was also because of the certifications and qualifications that they might acquire and the skills they might develop, that could be transferable to other contexts, as well as the networks they might build throughout their volunteer experience. The title in this subsection's heading is a quote from Anita, one of Youth4Health's youth volunteers. She mentioned this during our lengthy conversation on her motivations to volunteer. For me, it encapsulated many conversations I had with young volunteers in Youth4Health around future employment and whether and how their volunteering would contribute to that. She said:

> *It* [volunteering] *is my edge compared to others. Like during an* [internship] *interview, I was asked if I have engaged in different government activities, I was able to say yes! I can always answer something when they ask about some work experience… we do medical mission, peer education, community outreach – there is something I can share in my future job.*
> – Interview excerpts, 16/12/2017

For me, it was clear from the language Anita used (i.e. *edge compared to others*) that she was aware of the competitiveness of the job market – and the importance of having some 'work' experience, even as someone who was just about to graduate. She positioned herself at an advantage because of her volunteering experiences. In this regard, it struck me how she framed her volunteering activities – medical missions, peer education and community outreach – as 'work experiences' (as in a curriculum vitae) that could boost her chances in getting employment. It could also be gleaned from her statement above that she considered these experiences as sources of transferable skills and knowledge that she could share with her prospective employers (i.e. *there is something I can share in my future job).* Taken together, for Anita, volunteering had enhanced her employability.

I observed Anita and her fellow volunteers in Youth4Health regularly engaged in practical, hands-on activities (see, for instance, the midwife Glenda's comments above), alongside a series of non-formal training programmes delivered by government institutions such as the DOH and INGOs. These training programmes led to certifications – ranging from certificates of participation/attendance to certificates of completion – which, based on my observations, were considered to be prized possessions within Youth4Health, both by volunteers and staff members. For instance, the walls of the waiting area of their office were adorned with all the diplomas, certificates and official documents of all their staff and some volunteers – all of which were nicely framed and arranged – which were at times called by staff member as proof of their expertise. Completion of specific training carved out the role(s) a volunteer occupied within the organisation and the wider health system. For instance, volunteers can only conduct a community-based screening (CBS) for HIV if they have undergone three-day CBS training, facilitated by the DOH. Prior to being allowed to conduct community health lectures – and gain the title of Peer Educator – volunteers need to undergo a peer education module. The same is true for those who want to become Peer Counsellors and HIV counsellors. These qualifications are not exclusive to Youth4Health but are recognised in other similar organisations and institutions. This means, borrowing from Anita's insights, that these were transferrable to other jobs and volunteering opportunities as well. In Chapter 5, I noted how volunteer work seemed to have expanded what volunteers felt they were capable of doing for themselves and/or for their communities. It appears that their perception of their career trajectories was similar: volunteering seemed to expand what jobs they thought they could do and positions they could occupy in the future.

Being able to visualise a certain kind of future – and the role of volunteering in that process – was further facilitated by staff members sharing the examples of former volunteers who had successfully made a career out of their advocacy. I remember several staff members calling them, with pride, 'products' of the organisation. Many young volunteers had the chance to meet these former volunteers. Three personalities were usually mentioned in these conversations: Larry had go on to occupy several management positions in various health NGOs in the region after leaving Youth4Health; another volunteer (now referred to as Attorney, rather than his first name) had become a lawyer and during my fieldwork was back volunteering as a legal counsellor; Martin had started out as a peer educator and since then had become part of an international youth organisation, a role that took him to various countries around the world for conferences. Playing up the fact that all three came from poor families, staff members spoke about them in front of the volunteers as if they were role models of what their future careers might look like. In a meeting among youth volunteers, an extended conversation around commitment was shared because many

volunteers did not show up for an activity they had committed to. In the account below, Mateo and Myra – both former volunteers and now staff members in charge of the youth sexual health clinic – shared their own experience and and that of their former peers when they were all volunteering at Youth4Health:

> Mateo: *'Take, for example, Larry – look at how he is now --- before he was just distributing condoms here* [at Youth4Health]*...'*
>
> *Myra interjected, mentioning Attorney and Martin… Mateo continued saying that when Larry resigned from Youth4Health, he wanted to take a long break, but he was immediately offered a job! The volunteers were smiling, some of them looking surprised – although almost all of them know Larry…*
>
> *'Once they [employers] know that you are from Youth4Health', Mateo continues, 'they know that this agency has credibility… they know what graduates we have here… they are the ones who will even offer you the job' As if trying to validate his point, he emphasised that it has happened to many of them who are now no longer volunteers and have moved to take staff positions.*
>
> *He then said: 'Youth4Health is a training ground. Once you say that you are from Youth4Health, they expect that you are competent, knowledgeable and empowered, you know many things and many people...'*
> –Field Notes[31], 16/01/2018

For me, Mateo was not only using these examples to motivate volunteers to fulfil their commitment but also seemed to be shaping volunteers' perception of their career trajectories (although perhaps unknowingly). He used previous volunteers' 'successes' and later, his own experience (i.e. receiving job offers by being a volunteer of Youth4Health), as examples of what these young volunteers' job prospects could look like. Interestingly, he began by using an example of an activity that was highly familiar to the youth volunteers (i.e. *before, he is just distributing condoms here*) to describe Larry's previous volunteering experiences. In effect, he seemed to be suggesting that Larry was just like them before, and that what he was able to achieve, they could achieve too.

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[31] Here and elsewhere, I am able to present a lot of speech even in my observation notes (and not interview excerpts) because I would, at times, record meetings and informal conversations following consent from those involved. I have discussed these strategies in Chapter 4 under the research methods section, under participant observation

I would also like to pay attention to how he emphasised Youth4Health's credibility – as viewed by external organisations and institutions – and how this could 'rub off' on the volunteers. He highlighted the social capital that the volunteers were expected to amass – and the positive impact of this on their careers – simply by having participated in Youth4Health's activities. I use the word 'simply' because his speech seemed to imply that competence, knowledge and empowerment did not 'exist out there' but was 'given' or expected, almost like a package that was located within Youth4Health and that every volunteer was welcome to take. For me, Mateo did not necessarily demystify the competitiveness of the job market in the conversation above, but he intensified and widened the 'edge' (borrowing Anita's words) that volunteers would have as compared to others as a result of volunteering work for Youth4Health. Mateo's narratives here remind me of how some people in the Philippines spoke about graduating from a reputable university (in fact, Myra called previous volunteers *graduates* and Youth4Health as a *training ground*): employers will flood you with job offers simply because you graduated from such a popular, famously credible university.

I have also noted how volunteering experiences helped shape the career aspirations among certain volunteers in Land4All. Towards the end of my fieldwork, Susan shared that she was considering undergoing the required training so she could apply for an organisation that was accredited to provide the services of a CMP Mobiliser. CMP Mobilisers are organisations and groups that assist communities like Land4All to fulfil government requirements to apply for CMP successfully. All communities that hope to apply for CMP require a CMP mobiliser who receive a hefty fee for their services. Among many of their tasks are organising the community association and registering the group as a legal entity. Based on my observation, Susan and their treasurer Mila had been heavily involved in these processes:

> *Susan was going through her documents and was once again complaining about the many government forms they needed to process. With the amount of work, she has done and being able to familiarise the system and processes she said she feels like she can do it on her own. 'Sometimes, it's difficult to communicate* [with the mobiliser]*, it's better for me just to do it myself.' She said that a government official encouraged her that she should train to become part of a CMP Mobiliser. She told me she was seriously considering it. 'If you look at it, I am doing many things that the CMP mobiliser is supposed to do!' We then spoke about the huge amount of money they are paying for the mobiliser.*
> – Field Notes, 25/03/2018

Susan saw parallels between her unpaid volunteer tasks and a paid position as a CMP Mobiliser. By heavily engaging in many of these government processes through volunteering, she believed she would gain enough expertise to qualify as a CMP Mobiliser – a paid position that had generous financial returns.

Finally, volunteering's impact on employability and job prospects was also used by some members of Youth4Health's staff for volunteer recruitment. Take, for example, this account between a potential volunteer and Youth4Health's lead staff members. At this time, Youth4Health was on the cusp of fully implementing its proxy consent programme – which was to facilitate for a minor to get tested for HIV even without their parents' consent. Key to the plausibility of the programme were social workers and case managers, but the organisation did not have any budget to hire them. At that time, they were looking for possible volunteers:

> *I overheard Luisa and Tomas* [project officers] *speak to someone who I later found was applying to be a social worker for Youth4Health. The guy's concern was that he is reviewing for the social work board exam – so he might not have time. However, he clarified that this is the reason why he wants to work – so he can prepare for his board exam.*
>
> *Tomas stressed that the actual post is not yet available - therefore the salary will be delayed... The request was that maybe he could volunteer here from time to time while waiting for the budget. The guy agreed, without hesitation. He said that he appreciates the experience that he might potentially receive here. Luisa and Tomas seemed pleased. 'You know proxy consent?' Luisa interjected… 'We apply that here. That is what we can offer here to you: the learning and the experience.'*
> – Field notes, 20/09/2017

For me, this exchange provides a crucial example of how learning and experience were framed and used – both by the programme officers (Luisa and Tomas) and the potential volunteer – as incentives and motivations for volunteering. Both staff members here seem to talk as if they were marketing a product – clarifying what sort of benefits they could offer. Like Glenda's rationale earlier, this social worker considered his participation in Youth4Health as a preparation for his licensure examinations, something that he *valued*. Presumably, he put a high price on this learning that meant he was less concerned about the uncertainty of whether or not he would be offered a paid post.

In this subsection, I have shown how volunteers and other actors in both organisations seemed to frame their volunteering experience as contributing to their career development. Such framing was influenced by what they thought they were learning and experiencing (e.g. skills, knowledge and values) through volunteering, including the networks they developed. What I have not discussed fully in this subsection are the potential barriers and challenges that volunteers would face in the future (which might temper what they thought they could achieve through volunteering). I did have a sense that learning in/through volunteering was dominantly considered as positive by the volunteers and staff. However, I did not have the opportunity to trace a volunteer's career trajectory myself, considering my limited time in the field. This subsection, however, brought some fresh insights into how learning in/through volunteering was regarded by volunteers.

Taken together, these two subsections have highlighted how learning was valued based on whether and how it contributed to real-life outcomes and situations – including examples such as developing empathy, understanding of youth culture, awareness of complex issues such as consent and rape. However, a more dominant framing was that such real-life outcomes were strongly linked with the world of work. A close look into the way these issues were talked about, volunteers and staff members themselves used words such as 'career', 'future employment', 'edge', and called volunteers 'graduates' attending a 'training ground'. This also relates to some of the insights discussed in Chapter 5 whereby volunteering also benefitted the volunteer, here in terms of career prospects – although not many framed their experience as such. Finally, this subsection illustrates how different hierarchies of knowledge shape the activities and decisions in the organisations, such as what different volunteers were considered able to do (i.e. only a peer educator can conduct community health classes) and in terms of volunteer recruitment.

6.2. Learning to work a certain way

In this subsection, I analyse three sets of learning and literacy events that illustrate how volunteers learned to work a certain way in both organisations. First, I look into how volunteers in Land4All got acquainted and grappled with processes and information related to their CMP application. Second, I discuss how volunteers in Youth4Health served as each other's teachers as they figured out the most effective ways of delivering teaching materials on adolescent sexual and reproductive health that was mandated by a government partner. Third, I present the process by which a volunteer created a budget plan and how, in the process, he learned about donor-driven bureaucratic concerns. While discussing how these events took place, I analyse the wider

practices that these learning and literacy events were part of. I not only describe how volunteers learned to do something but also how such activities linked with wider cultural values and power dynamics in these spaces.

6.2.1. "Through this, my ignorance becomes knowledge": Getting hold of bureaucratic process and information

> *What I didn't know before, I already know now. How to process papers that I didn't know before, now I understand.*

> *For example, the requirements, how to submit, how to fill up, how to enter the buildings… for example, you see, the HLURB… I meet the officers there; I met the mayor because of this… at least I have experienced this. At least someday it won't be difficult for me…. Like in the bank, the requirements needed to open an account… I know that now… How to deposit in a bank, how to withdraw, before I didn't know how now I do! I have experienced this, I'm thankful… through this, my ignorance becomes knowledge!*
> – Interview Excerpts, 29/10/2017

Mila's account as Land4All's treasurer in the quote above, elucidates the learning processes volunteers underwent through their engagement with different bureaucratic institutions and processes, as part of their CMP application. Mila explicitly refers to the acquisition of learning outcomes (i.e. *what I didn't know before, I already know now*) which, for her, filled a gap in her knowledge of these processes. This awareness, as she also suggested, she believed was transferrable and could be used by her in the future, for instance when opening her own bank account (i.e. *at least some day it won't be difficult for me*). As I have described previously (see Chapter 2), volunteer leaders in Land4All needed to familiarise themselves with a range of information across various topics, such as finance management, engineering, laws and government processes. As association members themselves, there was also need for them to understand the loan terms and agreements that would bind them to a mortgage payment for at least 25 years. These pieces of information struck me as extremely crucial as they helped determine whether they would be able to secure the loan in the first place. In what ways, through volunteering, do volunteers learn about this information so that they can engage with and accomplish tasks required by the application?

Based on my observations and interviews, volunteer leaders of Land4All often had to figure things out over time, rather than being directly guided. While there were orientation sessions and seminars conducted by government offices, these were rare, and because they had been

conducted for the whole community, there was often little time for questions and discussions. The way that Mila spoke about her experience seems to suggest that she learned these things in the process of doing the tasks and not necessarily because of a formal orientation or an assigned staff and/or facilitator guiding her through the process. In the next chapter, I will give another example where Mila devised her own financial recording system, as she figured out what to do with the financial reporting requirements.

Others learned the other way around: they were able to apply previous knowledge from other spaces (e.g. their work) to their volunteering tasks. For example, their secretary, who worked in a fast-food restaurant, was able to help to prepare a budget plan for a project proposal because he was in charge of doing the grocery shopping in his place of work and was therefore in charge of the budgeting. Others based the learning on their previous experience, for example, when

> *I asked Vivian* [a board member in the association] *how she knows a lot of stuff with land acquisition processes. She said it was because of her previous work – she was in charge of land scouting and selling in Pag-ibig* [an affordable shelter financing programme]. *She also had worked in a resort before, in a subdivision and her* amos [person she was working for] *owned several properties in different subdivisions, so she knows how to estimate say, how big or small a 50sqm land is. Several instances already during the meetings has she been asked by Susan to help her explain to others because she can understand.*
> –Field Notes, 08/10/2017

Vivian appeared to use previous knowledge gained from working in contexts similar to theirs (i.e. another government programme) and from seemingly unrelated contexts (i.e. working as a domestic worker). What she described here – and what I observed her doing during association meetings – was to take pieces of information (i.e. land scouting and scoping processes) and skills (i.e. estimating floor areas) from these previous experiences and apply them in making sense of their current situation. Consequently, she was a resource to other members of the association as well.

While many of the volunteers figured out things as they went along, the CMP mobiliser (as discussed earlier in this chapter) ideally was supposed to take on the role of a guide – but their interaction with the volunteer leaders was limited. In addition, where they did engage with the volunteers' work, I observed no handholding; rather, they instructed volunteers exactly what to do. There were aspects of the process that were important to accomplish, but I was not completely convinced that the volunteers (and community members) needed to (or wanted to) understand what the task was about. This was evident, for example, during the development of

Land4All's constitution and by-laws (CBL) – an important, legally-binding document that contained key aspects of the association's operations. The CBL was produced alongside several other organisational documents (i.e. lists of members, articles of incorporation, authorisation letters) as part of their application pack for registration to be recognised as a legal entity. However, I observed no discussion among community members about these, nor were the volunteer leaders completely briefed about the contents and implications of the CBL.

Figure 5: An excerpt from the CBL pro-forma.

Its production happened as follows. The CMP mobiliser had a Microsoft Word file containing pages of the CBLs that were pre-written and emailed directly for Susan to fill-out. It was a 14-page document, almost like a template where the association only needed to input some specific information such as the association's name and location (see Figure 5 above). I later found that this was used by the community mobiliser and distributed to different associations so that they

could just copy, paste and print. There was no back and forth in the documents; the actual production of the document was straightforward – the challenge was more about providing the required signatures. Both Susan and Mila expressed appreciation for this, as both felt that they were engaging with too much information at that point.

Some processes, however, required more involvement of the volunteer leaders. Many of the letters and notices within the organisation were produced by the volunteers with significant help from others[32] – often those who were 'outside' their association. In the example below – a meeting between Atty. Subaldo (an engineer who wanted to help Land4All with a land conversion application) and Susan – they were planning to write a complaint letter to a government office for the arguably irrational charging of an inspection fee.

> *On her green notebook, Susan has been writing down what to include in the letter. They were talking about different statements to present their situation as deserving of fee exemption… Atty. Subaldo was speaking fast, but he was saying something like 'the president requires by law that* [informal settlers] *are prioritised in government offices'. Atty. Subaldo said, jokingly, that Susan should then write 'open-close parenthesis, I will report you!' His associate looked surprised and commented that he was being a bit combative and advised that they should not overdo the letter; otherwise, their request might be denied. He continued dictating to Susan what she needs to write in the letter. "We look forward to your favourable response," he says, and this was written down in-toto by Susan on her green notebook…*
> – Field Notes, 17/10/2017

Unlike the creation of the CBL above, the writing process referred to in this account was slightly more involved, although I still sensed that, in producing this letter, Susan was being told what to do, rather than actively shaping its content. In the account above, Atty. Subaldo was deciding and dictating the tone of the letter, although he was not a signatory. To a certain extent, he also seemed to be 'speaking for' Susan and the association. I also noted that he used legalistic terms and cited specific laws to be included in the letter. On the other hand, unlike with the CBL, Susan had a say as to whether this letter would be sent and what form it could ultimately take (she did share that she wanted to change the wording of the letter later to soften the language).

In this section, I have discussed how volunteers gained information and learned to perform processes related to their volunteering tasks. Often this process could be described as learning by doing and/or figuring things out as they went along. Others drew from previous experiences from

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[32] I am one of these 'others' who have helped the association members navigate through the processes. I shared this in Chapter 3 where I reflected on my dual role in the organisations (and its implications)

other spaces. Volunteers also learned by working with others; however, at times, these were not collaborative but rather, were more didactic, with volunteers being told what to do by the 'instructor'. At times, volunteers appreciated doing it this way rather than learning about things by themselves. These finding highlights that in the range of information and processes that they had to engage with, they selected ones that they thought would be most relevant to their particular circumstance at a given time.

6.2.2. "Don't include your foolishness here": learning the 'right way' to deliver health classes

Youth4Health's volunteers delivered a series of externally-created modules called the Healthy Young Ones (HYO)[33] as part of their adolescent sexual and reproductive health programme. In these classes, they use the HYO flipchart – a visual aid in English (no translations available) and centrally produced at the DOH national office. Youth volunteers in Youth4Health talked a lot about the flipchart and talked around it during their health teachings with young people. I observed that while the flipchart was used in many different situations (with slightly different audiences), the delivery was very similar – the dynamics of which will be the focus of this subsection. I knew that the DOH occasionally trained peer educators to deliver this material but although there was a manual available, I had not seen this being referred to and most of the volunteers I spoke with had not even heard of such a manual.

Instead, I observed volunteers relying on each other and/or the staff of the organisation to serve as each other's 'user guides'. I observed informal, unstructured orientation sessions (but still no referral to nor any physical use of the manual) conducted by staff members for youth volunteers on how to deliver the module. Usually, these orientations were done on a needs-basis, often in preparation for community outreach programmes when new volunteers were tasked to conduct the session. The style of delivery was specific. For instance, the comic strip below was presented using specific characters (Quen and Liz – names of a famous celebrity couple in the Philippines). Someone even annotated the flipchart (see black ink in Box No 1 in Figure 6 below), which I presumed served as a cue for other volunteers to use these names (and follow the storyline) when it was their turn to deliver the session.

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[33] Created in 2003 by the DOH, the HYO programme is designed in a way that any institution who wishes to deliver the modules may do so easily. Downloadable for free from the DOH's website are HYO's training manual, visual aids and other related documents.

Figure 6. A page from the HYO flipchart

One afternoon, I chanced upon RJ (a volunteer who had been in Youth4Health for a long time) orienting Pip (a younger, newer volunteer) with delivering the content of another part of the HYO flipchart. This session was neither planned nor intentional. That afternoon, the three of us were sitting outside the Youth4Health office for a chat and Pip began asking RJ some questions about the HYO lecture slated to happen that week. RJ proceeded to conduct an 'informal', 30-minute session, helping Pip familiarise himself with some of the flipchart content and *how* to deliver it. The conversation below occurred in a mix of English and Hiligaynon (the local dialect):

> *Pip* [reading exactly what was written in the flipchart, in English and pointing to the words] *Five ways to prevent HIV and manage the infection. First is A, Abstinence. This is when…* [pause]*… What is abstinence again? Okay, you can just do it* [points to RJ].

> RJ   [repeats what Pip said, reading the exact words on the flipchart] *Five ways to prevent HIV and manage the infection… It's the steps you can take to protect yourself from HIV. A is Abstinence. It's when you fight the urge… or prevent yourself from having sex. Now, your turn* [pointing to Pip]
>
> Pip   *Okay, Abstinence is when you fight the urge or prevent yourself* [from having sex], *and if you can't do it anymore, you can proceed to B…* [laughs]
>
> – Field Notes, 25/11/2018

This interaction felt like a role-play, as if they were rehearsing of a performance for a classroom setting. There was also a strong role-modelling component: Pip acted and spoke like a youth educator (following RJ) as if actually delivering the session. Central to this account is their engagement with the text (i.e. the HYO flipchart) where RJ helped Pip to get as close to the text as possible by mentioning specific phrases – in English – as written on the flipchart (i.e. Five Ways to Prevent HIV and Manage Infection) and then translating and/or paraphrasing them to the local dialect. Partly, this close engagement with the text might have been driven by RJ's desire that Pip would communicate the right, factual information – for instance, the correct definition of abstinence. I noticed that Pip explained abstinence (a concept he originally did not seem to know how to talk about) with words similar to those used by RJ (i.e. *abstinence as fighting the urge*), almost like a script. In demonstrating various strategies for communication and information-sharing, RJ repeatedly mentioned the phrase *this is how we always do it*, which suggests that he was drawing on his own past experiences and style, having conducted these sessions several times in the past. In a way, RJ interpreted and delivered the text in a way that made sense to him, perhaps in the hope that Pip would take on his style and methods when it was his turn to deliver the module.

> Pip: *… if you're faithful with your partner, and he is not infected with HIV virus, and that's good because there's only two of you. But if you cannot stop yourself, go to letter C which is Correct and Consistent Use of Condom… this is what we call the right use of condom… especially if you are* katol [a colloquial term referring to a promiscuous person] *then you should learn this…*
>
> RJ: [interrupts Pip swiftly] *No, no! Don't include your foolishness here…* [looking upset]*… you know there are kids that might be listening to you!*
>
> Pip: [laughs] *ah, for kids, well, it's this thing when you should consult with older people or HIV counsellors to teach you how to use a condom, so you know and be aware of the viruses that might enter your body…*
>
> – Field Notes, 25/11/2018

The second part of this interaction between Pip and RJ goes beyond information sharing. RJ was quick to censor Pip's vocabulary by explaining that the term *katol* was inappropriate and reminding him that there might be children and adolescents listening to his lecture. I had the impression that when Pip used such statements – which sounded like a side comment – he was trying to soften the mood, as the lecture did sound too formal. Related to this, I would like to point out that RJ and Pip were also friends and, often, during informal chats, RJ, Pip and many other volunteers engaged in fun banter– including calling each other *katol* – which, to outsiders, would have sounded offensive. Yet in the account above, RJ was adamant that such language should not be used during a lecture. In a way, how volunteers learnt about what counts and what does not count as acceptable practice, partly depended on interactions such as these. These also show how more informal, friendly dealings among volunteers could, at times, become more formal when they involved certain organisation-related tasks. For me, RJ seemed to have an understanding of both the role of playful banter and the more formal 'speak' needed to deliver the sessions. In a way, he was a participant of both 'worlds' and acted as a bridge and mediator for Pip, helping him to navigate between these as well. What I know from observation was that there was consistency in the way volunteers and staff delivered this material – as if there was an unwritten user-guide. I think that this example shows how they created practices around externally-provided instructional material to fit their own needs and approaches.

6.2.3. Genealogy of a document: learning about donor requirements

This final subsection will describe the process by which a hand-written document (see Figure 7) prepared by Tito, a youth volunteer of Youth4Health, was transformed into a formalised, budget plan (see Figure 8) needed so that he could access the funding for an activity he was spearheading. First, to explain the context, Tito's activity – an arts contest for young people and children – was part of a series of weekend activities initiated and designed by youth volunteers to generate audience and increase awareness of their then newly-launched After 5 programme. This programme aimed to provide young people with access to ASRH services after five in the afternoon when most clinics were closed, and young people were free from school. The plan was well supported by Youth4Health's staff, and youth volunteers were given the freedom to design and implement their own programmes provided that they generate an audience. The project was funded by a government institution (DOH) and was therefore subject to strict financial management rules. The account below narrates the interactions Tito engaged with to prepare the budget plan.
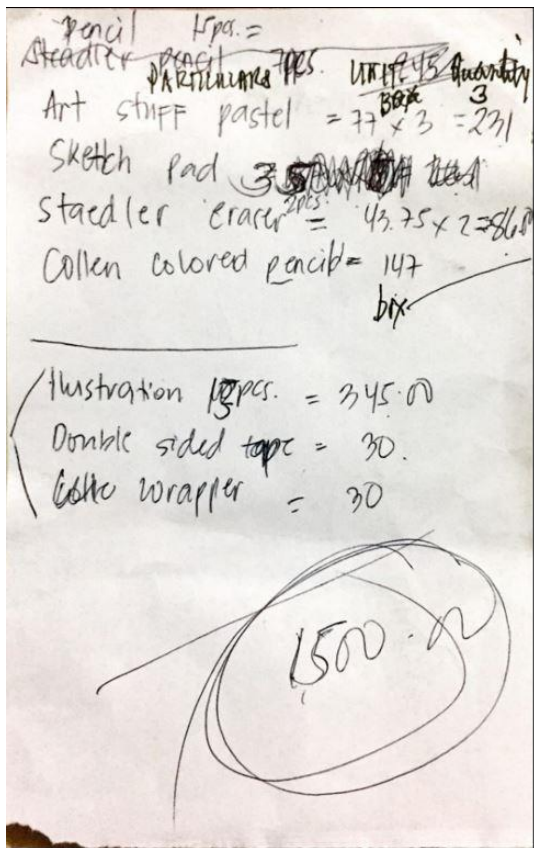
Figure 7: Tito's original hand-written budget plan

Figure 8: Finalised budget plan to be submitted to funder

After making a list of materials, Tito approached Luisa [programme officer] *to ask for help and showed her the list. He was told that he should file for a Request for Purchase which Luisa then asked their finance officer to give her a copy. She showed Tito the form.*

She then said that he needs to make a budget plan. On the list that Tito made (Figure 7 above)*, on a piece of paper, Luisa said that he should put a date as if tutoring him, 'When is this happening? Put the date here. State what activity', she paused to hear Tito answering. Tito only realised this later and then he answered, 'Art Contest'. Luisa then continued, she said that Tito should put Line Items and total budget. 'How much is the total budget?' '3,000 ma'am'.*

Luisa then cut some of the items out, saying they were too expensive worried that he has not even placed any budget for food to which half of the budget should be dedicated. Then Luisa said that he should have this checked by Myra [staff nurse in charge with the After 5 programme]*, and then to her as the programme officer and then submit to the finance officer. Tito took the list and the Request for Purchase with him.*

Later that day, another staff went through his list again, this time with Myra. Myra saw that he did not place any item for food, 'increase the budget for food and then just buy

cheap ones so we can buy for many. These are just estimates anyway!' He was also reminded that the main goal, anyway, is that they deliver the adolescent health lecture, so the art contest is simply a background activity.

Tito went to the computer and started typing. That day, no one looked at the Activity Proposal he made, so he saved it for approval the next day. He seemed proud of what he has done!
–Field Notes, 09/01/2018

After consulting with several staff members, his original list on a piece of paper ended up as a computerised activity budget proposal in tabular form (complete with headings such as "Materials," "Quantity," "Total"), signature lines for himself, Myra and Luisa that he then attached to a Cash Request Form. The actual images of the texts presented above contain remnants of these interactions. There seem to be two sets of hand-writing in the document on the left. The lighter shade is Tito's, and the darker shade is Luisa's writing. It shows that Luisa annotated, edited, scratched, revised and added to the original hand-written document. She seems to have revised not only the technical aspects (e.g. she corrected the quantity of the 'Sketch Pad' to 35) but also the language – for instance, she added the headings – e.g. PARTICULARS, QUANTITY – in capitals too. The resulting document, as shown above, is reminiscent of formal budget documents that are entered into bureaucratic processes.

In the process of refining his original document, Tito was 'taught' strategies to help secure the approval of his budget plan. For instance, he was advised to increase his declared amounts so they 'fit' the budget caps – *anyway, these are just estimates!* – and was asked to over-allocate money for food expenses so that they could feed more people. He was also made aware of the forms to be used in this request and instructed of the approval pathway (i.e. start with Myra's signature, then Luisa's, then submit to the finance officer). Then, there were the more nuanced orientations on how certain things were done within the organisation. Luisa made Tito aware that 50% of budgets should be allocated for food, therefore crossing out 'expensive' art materials. Myra also reminded Tito that the success of the activity was not dependent on how the art contest was organised but, more importantly, on the size of the audience. The latter needed to be documented because this was a key deliverable for Youth4Health. The crucial focus on generating numbers was a source of frustration for Tito during the evaluation activity that happened a week later, because only about 10-15 young people attended his event. He was reminded by Myra and other staff members that as an organiser, he had to ensure a captive audience. Again, this seems to me a reminder that their activity had a quantitative target that they needed to document and report.

The account also seems to suggest that the process of Tito being 'taught' how to make the budget plan was chiefly one-way, with staff members imparting knowledge and information to Tito so that he could get the job done. There seemed to be very little dialogue between Tito and the staff members. He was being told what to do to which he would readily comply, in a way that is similar to the account of how Susan wrote a letter and filled out the CBL's proforma. The availability of this one-on-one support was what was starkly different in Youth4Health when compared to Land4All. Volunteers in Youth4Health seemed to have more guidance in taking hold of these donor-related processes, either from the organisation's staff or from each other (particularly from more experienced colleagues). Additionally, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, Youth4Health also had more training programmes for volunteers and staff – a couple of which were directly related to the delivery of materials (such as an HYO training programme) or to the fulfilment of documentation (i.e. an orientation on financial documentation by an international NGO).

This subsection has illustrated that in the process of co-creating a piece of text with the various members of Youth4Health's staff, Tito was also socialised into various strategies that followed the conventions set by external funders. In a way, he needed to create a text that did not only make sense to him but also followed a form and language that could be 'entered' into a more formalised bureaucratic process.

6.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how volunteers' discourses around learning – similar to how many of them talked about and performed volunteering (see Chapter 5) – were tightly linked with the wider world of work and employability. Implicit in these discourses seems to be the notion of learning as an asset – learning was talked about as if it were something that volunteers could acquire and own and then transfer. In their hierarchies of knowledge, volunteers valued learning that was more relevant to real-life challenges.

Through accounts of engagement with various activities, this chapter has highlighted how volunteers were learning to work following certain conventions and ways of doing in the organisations. I found that volunteers – alongside other actors – served as mediators that helped to transfer these practices to those who were less experienced. Several examples (particularly in 6.2) have shown that literacy (including texts that were predominantly in English) played a role in this transfer. Volunteers like RJ had taken on the role of a literacy mediator. I must quickly point

out that I do not mean to say that these practices were static (i.e. they remained the same and only needed transfer from one person to the next). Rather, in accordance with Wenger's (1998) ideas of practices within CoP as ever-changing, they were also shaped by the volunteers and other actors that participated in them. This process will be explored in the next chapter.

Similar to Rogers' (2014) continuum, this chapter has also illustrated how different assumptions of, approaches to and 'forms' of learning co-existed in the two organisations. In both, there seemed to be a common assumption (see particularly 6.2) that volunteers were 'empty vessels' who needed to be taught and trained. Often, learning happened as they carried out the tasks, at times, with the support of a more experienced other (e.g. peers, fellow volunteers, staff members). While I observed volunteers in both organisations dealing with complex, bureaucratic information and processes, in Youth4Health, more non-formal orientation and training programmes complemented more informal ways of learning. In Youth4Health, the role of the 'teacher' or 'mediator' was much more integrated into the organisation's practices as compared with Land4All. I have also noted in this chapter that, partly because of the wealth of processes they needed to navigate, 'getting the job done' was, at times, more important than 'learning how to do the job'. Some volunteers learned selectively and strategically – that is, what sort of things must be learned that were useful and relevant to a particular moment and circumstance. For instance, tasks that could be accomplished chiefly by others (e.g. the CBL) seemed to be given less attention.

Significantly, 'learning to do' was not only about learning information or mastering certain tasks but also about learning the important conventions in the organisations, such as what words to use, how to act, who was allowed to do what, etc. Relatedly, this chapter has also highlighted how volunteers' motivations and practices that were more related to community-building and friendship (see Chapter 5) clashed with the more formal expectations from the organisation. Tito, for instance, was told that the art activity was not really about the art contest but about generating an audience and RJ and Pip's playful banter needed to be regimented to align with more formal, precise language during a lecture. This goes back to the title and opening account of this section: volunteering emerges as no longer just about helping but as part of a wider, more formal system of practices and rules.

Chapter Seven
Divisive Literacies?:
Bureaucracies, volunteering and inequalities

7. Introduction

This chapter explores the various literacy practices involved in the way volunteers make sense of and navigate around the bureaucratic and institutional processes, often mediated by and/or embodied in written texts. I will extend some of the issues presented in the previous chapter, particularly the role of texts in learning processes that involved performing a particular task, often with others. I will take a closer look into volunteers' and other actors' interactions with written texts in the form of the manuals they read, certificates they received, guidelines they referred to and documents they were expected to produce.

In the previous chapter, I explained how volunteers were learning to work in certain ways and how these signalled issues of power (e.g. hierarchies of knowledge). I extend this notion further by treating the issue of power more explicitly in this chapter, particularly how certain (literacy) practices might construct and enhance inequalities in the organisation. For example, I concluded in the previous chapter that volunteers 'passed on' practices to each other. In this chapter, I explore more explicitly how they shaped, resisted, re-ascribed meanings and reinterpreted these practices (as opposed to taking them in and passing them on unproblematically).

Related to this, I am aware that the practices within both organisations interacted with wider bureaucratic processes of various external organisations which they had to deal with partly mediated by texts that 'travel' (cf Kell 2006) (which I will refer to as external texts). I also intentionally use the phrase 'had to deal with' to signal the limited opportunity for the volunteers and staff to resist these processes (which I will treat in detail later). Instead, under certain circumstances, they deployed creative strategies to navigate around them.

7.1. Encountering external documents

> *One woman said that she heard some rumours that the* [CMP] *application will not push through. Susan sharply replied,* *'Basi itampa ko sa ila ang* certification *halin sa HLURB!'* [Maybe I should slap their faces with the certification from HLURB].
> – Field Notes, 22/10/2017

Several of the bureaucratic processes that volunteers had to deal with (see Chapter 2) were embodied and/or contained in formal, written documents, produced by external institutions that were then *brought into* the organisations and encountered by the different actors that occupy them. One such document was the certification that Susan spoke so strongly about in the account above. She was referring to their Certificate of Registration from the Housing Land Use and Regulatory Board (HLURB) (see Figure 9 below). Taking over four months to process, the one-page document was printed on an official letterhead, had an electronic signature from HLURB's acting regional manager and contained a variety of legalistic clauses. It was, *in itself,* a powerful document that recognised the legality of the existence of their association. This document embodied government approval that Land4All now had the legal identity and capacity to apply for the CMP. In many government processes, such as acquiring official receipts from the tax office, this document held high currency.

However, Susan attributed other meanings to the document. For her, as in the account above and our many conversations, this certification meant *proof of progress*. Tracing key events in the association, the release of this document marked one month since they were served their final notice of eviction that led to the demolition of their houses. The association's direction was uncertain and marred by the growing mistrust and confusion passed around by gossip among association members (as in the rumour shared by the woman above). Susan and many of the volunteer leaders seemed to consider this document as definitive, concrete proof that dispelled these confusions at least temporarily. Strongly worded comments such as 'slapping' the certificate in the face of a non-believer, for me, indicated a sense of confidence in the power that the document carries.
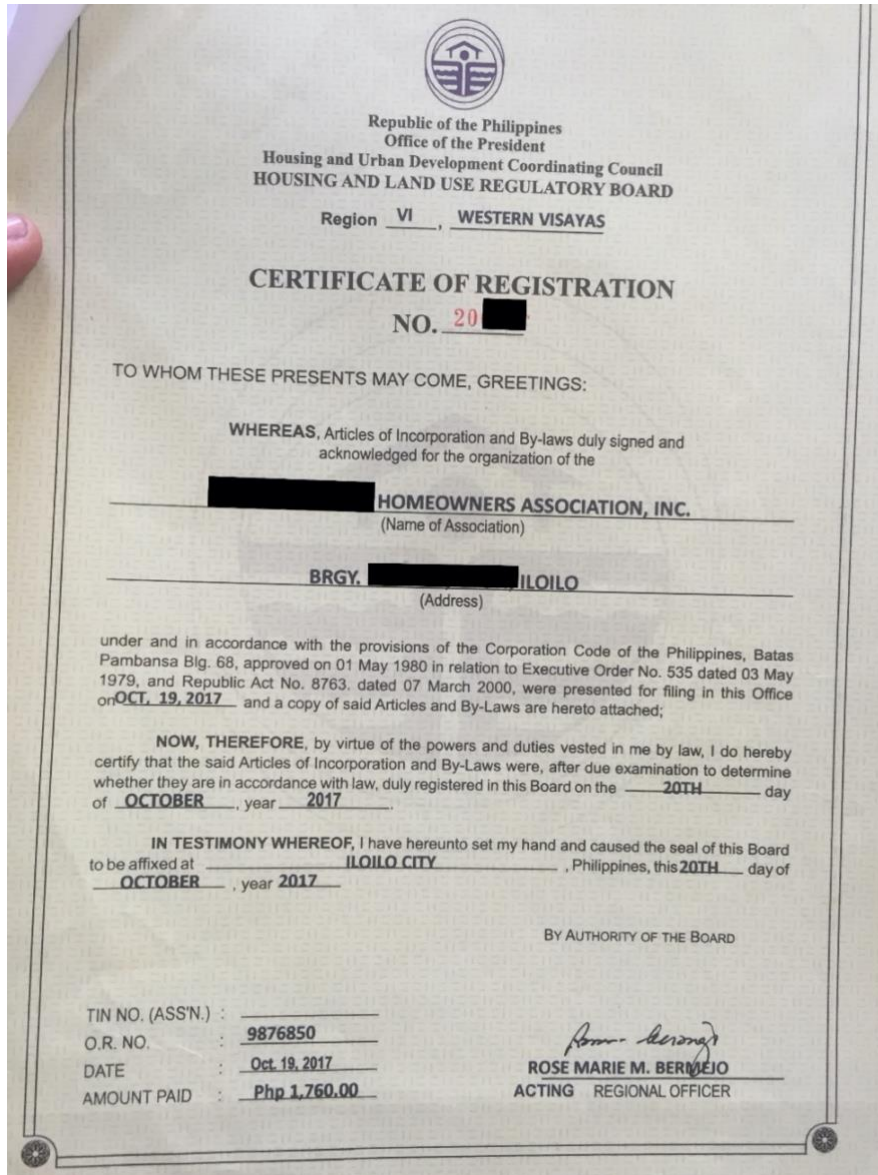
Figure 9. Land4All's HLURB Certificate of Registration

The document was similar to many government-issued certificates I encountered in Land4All. It followed a template that was maintained regardless of which associations received it – despite the presumably different circumstances surrounding each association (which reminds me of the process by which their constitutions and by-laws were formed by following a pro-forma that was distributed to all similar associations). The specifics were written into the blank lines, with Land4All's registration number, name, address, and other basic information. The text was written in English rather than in the local dialect (i.e. Hiligaynon) or national language (i.e. Tagalog). The document heavily used legal terms (i.e. *...in accordance with the provisions of the Corporate Code of the Philippines...*) and specialised, formal language (i.e. *...I have hereunto set my hand*

and caused the seal of this Board to be affixed…) that the volunteers and staff seemed to have difficulties understanding, even those who understood and spoke English well.

While the actual document was available for anyone to see, Susan and other officers usually spoke of it in general terms. For instance, while the certification specifically referred to the approval of their constitution and by-laws, the volunteer leaders often spoke of this document as something that *makes* [their] *association legal* or the *first step in the application process*. This seemingly distant text was ascribed with very context-specific meanings once encountered by volunteers in the organisation. For the organisation, it seemed that the power of the document lay not necessarily in what it contained but in what the volunteers said it represented. A common space within which volunteers *talked about* these documents was during association meetings.

> *After the conversation around the receipts, the community mobiliser took the certificate of registration, showed it to the members and then took the tax registration and did the same. She then exclaimed, while holding both documents, 'Don't doubt about the legality… everything is legal…' Susan added that these are available for them to see including their constitution and by-laws and pointed to the folders on the table.*
> – Field Notes, 02/04/2018

The Certification was kept in a clear folder along with other documents – for instance, their approval forms from the tax office, a signed letter of intent to sell from the landowner and a copy of the land title – individually covered in plastic sheets. During association meetings, the folder was placed on a front table alongside a tattered white folder containing an original copy of the association's constitution and by-laws. These documents seemed to become more visible throughout my fieldwork, perhaps as the association acquired more of these certifications. Their visibility seemed to imply transparency, accessibility and even perhaps a sense of ownership (i.e. this is for the association members to see), reinforced by the frequent references to them and – as in the excerpt above – the invitation to members to check them themselves. At times, I observed that some members would flip through the documents.

There were certain documents, however, that engaged volunteers and members more actively. The Vicinity Map, as in the photos below, generated a lot of discussions and concerns. Produced by a contracted engineer and surveyor, the blueprint was an illustration of a plot of land that the community was set to purchase through the CMP. The document also contained technical textual information such as GPS coordinates, land area, scales and lot numbers. However, it was much more visual, containing pictures and other familiar images. Therefore, while the text is in English

and in most parts technical, I noticed that the images helped the volunteers to engage more actively with this document.

Figure 10: Volunteer leaders and association members gathered around the vicinity map after a community meeting

Figure 11: Volunteer leaders and association members talked about the vicinity map while on the actual lot it represented

Compared to other documents, they *talked around* (often literally gathering around the document as in the images) the Vicinity Map more heavily. A possible reason for this increased engagement might have been that the map was considered by many as the first tangible image of what their community could potentially look like. The conversations would often revolve around which lots were in the best areas, which areas were easiest to access; members who wanted to be next-door neighbours talked about the plans to ensure that they got adjacent lots. The volunteer leaders shared things like: *We can build a community garden here; We will build an association and office here; This is a nice place to put up a basketball court*. They looked at the map, and they pointed to the actual territory where they were currently situated. Since being evicted, it seemed to me that the Vicinity Map became a glimpse into their community's future. In other words, the Vicinity Map was ascribed with another purpose, in that it allowed the volunteers and association members to predict and/or aspire for a certain kind of future.

Texts and documents that were brought into both organisations were ascribed with situated meanings and purposes that may or may not have been in line with what these texts intended to 'deliver' or 'do'. These examples seem to show how external documents underwent a process of (re)interpretation once the different actors encountered them within the space and in consideration of the contextual specificities and circumstances within that space at given times.

The HLURB Certification and the Vicinity Map, for instance, were ascribed with situated meanings (apart from those they represented) – as *proof of progress* and as a *representation of the future*. This shows, therefore, that while text imprinted on a document may be seen as static, the way people *talk about* and *talk around* them may make their uses and meanings malleable.

7.2. Engaging with bureaucratic literacy practices to get the job done

In the chapter introduction, I signalled that many of the bureaucratic tasks and processes required from the organisations allowed little space for resistance and renegotiation. While both organisations deal with bureaucracies, they do so in slightly different circumstances (a more detailed exploration of these engagements are in Chapter 2). As a summary, in Land4All, the bureaucracy mainly involved their government loan application, while in Youth4Health, their dealings with government and local and international NGO partners all involved a certain amount of bureaucracy. Volunteers and staff members within both organisations *needed* to navigate around these bureaucratic processes – mediated in part by the need to 'get the job done'. In this subsection, I will explore the complex practices related to this.

7.2.1. Documenting clients reached: Navigating donor requirements

The document below (Figure 12) was a form used in Youth4Health to record key information of clients who attended the organisation's activities. While it served as an attendance sheet, the document was also where the UIC or Unique Identification Code was recorded. UIC was a system of anonymising clients introduced by an INGO who was funding their HIV/AIDS programme. The UIC was supposed to correspond with a longer questionnaire called the CBS (Community Based Screening) Form which a client filled in under the guidance of a volunteer peer counsellor. UIC was used to match a client with his/her CBS results. In other words, the UIC was proof of reaching a client. A client's UIC was created by combining the first two letters of the client's mother's name, first two letters of his/her father's name, the order of his birth and the date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY). So, for instance, my UIC would be MAEF0110121990. This pattern (see the form below) is publicly recognised and could potentially be used to reveal sensitive information. The Youth4Health attendance sheet was also a way to harmonise various forms for recording – like a master list where staff and volunteers could take specific names and

numbers to make reports to specific funders, for instance, to report the number of adolescent clients tested every month.

Figure 12: Attendance sheet with UIC

This was not a stand-alone document and was filled out alongside other forms and sheets generated from external institutions, often requiring a long paper trail. I noticed how volunteers and staff usually had many photocopies of these forms during outreach activities, and copies were always located in the office in case they had walk-in clients. Now, I will discuss more specifically how the volunteers engaged with these documentation processes in their activities. The account below is of a sexual health lecture that volunteers conducted with about 150 students in a university when I noticed that,

> *While the lecture was being conducted by one volunteer and two staff members, the three volunteer peer educators were tasked with distributing the attendance sheets and asked the participants to sign them. There were two attendance sheets: one was for an INGO (and the usual Youth4Health attendance sheet with the UIC). There was also the long*

client forms for CBS testing (information sheet) with a sheet requiring additional information (1/4 sheet of paper) stapled to it.

Soon, the attendance sheets begin coming back to the table (there is a side table where the volunteers are working). I looked at one of the attendance sheets and saw that not all the participants filled out the UIC portion. One of the staff members asked Tito why this is the case. He said: 'Not everyone knows what the UIC is…' I asked Tito what happens now that it is incomplete. 'Isn't that important?' I asked. He gave me a confused look and shrugged his shoulder. The staff member looked worried.
– Field Notes, 28/02/2018

This account illustrates how, in a single event, volunteers assisted with accomplishing both internal and external record-keeping. The sheets (i.e. Youth4Health and for the NGO) that they were using, while having the same goals, had to be filled out separately. Both were then entered into an e-record which could be then used as a basis of report writing. It also seemed to be commonplace in the organisation that during activities with large audiences, they would ask everyone in the room to fill out the UIC (as in the account above). However, without the guidance of a volunteer, not all participants inputted a UIC that followed the pattern described earlier. As Tito's statement indicates (i.e. *not everyone knows what a UIC is…*), some were expected to make up their own ways of record keeping. Towards the end of the session, I remember the volunteers asking the students to fill out the sheet again. The account illustrates how the form was used differently from what was intended. Because they asked everyone to affix UIC, the form – and the reporting documents that were to follow – recorded the number of people who attended the event and not the number of clients tested and counselled.

In some volunteer-led activities, the use of these forms to reflect the number of attendees rather than the number of people tested, was more explicit. In December 2017, Youth4Health received special funding from a large INGO to conduct additional CBS testing. Youth4Health decided to distribute the funding to 'clans' – informal, loose groups of gay men and transwomen. The clans that I came across during my fieldwork were set up like support groups. They occasionally conducted activities for people outside their group, but mainly they met for in-group social activities and gatherings. As shared by the organisation's leaders, clans were important in their organisation's work, especially in generating clients and organising community-based activities, as they usually had access to a captive audience. The additional funding was specifically secured to revitalise the groups. Each clan was given the freedom to design an activity, as long as they generated the numbers. The group's plan that I am about to share – discussed during an informal

planning meeting with RJ – illustrates what I later discovered to be a common strategy to satisfy donor requirements. One afternoon, when I went back to the Youth4Health office:

> *...I saw RJ having a meeting with four volunteers of the Seaside clan – about the testing activity. A couple of other staff were also there in the meeting area, but they weren't actively participating in the meeting.*
>
> *They were talking about their activity on the 23rd December – a Christmas party and HIV testing. Their strategy was that as early as now, they looked for people to sign the attendance sheet, the acknowledgement receipts and assign UIC numbers. So that on the 23rd, they no longer need to prepare for the testing and instead, use the money for their Christmas party and provide people with some snacks.*
>
> *'Give me the attendance sheet. I'll go around our barangay...' says one clan member. Everyone seemed to be okay with the idea of saying that on the day of the party, they wouldn't have many things to do.*
>
> *RJ again emphasised, but in a very quiet voice, as if telling a secret: 'Let's finish the attendance first... let's have it signed already.'*
> –Field Notes, 20/12/2017

In the account above, the clan was deciding to use the money given by Youth4Health to fund their Christmas party – a social event presumably for the benefit of their clan members. But, they also seemed to recognise the bureaucratic requirements attached to the funding: first, they needed to deliver the numbers, and that should be reflected on the attendance sheet; second, they needed to account for the money, and they planned to support those using acknowledgement receipts. Aware of these requirements, a couple of the volunteers devised strategies: filling out the form (as in Figure 12) and assigning UICs in advance by going around their community for signatures; having the acknowledgement receipts pre-signed; re-aligning the budget, presumably from logistical costs to testing (e.g. transportation contribution to clients) to Christmas party food. In my observation, there appeared to be a consensus among the volunteers to adopt this strategy. A couple of staff members were also present during the meeting, and although they were not directly participating, they voiced no objections to the plan. This account also serves as an example of how volunteers would, at times, prioritise more 'informal' activities such as community-building activities and fellowship (e.g. a Christmas party and social event), even within the confines of a more 'formal' deliverable. In a way, they were helping to shape practices, rather than just following exactly what they were expected to do.

Interestingly, other staff and volunteers of Youth4Health also employed similar strategies for a Christmas party they organised.

> *The funding from the INGO meant that they needed to be able to document the number of people attending and be able to test a certain number of people. I assumed that they'd be taking attendances of everyone who was there. Surprisingly, they even assigned each person a UIC and placed the instructions on how to write the UIC right at the registration table:*
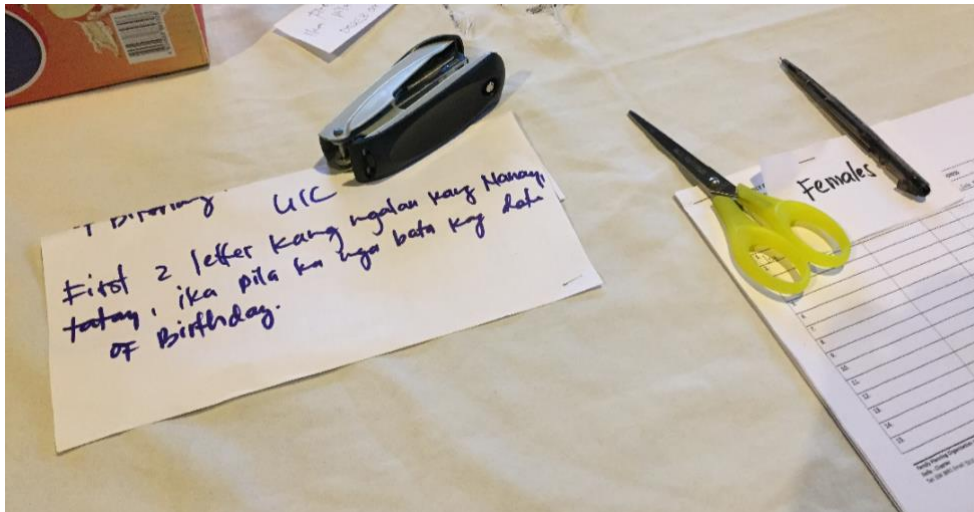
> *When I entered the venue, there was a huge tarpaulin at the centre of the stage. The tarpaulin that was used as a backdrop of the event says Youth4Health General Assembly. It had the logo of both the INGO and Youth4Health but didn't have a date.*
> – Field Notes, 21/12/208

The staff members seemed to employ strategies that combined those delineated in the first two accounts: they asked everyone who attended to sign the record sheet (which accounted for about 70 people) and used the CBS testing funding for activities that they were not primarily intended for (although CBS testing was conducted before and during the party). Yet, considering all the circumstances, they were able to deliver the documentation needed by the funders. Some other tactics can be observed here. The piece of paper in the photo was a step-by-step guide on how to 'make' the UIC and was placed on the registration table alongside the record sheet. In a way, it replaced the volunteer who was supposed to ask questions to individuals and then formulate the UIC number based on the person's response (partly to ensure confidentiality). The large activity banner (which could be seen and read by everyone who attended) framed the activity as a "general assembly" rather than a Christmas party and withheld certain information (i.e. date) that might suggest otherwise.

Some examples described in this subsection are reminiscent of the reinterpretation of external texts discussed previously. To a certain extent, the external documents presented here were used by volunteers and staff in ways that adapted to the circumstances that the organisation found itself in at a particular time – including activities that had a more community-building component. In Chapter 2, I highlighted how Youth4Health's financial sustainability was dependent on external funding. Both the acquisition of additional funding and renewal of existing ones were, in large part, dependent on yardsticks such as the number of clients reached. Similar to earlier discussions, the documentations discussed in this subsection embodied power and were seen as proof of performance. I had the impression that volunteers and staff were aware that these documentations *needed* to be completed. *How* to complete them, however, was another question. This brings me to a key aspect of bureaucratic literacies that this subsection highlights. Adding to how external documents were reinterpreted and reused to have situated meanings, I have shown how volunteers directly participated in the *production* of these bureaucratic documents. While bureaucratic processes – mediated by text (as in the record sheets) – continued to exercise their power over the volunteers by framing what they *had to* do, volunteers' co-producing of these documents meant that they could likewise exercise their power over these bureaucratic processes, in part, mediated by the texts that they produced.

7.2.2. Literacy and numeracy practices in financial recording

Perhaps one of the most crucial tasks for volunteers in Land4All was navigating financial transactions. When they started organising themselves early in 2017 (prior to my fieldwork), they said that they did not have core funding. Whenever expenses arose (e.g. court appearance fee), the volunteer leaders would divide the amount and individually ask members to contribute. As the CMP application progressed, more transactions needed more money: certification fees accumulated, down payments for contractors and engineers were required, and costs for small logistical duties added up (i.e. photocopying, printing, computer rentals). This partly led, as I have discussed in Chapter 5, to volunteer leaders spending their own money for organisational tasks. Core funding for the food, transportation and transaction expenses of the volunteer leaders was needed. Their CMP application also required a bank statement under the association's name that showed a savings balance equivalent to three month's payment (ca. £6,000). This meant that they needed to pool members' money through monthly savings.

I gathered that this increase of financial responsibilities (both in amount and in processes) compelled the volunteer leaders to devise a more streamlined and formal financial system than going door to door for contributions. The volunteer leaders, for instance, introduced a schedule of fees in September 2017 that summarised the main expenses of each participating member (see Figure 13). This document was distributed among members and was the key reference whenever questions around payment occurred. The document appeared formal, and the signature of both the association treasurer and the president evoked a sense of authority.

INFORMAL SETTLERS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Brgy. ███ Iloilo – ███

Statement of Accounts for Lot Acquisition and Site Development Only

Particulars	Amount	Payment		Remarks
		Made	Balance	
Membership Fee	150.00			
Monthly Dues every month	50.00			
Mobilizer Fee	2,000.00			
MRI (1yr) 41.00x12	492.00			
Doc. Stamp (Mortgage)	300.00			
Title Expenses	3,500.00			
Monthly Amort. 3mos. Adv. (875.00)	2,625.00			
Land Survey (5,000x120 members)	42.00			
Land Scheming	600.00			
Other Expenses	1,000.00			

Noted by: ███ President

Prepared by: ███ Treasurer

Figure 13: Copy of statement of accounts containing payments needed for lot acquisition and site development

These documents were complemented with another key aspect of financial management which was collection and recording. As association treasurer, Mila was chiefly in charge:

> *Mila was sitting at one side of the table, and members queued to give her the money. The member gave Mila some cash which she counted. Mila then asked for her full name and wrote down the full name on a blue record book. Opposite to it, she wrote the amount,*

what the payment was for and space was left for the member's signature. She then asked the member to take out her own record book – a small notebook – wrote down the date, the amount she gave Mila and space where Mila signed. This was proof of the transaction. Mila placed the money in a pouch. She then issued an official receipt.
– Field Notes, 25/03/2018

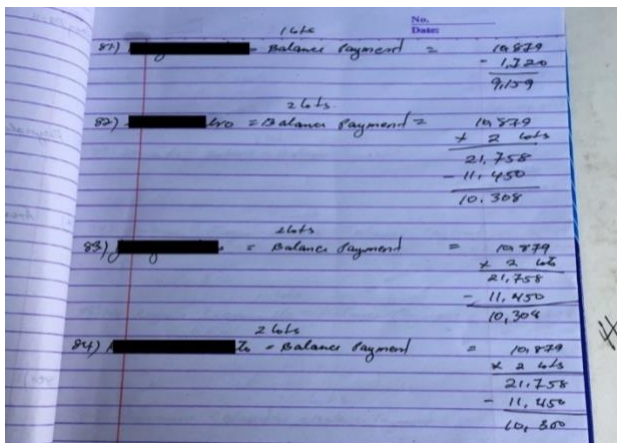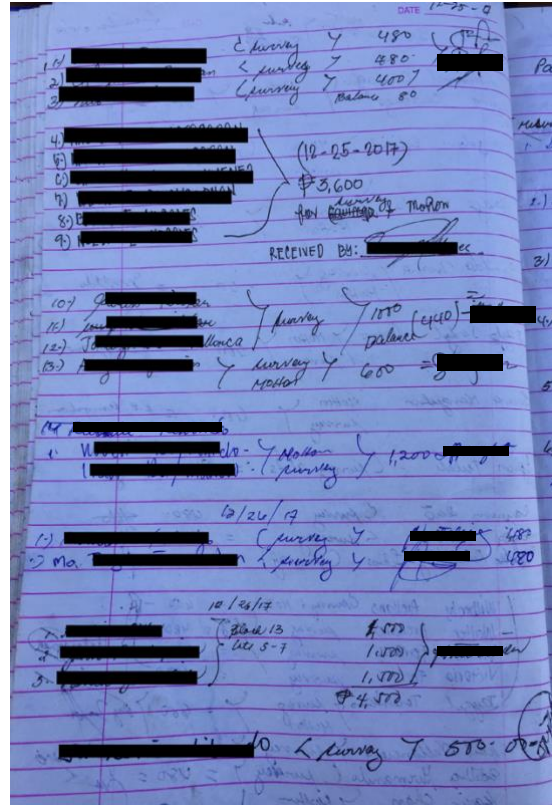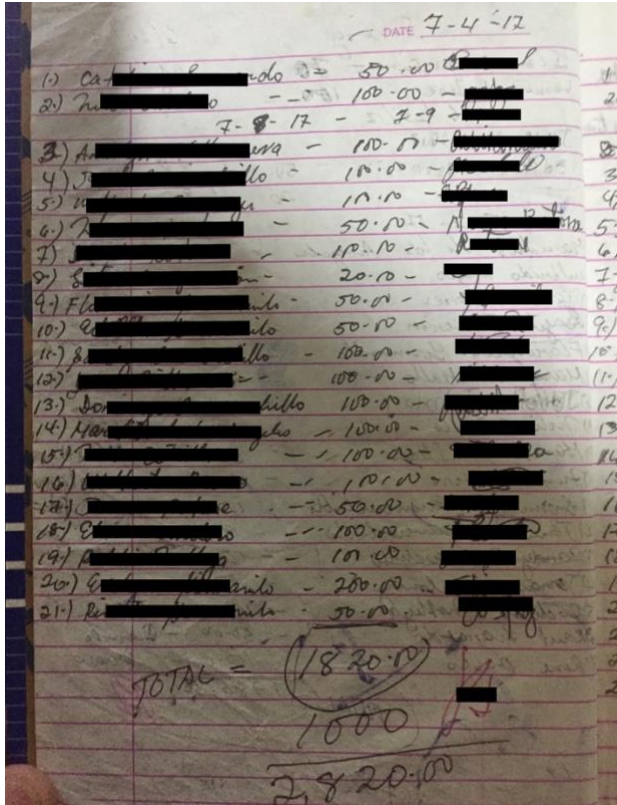Figure 14. Pages from Mila's record books

The account above is an example of how Mila usually conducted the process of collecting and recording at the same time (see the top right picture in Figure 14 above for an illustration of what the process above looks like on the record). Several literacy and numeracy activities were involved in the event above: counting (and recounting) money (sometimes, also money-

changing), writing names, affixing signatures, creating and exchanging literacy artefacts such as record books (see images above), transaction lists and official receipts.

Both Mila and the association member kept separate records of transactions but cross-checked and signed them. This system (which predated my fieldwork) began when the association was collecting payments but was not yet 'officially' registered as a legal entity (see discussion above regarding the HLURB certification). To ensure payments were documented, they used to issue temporary receipts which can be bought in stationary stores, until warned by the HLURB that this was illegal. It can be inferred that they recognised and followed government rules surrounding financial transactions but recognised that they still needed to create a system (i.e. keeping records on both sides) that established accountability. The literacy event described above appears to demonstrate this shared accountability system, where responsibility for record-keeping rested on both the association and each member. Interestingly, however, even when the official receipts were issued, this mutual financial record-keeping was maintained. In times of conflict and disagreement, it was these documents that became the arbiter and not the official receipts. This also shows that certain 'less structured' systems in the association predated their formalisation and that these were given more credence within the group.

The records in the top left of Figure 14 show that Mila categorised payments into headings: "survey" (i.e. expenses to pay for an engineer for a land survey) and *mohon* (i.e. expenses for setting up concrete cylinders to demarcate sub lots). This image also shows how the recording could be inconsistent. The handwriting used to write the names for numbers 4-9 was not Mila's, which meant that someone else inputted this entry. Mila also affixed her signature beside these names instead of the payees. The bottom picture shows that Mila also consolidated payments into what appears to be individual accounts/records. In doing so, Mila appeared to have employed basic mathematical operations such as addition (i.e. total money paid so far) and subtraction (i.e. to obtain the payment balance). Additionally, I think that creating this whole system of recording required more complex skills of organising, prediction, etc.

Because association meetings were usually on Sundays, Mila was also tasked with safeguarding the money until the following weekday, to deposit the money when the banks opened. *[Keeping] Big money… I think about it a lot* [Interview excerpt, 29/10/2017]*,* she worriedly told me once during a conversation, because the lock of her door was simply a piece of plastic string. Yet Mila's role seemed to be more than keeping the physical money safe: it was also about making visible – through documentation – how the money in the organisation was spent:

Figure 15: A page from Mila's financial statement

Mila showed me her yellow pad and read a couple of items on it. She said that she writes it this way so that people would understand it easily. She said this is one of the things that stressed her out in work.

I asked: So who taught you to make the statement this way?

Mila: Just me! I just thought of it. I asked myself how I can liquidate the money, one by one, so it would also be easy for people to understand. Susan taught me at the start what to do… but I wasn't comfortable, it was difficult to do… so I just did it like this so that if the auditor reads, it's easy…So I write there 150 pesos to pay for transportation and then for snacks for two people… So then I would add that… [She points me towards the lower portion of the list] there, 400 – that's the total we spent… So, people won't have difficulty with reading, and they won't doubt where the money went!
–Field notes, 29/10/2017

In the account above, Mila was describing the sheet of paper shown in Figure 15. As she explained to me, Mila created this document in a way that was understandable to her and to the association members. When I first saw this record, I thought that it read like a diary and that Mila was writing this for herself, to make things clear for her whenever she was asked about it. However, as she described, she created this financial statement with the clear intention for it to be read by community members. Mila's documentation is in sharp contrast with many of the texts The way Mila created this document reminded me of Tito's original budget plan as they were both constructing texts that made sense to them. As in the case of Tito, I also wondered how Mila's documentation changed once it needed to be entered into the bureaucratic system of the CMP application. I did not have the chance to observe this during my fieldwork, although I was aware that financial reporting followed a particular format; even the kind of notebook used was provided by the government office concerned.

For me, these various iterations of recording systems, especially taking into account the ins and outs of the organisation's money – which were sometimes reminiscent of accounting debit-credit systems – shows Mila's rigour and sophistication in trying to 'make sense of' and 'capture' these financial transactions in a way that was transparent both to her and to the members. Her account is also a reminder of the importance of trust and that community members needed some assurance – such as documents Mila produced – that their hard-earned money was spent judiciously and fairly. These literacy and numeracy practices surrounding record keeping seem suggest that volunteer leaders considered the documentation of financial transactions a crucial factor in dispelling concerns about accountability and trust-building. Related to the discussions in the previous section, texts were seen as proof. The power ascribed to putting words and numbers on paper almost gives me the impression that *a transaction not written is a transaction that did not happen.*

Taken together, this section has introduced the various ways in which volunteers engaged with (mostly external) bureaucratic texts and processes. They not only 'received' them uncritically, but they reinterpreted, reused and re-ascribed meanings to them. These findings show that practices within the organisation were not static but could be shaped by volunteers as well. The same could be said in relation to external documents and texts. When they 'travelled' and penetrated local practices in the organisation, they could displace local life (e.g. forming new ways of documentation through the UIC) but their meanings and uses could also be changed depending on the contextual realities and needs in these groups – some of which might not match the intentions of those who created these texts and processes.

7.3. Participation and bureaucratic literacies

The rhetoric of participation permeates certain policies and programmes related to community and volunteer engagement very explicitly enacted within Youth4Health and Land4All –. The objective of the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 – the legal basis of the CMP – was to "encourage more effective people's participation in the urban development process". Particularly, the CMP "assists" organisations of "underprivileged and homeless citizens" towards land tenure through the "concept of community ownership". Not only do CMP policies seem to place community participation at the heart of the programme (at least conceptually), they also relegate the role of the government to financing, regulation and guidance. In the case of Youth4Health, their website and flyers describe it as one of the oldest and biggest volunteer organisations in the country. In these documents, the group's network of community-based volunteers seems to be presented as a significant contributor to Youth4Health's longevity and impact. In the organisation's 2017 strategic plan, a priority objective was to encourage leaders and volunteers in communities to actively participate in Youth4Health's governance structure and contribute to its advocacy activities. In a way, this approach reframes volunteers' role within the organisation to include leadership and governance capacities.

For me, these pronouncements may be seen as an attempt – at least at the policy level – to democratise certain social and institutional processes (e.g. urban development, land tenure, NGO governance, and advocacy work) by opening up spaces for participation, for instance, through volunteering. However, it is also important not to take these policy aims as non-problematic and, instead, allow for ethnographic data to illuminate what participation may 'look like' within the organisations (see Chapter 3). Specifically, this brief subsection explores the links between bureaucratic literacy and participation, particularly whether and how bureaucratic literacy practices within both organisations may enhance and/or confine volunteers' participation in activities. The issues presented in this section emerged more strongly from data from Land4All – particularly the way their membership evolved over time. The second subsection also focused on how volunteer leaders in Land4All constructed and co-produced texts and documents. The way volunteers in Youth4Health co-produced texts has already been analysed earlier in this chapter.

7.3.1. Changing association membership: Bureaucratic literacies as divisive?

I will begin by exploring the dramatic change in association composition within the informal settlers' association. Land4All started when 49 informally-settling households that had been displaced formed an association to access a government loan programme for landless people in the Philippines. Fast forward to the last quarter of 2017, the association found itself in a situation (i.e. a notice of demolition) where they needed to submit a final list of programme participants and begin their application for a loan take-out. Approximately 150 slots/members needed to be filled. To satisfy this requirement, the association – originally composed of 49 households – needed to look for about 100 more members to join the group. They employed various strategies to fulfil this. First, members who wanted a loan for more than one lot were asked to look for proxies to register (usually a cousin or a child aged 18 and above). The member would pay for the loan, but the proxy would be registered as an association member. Apart from filling the spaces, this strategy, based on my observation, was also rooted in a desire to ensure that all community members (and their immediate families) were able to access the programme. Therefore, it had a technical but also a community-influenced purpose. Second, they opened participation to residents from outside the community. What struck me was how these new members seemed not to have the same socioeconomic situations as the 'original' ones. They were public school teachers, government officials, engineers, small business owners and lawyers.

The problem, as Susan often told me, was not with these new members: *It is the original ones that are giving me a headache*. I found that the challenge, partly, was that several of the original members could not cope with the financial demands of the loan application. For instance, Mila's sister considered quitting just before I finished fieldwork because her weekly income as an occasional *labandera* could not suffice for the requirements of the loan programme. This did not seem to be an issue with the newer members. For instance, one teacher signed up for ten lots, while a lawyer decided to loan for an entire block of lots. As the overturn of membership unfolded, I saw how inequalities within the association seemed to emerge and intensify. Adding to this were members who remained suspicious of the volunteer leaders, the way the association was run and the CMP generally. I interviewed a couple who decided not to join the association's bid for loan:

Wife:	*…contributions after contributions after contributions. Always about money, Susan* [she shakes her head vigorously] *is fast with money.*
Husband:	*I think they (the volunteer leaders) are working with the previous landowner…*
Wife:	[smiling as if her husband hit the nail in the head] *Yes, they were probably given money to convince us to move…*
Husband	*The previous landowners probably told them, 'convince everyone to move and we will give you the money instead of giving to them.*
Me:	*Where did you get information about these things?*
Wife:	*Observations. Look, everyone is leaving. Look how many people left the association, their mobiliser left them… The mobiliser probably detected that her intention is to gain money…. This is also what I detected.*

– Interview excerpts, 03/04/2018

During the interview, I was struck by how these two ex-members sounded so certain about their claims. As the interview progressed, it became clear that there could be several reasons for the couple's suspicious attitude towards the process and the people involved (especially Susan). For the discussion in this section, however, I would like to focus on the possibility that such suspicion could have been exacerbated by their lack of understanding about the association's journey and how the loan process worked. For instance, the couple did not seem to know or understand that the association sued the previous landowners. The litigation led to a long and expensive court battle – expenses of which were paid for by the association members themselves – which ended in demolition. The possibility of the volunteer leaders and the ex-landowners conniving for money seemed implausible to me. If the couple had understood the importance of expediting their loan application, perhaps they would have reconsidered their claim that the reason the first mobiliser left was that he detected Susan's corruption[34]. In fact, the mobiliser did not leave the association. He was fired because the volunteer leaders felt he was too slow in processing the papers.

In my observation, there was an issue here about communication and participation: there were difficulties on the part of Susan and colleagues to lay out these issues in a more transparent manner (e.g. previous discussions on how they also had trouble understanding the processes) but also that many members – including the couple – were not very active in meetings. As I have shared in Chapter 6, volunteer leaders would know the specific processes as they went along – by 'doing' the process themselves. There seemed to be a missed opportunity for other community

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[34] As someone who was familiar with the CMP process and the broader situation of the organisation, I did feel an ethical responsibility during the interview to 'correct' these inaccurate understandings, and I attempted to communicate information more effectively. However, I also felt that I needed to tread lightly as they were very emotional, and I did not want to give them the impression that I was taking sides.

members – such as the couple – to learn about the programme with the same rigour as the volunteer leaders. Such disparity was further increased by the constraints faced by the latter to communicate to the rest of the community. Susan openly spoke about this 'lack' of understanding – and also the lack of dialogue– as a 'pain point' in their association's affairs. For instance, the account below from a meeting among 'old' and 'new' members captures such perception:

> *In reality, no offence ha… but, I am really having a difficult time with the old members…*
> *the new ones I am not having a difficult time with because mostly, they can understand…*
> *the process, the situation. So no offence, who I see as always defaulting are those old*
> *members. So… I feel bad about you, but there is nothing I can do…*
> – Field Notes, 04/02/2018

This statement shows how Susan believed the lack of understanding on the part of the 'old' members not only was problematic but led to them defaulting. Embedded in this sentiment seemed to be an assumption that the new members knew more or were able to understand more. Susan's seemingly high regard for the newer members was evident during meetings. Sometimes, when Susan had difficulty explaining a process or a requirement, she called on, for instance, the lawyer and teacher to either explain on her behalf or confirm what she was saying. Over time, the 'original' members defaulted and by the time I left fieldwork in April 2017, half of them were no longer part of the association. Therefore, the so-called 'informal-settlers' association that must be composed of, as the law stipulates, "underprivileged and homeless citizens" to access the government loan programme for land tenure, was then composed of a majority of members that had stable and, for some, high-paying jobs. In her message above, it was also apparent that Susan felt bad about the situation because, as we talked on other occasions, she wanted then to stay as neighbours after having considered each other as family (see the first subsection in Chapter 5). In the conclusion of the second section of this chapter, I noted how volunteers were able to work around funder-deliverables and preserve their fellowship activities. What had happened here, however, was that the sense of community and solidarity may have been dented by the formal, bureaucratic requirements that they had to fulfil.

This change of composition seems to have created real tensions in the organisation's identity. I remember during a large meeting, being approached by one of the original members, who whispered, *those will be our new neighbours.* She continued to tell me about how these new members arrived in cars, dressed well and had good jobs. *Maybe I can wash their clothes one day for money,* she told me. The new composition seemed to also have affected the volunteer leaders as they began to think not only about their situation but also about how 'these people' would

think of them. During an interview, for instance, Susan said she felt embarrassed talking about the association's problems during big meetings: *...you feel embarrassed because the money being used is the money of everyone and not just of the old members, it includes the new members... It's very embarrassing* [Interview excerpt 03/16/2018].

I do not mean to argue that difficulty to understand bureaucratic knowledge and/or engage with bureaucratic literacies and processes have led to several members backing out, as there were certainly other factors, the most significant, perhaps, being the financial requirement. However, it is also inaccurate to assume that the complex bureaucratic processes did not play a role in the non-participation, especially since many of the misunderstandings had led to confusion, suspicion, and loss of trust over the entire process. This subsection has also highlighted how communication between members served to intensify social inequalities and relationships, for instance, between those considered educated and those non-educated (I explore this further in Chapter 8).

7.3.2. Assembling documents of power

In the previous subsections, I introduced certain documentation and recording systems that were constructed by volunteers in practice (e.g. Mila's financial accounting). As explained, these documents were created for practical purposes (i.e. as a way to make accountability of funds transparent) and were meant to establish trust between the members of the association, as the 'care-taker' of their funds. To a certain extent, these bureaucratic literacy practices were a way for volunteer leaders to take hold of their internal financial processes and for the members to participate in such a process. The set of documents I will be discussing briefly here were likewise internally produced yet were used for different purposes.

Mila	*I just want to say, if for example, we want to remove people, we write a resolution, sign this amongst us...*
Susan	*That is no longer needed, Mila* [sounding irritated], *we have minutes, we have a resolution that once they back out they don't get their money... we sent them a letter! No longer needed. Why do we need that, why do we need to sign? That is in the minutes; the mobiliser was there... that's proof! No longer needed. How many times do we need to write to them?!*
Mila	*Twice...*
Vice President	*We would appear like we are appeasing them....*

The tense discussion above is an excerpt from a meeting among volunteer leaders. The bigger conversation within which this account was situated was about a group of members – chiefly composed of 'old' ones – who did not attend meetings and/or pay dues regularly. They decided to take these individuals off the list of loan applicants and were discussing strategies on how to deal with the anticipated backlash. It is noticeable in this exchange how the volunteers seemed to be unyielding to extensions and/or additional notices to the defaulting members. It was apparent that volunteer leaders wanted to draw the hard-line (i.e. *appeasing members is not acceptable*). Otherwise, as they agreed with Susan's sentiment, they might have a difficult time dealing with these issues later. Originally, I had thought that the issue was about a clash of systems between formal and more informal ways of dealing with non-participation of members. However, I realised that the procedures that they were setting up were ad-hoc and that they were figuring this out along the way too. Additionally, this situation again offers insight into the extent to which empathy for their neighbours could override these requirements.

Text seemed to have a central role in these procedures. The point of contention – which Mila no longer pursued as the meeting progressed – was what can be considered as 'enough' proof to back up their decision to let people go. For Mila, an additional letter would be appropriate, although she had not expressed why. But Susan argued that there was a myriad of documentation – minutes of the meetings, resolutions and a notice letter – that was enough to get their message across and rationalise their decision. All of these documents were produced within the organisation (and were not a requirement from an external institution). To a certain extent, they saw the documents that they had assembled as powerful enough to implement chiefly unwritten organisational rules that demarcated who were allowed to participate and who were not.

███████████████████

███████████████████████ Association

Resolution No. 4 – S. 2017

A RESOLUTION OUTLINING THERULES AND REGULATIONS REGARDING THE ALLOCATION OF THE LGU'S PHP 3,000 ASSISTANCE AND THE REFUND OF DOWN PAYMENTS AND SAVINGS

WHEREAS, ████████████████ Community Association is an organization registered under the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB).

WHEREAS, this resolution clearly outlines the rules and regulations regarding the allocation of the LGU's Php 3,000 assistance and the refund of down payments and savings;

WHEREAS, on _____, the LGU ████████████████████ provided PhP 3,000 worth of assistance to the 49 informally settling families of ████████████████ and agreed during this meeting, in the presence of Mayor _____, that the said amount shall be allocated as PhP 2,000 for the household and PhP 1,000 as part of the association's fund.

WHEREAS, since the PhP 1,000 is the association's fund totally to PhP 50,000; this amount is the property of and will be used by the associatios;

WHEREAS, this PhP 1,000 cannot be claimed by the individual member whether he/she remains in the association or not;

WHEREAS, the PhP 1,500 downpayment given for registration of membership to the organisation is also the property of the association and is non-refundable in the case of discontinuance of membership of individual members;

WHEREAS, in the event that a member no longer wishes to be part of the association, he/she is allowed to withdraw the savings (individual contributions) he/she has incurred since he/she started up to the end of her membership;

NOW THEREFORE, unanimously approved by the ████████████████ Association Officers and Board of Directors during the meeting, be it resolved as it hereby;

RESOLVED that this resolution outlining the rules and regulations regarding the allocation of the LGU's Php 3,000 assistance and the refund of down payments and savings is approved

RESOLVED FURTHER, copies of this resolution shall be furnished to the concerned offices.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the above-stated resolution this date, _R-05-17_
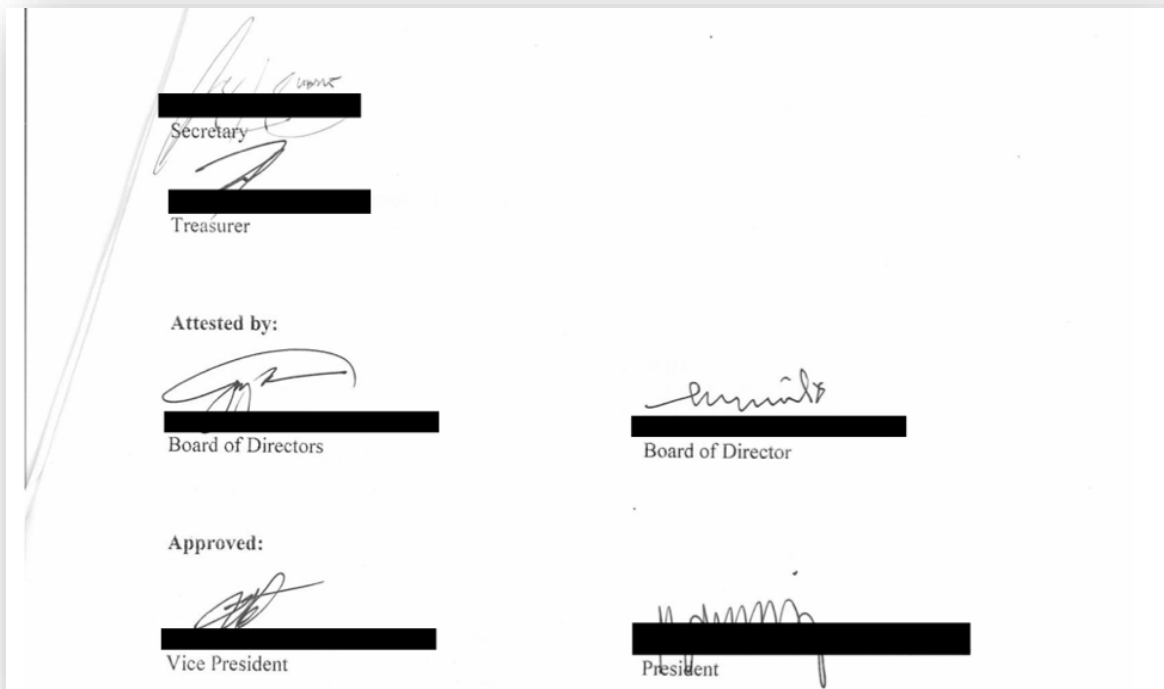
Figure 16: Copy of one of the resolutions

The volunteer leaders' reliance on these documents might be further understood by looking at a series of board resolutions that were released by the volunteer leaders. The content of the resolutions was decided upon by the volunteers. Susan's son, who was studying at a university, was the one often writing the content. These resolutions (for instance, Figure 16 above) according to my many conversations with Susan, were to make certain organisational rules 'official' apart from, as the conversation showed above, evidence that justified their actions. The most common expression I would hear from the officers was: *Para wala damo pamangkot, mayo kung nakasulat* (So that there are no more suspicions, it's better if it's written) [Field Notes, 17/08/2017]. These resolutions were not physically distributed but were read aloud during meetings. Just like other key documents shared in this chapter, a printed version was made available during these gatherings, and members were encouraged to read them. While the document was physically assembled by the volunteers, its dissemination remained dominantly oral – such as during the meeting where Susan made direct reference to the resolution.

> *Susan had a folder that contained the three resolutions. She waved this on air saying that all these documents have been signed by all the officers, including the board members. Susan proceeded to read the documents – fast and loud – one by one, exactly as it is written. As this is in English, she sometimes translates certain words then proceeds to explain – in Hiligaynon – what the resolution is about...* 'Indi na pwede ma withdraw ang 1,500 kag ang 1,000, klaro na ha...' [It is not allowed to withdraw your 1,500 (membership

fee) and 1,000. That's clear already.] *The members listened but did not ask any questions or clarified. Susan ended saying 'ara na, wala na damo pamangkot ha kay napirmahan ni sang board'* [That's it. No more questions because this was already signed by the board.] – Field Notes, 03/09/2017

My observation was that part of the reason why the dissemination remained oral was that association members had a difficult time engaging with the text alone. The document, as in the account above, needed rephrasing, translating and explaining – despite the details already contained in the text. These documents – and many others that I have encountered – were written in English. They use legal, formal words and phrases (i.e. WHEREAS…) that, as my observation showed, members could not readily access even if they spoke and understood some level of English. As in the account above, the document was presented and framed based on what it represented (i.e. a formal rule) and seemed to have been taken as definite and non-problematic. The lack of questions by the members seemed to have been taken by Susan as a sign of understanding. I also found it fascinating that Susan attributed the decision to a governing body (i.e. signed by the 'board'); in doing so, she seemed to be wanting to avoid ownership of the decision, shifting it and to a more accepted hierarchal power. Early in 2018, several defaulted association members demanded that they be given back the money that they had already contributed to the association. An interview with a couple who decided to no longer participate revealed that from their perspective, the officers had stolen the money. *We are still discovering what really happened… that is our money, given by the mayor for the housing project. But where is the project? There is none…* [Interview excerpt, 04/02/2018]. This opinion provides an important insight into the discussion because although the producers of these documents (i.e. the volunteer leaders) clearly subscribed to the power of such documents, this did not necessarily coincide with how the receivers (i.e. the association members) engaged with and regarded the documents.

Another piece of text that I would like to discuss in detail is the notice letter that the volunteer leaders sent out to members who were in danger of defaulting. Unlike the resolution, this document was framed more like a warning. Furthermore, while the resolution was meant for the wider association members, the notice letters were meant to be given to specific individuals and were, therefore, more targeted. Most of the people on the list were 'original' members. The idea of giving out notice letters came from their community mobiliser who said that this scheme had been implemented in other informal settlers' associations and had worked in terms of getting members more serious about their participation (i.e. increased payments, better meeting attendance). This letter was once again written by Susan's son.

January 2, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Good Day!

The ████████████████████████████████ like to appeal for a confirmation regarding your application in the association. Presently, the ████ is already finalizing its members for the upcoming designation of sublots. In addition, the association had already been registered under the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board and the official receipt had already been processed under the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR-6).

From this, we would like to request for your presence specifically your active participation every monthly meeting. It had already been approved by the association's board of members that inactivation of the membership for consecutive absences shall be subjected as forfeited.

Last November 26, 2017 during the monthly meeting, it had been discussed about the three-months advanced amortization fee which could be summed up to Php 2,625.00 for every 50 sq. meter- lot and Php 1,000.00 for the half payment of mobilizer fee. This will be only until January 15, 2018 and disobedience regarding the said payment will be considered as disqualification of account.

Also, another monthly meeting was being held last December 17, 2017 and it had been conversed, deliberated and finalized that there will be a payment of Php 480.00 for the land survey and the installation of mohons for every lot which will sum up to Php 120.00 (2 pieces are needed, Php 60.00 each). This had been agreed that the due dates of these payments will be on December 24, 2017.

For a complete breakdown of your payments, kindly refer to the itemization encoded below:

Deadline:	**December 24, 2017**	
Installation of Mohons	Php 60.00 each	**Php 120.00**
Land Survey		**Php 480.00**
T O T A L		**Php 600.00**

Deadline:	**JANUARY 15, 2018**	
3-months advanced Amortization Fee		**Php 2, 650.00**
50% of the Mobilizer Fee		**Php 1,000.00**

Moreover, responsible payments shall always be paired with attendance and participation in every activity held by the association. And also, rules and regulations of the ██████ were only been adopted from the bylaws of Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board.

Hence, we are hoping for your prompt response upon receiving this letter. As a memoratorium, kindly meet the president, ██████████████████ personally for your queries and answers as soon as possible.

Thank you and God bless.

Sincerely,

████████████████

Secretary
██████████████████ ociation Inc.

Attested:

████████████████

Vice President
██████████████ ociation Inc.

Noted and approved:

████████████████ s

President
██████████████ ociation

For a complete breakdown of your payments, kindly refer to the itemization encoded below:

Deadline: **December 24, 2017**

Installation of Mohons	Php 60.00 each	**Php 120.00**
Land Survey		**Php 480.00**
T O T A L		**Php 600.00**

Deadline: **January 15, 2018**

3-months advanced Amortization Fee	**Php 2, 650.00**
50% of the Mobilizer Fee	**Php 1,000.00**

Figure 17: A copy of the notice letter

The letter reads like a formal document complete with a letterhead and signed by three out of the seven volunteer leaders (although no signature had been affixed on the document I gathered). The letter is written in English in a very formal tone and, on many occasions, mentions technical terms and phrases (e.g. *inactivation of the membership for consecutive absences shall be subjected as forfeited*). While the overall presentation of the document is formal, I was struck by how the writer ends the letter in an informal yet familiar manner (i.e. closing with *Thank you and God bless*). Despite being given to a specific person, the document is impersonal as it does not contain the name of the person concerned (i.e. begins with a general 'To Whom It May Concern' subject line). Another significant aspect is how the letter provides copious and repetitive information regarding the payment and later presents them in a tabular form which, according to the treasurer, might be more accessible to the recipients. The letter also makes direct references to meeting dates and key agreements (i.e. "…it had been conversed, deliberated and finalized that there will be a payment of…") decided upon in these meetings. Presumably, it draws upon another key document that was internally assembled and produced: the minutes of the meetings. Due dates are set out alongside expectations (i.e. 'active participation', 'obedience') and consequences (i.e. 'disqualification of account', 'inactivation of membership'). In a way, this text was used as a threat.

However, I found on closer analysis that the letter was not meant to be a stand-alone, one-way, information-giving document. It ends with an invitation for the members to meet the president for queries and discussion. The association member is asked to sign a slip of paper with the words "Received" and then the date – a confirmation and proof of letter receipt. Especially prior to the association's submission of a final list of members, I noted that many association members visited Susan and Mila in their houses to talk about the status of their membership:

> *A couple came up to talk to Susan looking a bit worried. It was a vague conversation, but it sounded like they had a problem with paying for their monthly fees and were afraid of defaulting. Susan sounded irritated, almost like reprimanding them for their behaviour.*
>
> *Mila was looking through a pile of documents, seemingly looking for something and mentioned the letter they sent to the couple… 'We sent letters one-by-one'… the woman seems to have a vague recollection, but the man said: 'Yes, I signed mine'.*
>
> *Susan reacted immediately 'You signed it! Did you come here to talk to us and negotiate? No.' Mila sounded a bit more empathic, saying that the letter was a way for them expedite the process of people paying their dues. 'That's why we are pressuring you because we are also pressured… We are just following the rules'.*
> – Field notes, 18/02/2018

To give a bit of context, the irritation that Susan expressed here – not entirely captured by the account – was because the couple contacted her so last minute, when they were about to submit the final list of members. The account above illuminates the expectation of the volunteer leaders that members communicated with them following the receipt of the letter. Therefore, they seemed to frame the letter, not as a definitive decision regarding their membership but a strongly-worded reminder and invitation for dialogue. Another important aspect to pick up from this interaction is how Mila attributed the assembly of the letter – which, for her, was a way to expedite members' payment (once again using literacy artefact as a threat) – to external forces (i.e. *we are pressuring you because we are also pressured*). To a certain extent, the ownership of the decision to send out the letter was transferred to a faceless authority who created 'the rules' that Mila referred to.

Reflecting on the documents presented in this subsection, I realise that many of the aspects of these texts (e.g. language, power, technical speak) – although internally produced within the association – were reminiscent of the many external bureaucratic texts that volunteers and members engaged with. And, as the ethnographic accounts have illustrated in this subsection, such documents helped frame practices within the organisation (and vice-versa). In particular,

these texts and practices partly contributed to who could participate in the association and who could not. As such, these helped set out the 'conditions' for participation.

The impetus for the assembly of these documents did not come from 'outside', as unlike the other external bureaucratic texts (and processes), they were not required. Ultimately, the decision to assemble and disseminate these documents was made by the volunteer leaders. Therefore, these documents came into existence only partly influenced – and not necessarily directed – by external bureaucratic pressures. The volunteer leaders seem to have used these documents to fit their purpose (i.e. as a warning, a beginning of a dialogue, formalising rules). Still, these findings illuminate the many ways by which bureaucratic processes seeped into the organisation, either by influencing the documents they produced and/or framing the practices they engaged in. Finally, I have shown how volunteer leaders gave much credence to written text as a basis, for instance, to support their organisational decisions. A document was not issued in isolation but was usually distributed alongside different, internally-produced bureaucratic texts and speech that seemed to support and triangulate each other.

7.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored various literacy practices related to how local volunteer groups engaged with and navigated around organisational tasks specifically associated with bureaucratic processes. In doing so, I have situated the two organisations in a broader ecosystem of development and government institutions and asked whether and how such external partnerships structure the (literacy) practices within the organisation. The texts presented in this chapter have also shown how English pervades as the 'official' language of development and bureaucracy within these contexts (cf Appleby *et al* 2002; Robinson 2016). The majority of the texts presented here – including those that were assembled by the volunteers themselves – were written in English and used technical terms.

However, I have shown how volunteers were not merely compliant with bureaucratic processes and powers but instead, employed various strategies to engage with them in other ways. This includes how the language used in these texts were slightly adapted to fit organisational needs (e.g. translating some words in the local dialect so it would be more accessible for young people in Youth4Health). This also meant that the external texts and documents which often mediate and embody bureaucratic processes were neither static nor monolithic. Instead, their meanings and

uses were malleable, depending on how the volunteers engaged with them, using strategies such as reinterpreting, repurposing, resisting and assembling.

Table 6. Strategies for engaging with bureaucratic texts

Strategy	Description	Example
Reinterpreting	Through context-specific discourses, volunteers ascribe different meanings and values to external bureaucratic documents. In the process, the power of the texts seems not primarily to be based on what they contain but on the meanings ascribed to them by the volunteers.	Volunteer leaders reinterpreted and shared an official certification as *proof of progress* and a map that illustrates their to-be-purchased lot as a representation of the future.
Repurposing	Volunteers take a process/text and 'use' it outside its intended purpose as a response to contextual issues.	Youth4Health used an externally imposed recording scheme (i.e. UIC) to fit their own purpose of attendance recording and to navigate around multiple donor requirements.
Resisting	Some actors choose not to engage with externally imposed bureaucratic requirements and even deny their accuracy.	Land4All members who claimed that the land titles were fake and that the volunteer leaders were misappropriating the money.
Assembling	Volunteers create internal documents that are shaped by external, bureaucratic ones. These internal texts serve various purposes such as to inform, prove and/or threat	Land4All members produced letters, notices and memorandum

Drawing from Street's (1984) Literacy as Social Practice, Table 6 could be expanded by looking into the role of literacy mediators in these various strategies. This chapter has shown that these strategies were mostly engaged with collaboratively, often by a group of people. Within these communities where members had varying educational status, literacy levels and work/professional experiences, volunteers usually turned to each other (and/or other members of the community) for help in engaging with bureaucratic texts. Susan's son, for example, helped in the writing of the memorandum and notice letters; older, more experienced volunteers (some of whom became staff) assisted newer ones in filling out funder forms.

These strategies also point to how volunteers found ways to understand and 'take hold' (cf Kulick and Stroud 1993) of bureaucratic information and processes to get the job done. For instance, while many of the texts in this Chapter were in English, they needed to be translated orally to Hiligaynon, the local language, so the volunteers could engage with them in a productive manner. This chapter has shown how such attempts were, in part, accomplished by non-formal training

and orientation but also through informal everyday learning about bureaucratic processes. Using Rogers' (2004) insights on different kinds of informal learning is useful in identifying that some of these were self-directed (e.g. Susan read small portions of legal texts during her own time), accidental and presumably unconscious at the time (e.g. volunteers drawing from previous work experiences) and task-oriented peer-to-peer learning (e.g. volunteers in Youth4Health filling out the UIC form together). 'Losing grip' of these bureaucratic literacies, partly, seemed to have led to suspicion, resistance (as in Table 6) and ultimately non-participation. This was particularly salient in Land4All where non-formal provisions such as training and orientation programmes were rare.

Another significant finding in this chapter is how volunteers themselves assembled and disseminated powerful internal documents, envisaged to control, warn and/or threaten association members. Many of these 'new' documents and processes were similar in language and form to external institutional documents – formal, structured, impersonal and containing bureaucratic jargon. Using the lens of language ideologies, the examples in this subsection show that English has been perceived by external authorities and the volunteers themselves as the 'official' language of bureaucracy and authority. Therefore, when the volunteers had to assemble their own documents, they used English and bureaucratic terms. Relating to Blommaert (2005:241-242), the volunteers might have done this "on the basis of [the] conceptions they had [about the English language] and so [they] reproduce [and also spread] these conceptions" within their organisation. The role of language in shifting power differentials within the community is thus evident and shows how external practices and language ideologies helped structure internal ones.

Partly accomplished through these internal documents, literacy practices also tended to construct and intensify inequalities within a community (i.e. the changing composition of the informal settlers' association), thereby highlighting literacies' divisive tendencies. This finding seems to be distinctive for 'vulnerable' volunteers. There were tensions in being asked to participate in and even lead development programmes as 'empowered' volunteers (drawing from their own experiences and informal networks); yet their participation was constrained by bureaucratic and institutionalised practices.

Both organisations provided me as a researcher, a fascinating space in which to observe and analyse bureaucratic, institutional literacies, as there was often a clash in 'ways of working' (as in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) between volunteering as a communal, person-to-person helping activity and volunteering as a formalised 'mechanism' to fulfil government requirements and donor/funding

deliverables. For instance, the tension was palpable when Land4All volunteer leaders wanted to (and, at times, needed to) impose bureaucratic rules and processes on individuals who used to be simply their neighbours and friends (and not association members). There was also tension when Youth4Health volunteers navigated around similar requirements for them to conduct fellowship activities on the one hand and strengthen their bond as volunteers and friends on the other. Literacy practices seemed to play a crucial role in how volunteers navigated around the differences between formal/institutional and informal/community-based ways of working.

Chapter Eight
Volunteers as certain kinds of people:
differing volunteer identities

8. Introduction

There have been several points in this thesis when I have referred to how volunteers' identities were shaped by the learning and literacy practices they engaged with as part of volunteering. In Chapter 5, for example, the way volunteers valued certain kinds of learning might be further interpreted to explore how these knowledge hierarchies play out in relation to the construction of the 'expert' within the organisations. In Chapter 7, inequalities were constructed partly on the basis of who was identified as 'educated' and 'non-educated'. This chapter will explore notions of identity more explicitly; particularly, the ways by which volunteers in both organisations were framed as being certain kinds of persons by their fellow volunteers, other actors in the organisations and by themselves. With a focus on identities, this chapter will build on some of the arguments and themes that I have already explored in previous chapters.

Guided by notions of labelling (Escobar 1995), identification (Wenger 1998) and subjectification (Foucault 1982), the first section of this chapter will explore and problematise dominant identities ascribed to the volunteers, including where/from whom these were coming from. The second part of this chapter will look at how volunteers shifted between being considered as or considering themselves as beneficiaries and/or development agents of the programmes that they were part of. I will explore the power dynamics involved in these processes. Particularly, I will investigate whether and how volunteering allowed for the challenging of dominant identities – guided by concepts of positional identities (Holland *et al.* 1998) and negotiation (Wenger 1998).

8.1. Dominant volunteer identities: what are they and where are they coming from?

In this subsection, I explore dominant identities ascribed to the volunteers and trace where (and from whom) these discourses were coming from. In writing this section, I not only enumerate what these identities were, but also discuss some of the practices that helped shape and/or were

being shaped by these identities. For instance, I analyse both organisations in the light of them being part of the broader development ecosystem and aims (i.e. land tenure and HIV/AIDS development). Therefore, a good starting point would be to look at key policy and programme documents and how – through text – they construct particular volunteer identities and positions. I will begin by looking at these issues in Land4All, then in Youth4Health and then the construction of 'the expert' within both organisations.

8.1.1. Victims, landless people and 'squatter mentality'

The CMP explicitly states that "underprivileged and homeless citizens" (RA 7279, 1992) are the intended beneficiaries of the land tenure programme that Land4All was applying for. Additionally, the policy expects that residents of so-called "blighted or depressed areas" (RA 7279, 1992) can organise themselves before accessing the programme. Therefore, it could be inferred that as far as the policy is concerned, to participate in Land4All means that one must be an underprivileged, homeless citizen. These qualifications were later 'verified' by key government officers through community visits and family interviews. At the level of policy – and the various programmes and activities involved in its implementation – the volunteers of Land4All were framed exactly like this: as underprivileged and homeless individuals living in blighted and depressed areas. I found such framing seeped in the assumptions of government officials who were implementing the CMP.

For example, I had the opportunity to attend the very first orientation session conducted by the Socialised Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) – the chief government office that implements the CMP. Also in attendance were the city Mayor and a council member of the local government unit. The meeting was well-attended and felt significant: almost all the association members were present and 'big' government officials attended. The session lasted for about four hours. The aim was to orient the community members and the volunteer leaders about the nitty-gritty of the application process. Apart from this, I thought that this meeting was instrumental in 'setting the tone' for the community's participation in the CMP. Right at the beginning of the session:

> *The woman* [SHFC officer] *started by introducing herself and immediately said that they are there because they know that the community members are victims of eviction. She also said that they know the sense of urgency because they already have a court order. She said that the program was for people who are landless - which means no property is*

signed under his/her name… She emphasised, however, that this is NOT a dole-out
programme – 'You will have debts that you have to pay.'
– Field Notes, 23/06/2017

In this account, the government officer's language framed the rationale for community members being able to access the CMP programme in the first place. She 'backed up' her speech through 'official' documents that were projected on a PowerPoint presentation, which she referred to often. Aware of the policy provisions, I understood why her justification of these community members' eligibility was framed around them being 'victims' and 'landless people'. In fact, the heading of the PowerPoint slide she often referred to was *Qualifications of CMP beneficiaries*. For me, both the policy and the practice (i.e. orientation) tended to place the community members in the position of needing help. The government took on the position of being the 'helpers'. The officer offered a caveat towards the end of this account when she emphasised that this 'help' came with responsibility from the side of the beneficiaries. They had financial obligations to fulfil. Therefore, they did not only freely receive but also needed to pay back. Again, this echoes the policy pronouncements presented earlier: underprivileged and homeless citizens were framed as beneficiaries on the one hand and on the other, they were expected to organise themselves to be able to participate in the programme.

What also struck me in the account above was that the framing of these identities and relationships – between the 'helper' and the 'helped', was not dialectic, but rather, more static and predefined by the government (here, represented by the person delivering the orientation). Looking more closely at this account, I sensed how she established that 'they' – as representatives of the government – were aware of the circumstances of this particular community. For instance, she spoke of how they knew that the community members were victims and were under pressure because of the urgency brought about by the notice of demolition. At least in this situation, the government official who was external to the community, constructed the characterisation of the community's identities. In a sense, it felt as if she was telling them who they were but in relation to the bureaucratic process that they were now part of.

I will now look at how such identity framings played out in relation to practices and relationships within the organisations. In the middle of my fieldwork, I decided to interview one of the chief officers of the SHFC to further understand the technicalities of the CMP process. For this, I approached Frances because I had the impression that she was a very hands-on chief. Despite occupying a senior role in SHFC, I often saw her in community meetings, including in negotiations with the landowner over essential agreements. During our interview, she was very

candid in identifying key challenges experienced by squatter communities, based on her years of experience. Along these lines, I decided to bring up the issue of how 'well-off' individuals were taking over the slots of the original informally-settling households[35] (as discussed in Chapter 7). Referring to the document I cited at the beginning of this subsection, I asked whether she thought it was an issue that individuals who were able to purchase about 4-5 lots participated in a programme explicitly intended for 'underprivileged' citizens. Below is an excerpt of the conversation:

Frances:	*It's good that an association is mixed with people who are more knowledgeable… because if all of them have squatter mentality, they won't pay and they won't attain security of tenure. So, it's good that they get mixed with these kinds of people…*
Me:	*What do you mean by squatter mentality?*
Frances:	*Squatter mentality – they think that everything is free, no financial obligation. They have been squatting free for 20, 50 years. I don't pay for land, no tax, no amortisation, no payment for electricity. So why do they have to pay now? This is a very affordable programme – they have money for gambling, money for alcohol and cigarettes but not for savings. There is an attitude problem and not a financial problem.*

– Interview excerpt, 03/08/2018

While one of her staff members above characterised volunteers and members of Land4All in terms of resource deficits (e.g. lack of property), Frances' statements reveal her assumptions around informal settlers' knowledge and attitudes. First, she seemed to link socioeconomic status (i.e. my question above regarding those who can afford to buy several lots) with one's knowledge (or, more specifically, their capacity to engage with CMP information). She ascribed a generalised identity to the squatting populations such as the original members and volunteer leaders of Land4All: that they were less knowledgeable as compared to more well-off members. Frances, her colleague and the pronouncements from the policy/programme documents earlier, all contribute to the practice of 'labelling', as Escobar's (1995) work illuminates (see Chapter 3). Escobar (1995) points to how labelling is not only about naming but also attaching specific characteristics to individuals and communities. Frances, for instance, believed that it was not the lack of resources that prevented squatters from participating actively. Rather, she assumed that it was their way of thinking – which she conveniently labelled as *squatter mentality* – that, as squatters, they were entitled to enjoy things for free. It was apparent how she considered such an

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[35] I must clarify that I had the courage to bring up this sensitive information partly because Frances was aware of it for quite a while then. So, I knew that this was not something the association was trying to hide and might put the association in a difficult situation (e.g. being disqualified)

outlook and *lack of knowledge* as problematic and one that could jeopardise the possibility of them securing land tenure. The antidote, for her, was to 'mix' them with *more knowledgeable individuals.* She gave me the impression that she was relegating the knowledge of squatters as faulty and incomplete. This conversation made me realise that for Frances, the changing composition within Land4All was not problematic – and therefore must not be remedied. In fact, she seemed to think that this was ideal and needed to be encouraged so that the community members could navigate the land tenure process successfully.

This conversation illustrates how framing 'who volunteers are' not only resided in how policy documents and key government officials spoke about these communities, but also influenced the way these programmes were implemented. These insights relate to Escobar's (1995) notion of development discourses as not only about 'talking' but also as about actions as well. When I first realised that the composition of Land4All had been changing to include more well-off members, I was worried that their application would be denied and/or they would be reprimanded. But the practice was tolerated. Speaking to Frances – and obtaining a glimpse of her assumptions towards informal settlers – provided one reason why this was the case.

8.1.2. *"Many of the gay men have HIV… and I am a gay volunteer."*

> Me: *Do you experience discrimination by volunteering as HIV counsellors?*
> RJ: *Yes… because I always post about HIV stuff on Facebook, people already think that I have HIV! That I'm promiscuous or pay men for sex*
> Biboy: *I go to this clinic, and people already suspect that I have the disease. I used to have a dummy account for bisexual groups. There was one person who messaged me saying that I am HIV positive too because I keep on posting about HIV rates in the city. I was so surprised and told him that I was not HIV positive.*
> Me: *So, this is not a reaction that you expected from people?*
> Biboy: *No, no, not at all. Actually, it's better that it's just a chat because I don't know what I will say if they tell me in person.*
> Me: *And you Jelmar?*
> Jelmar: *Yes, definitely! I have so many people message me, even my friends, they were worried about me asking if I have it…. You know, many of the gay men have HIV… and I am gay volunteer…*
> – Field Notes, 29/11/2017

The excerpt above was part of an informal conversation between a group of HIV/AIDS volunteers before the celebration of the World AIDS Day in 2017. RJ was asked to deliver a

speech during the conference plenary based on what he thought were the challenges of volunteering for the HIV/AIDS advocacy. Together with youth volunteers Biboy and Jelmar, they were brainstorming what RJ might share. These exchanges highlight what volunteers thought and experienced to be people's strong association between volunteering in the organisation and the possibility of the volunteers having HIV/AIDS. Being identified by others as a PLHIV generated worry and concern among the volunteers' friends and made them uncomfortable about engaging with peers and acquaintances, both online and offline. Jelmar's statement *you know many of the gay men have HIV… and I am gay* particularly struck me. For me, his statement encapsulates the presumed solid link between being gay and being HIV positive. It shows how other people, particularly those in their closer circle, seemed to assume that Jelmar and his fellow volunteers were at the intersection of both identities.

When I began volunteering in Youth4Health, one of the first things that struck me was that a majority of the volunteers (and staff) who worked on the organisation's HIV/AIDS advocacy identified as gay men, bisexual men and transwomen, many of whom were living with HIV. There were volunteers who identified as straight, but were often more involved with other projects areas. So, I had wondered whether the composition of the volunteer team for HIV/AIDS might reproduce what I noticed to be a commonly held public assumption in the Philippines, that HIV/AIDS was a 'gay man's disease' (I will discuss later how this was also noted by the volunteers). When I spoke with the organisation's leadership team about this, the most common justification I would hear was that the choice was strategic, since

> *if you have HIV when someone talks to you about HIV, you can speak about it. When you are a PLHIV and a young person, it is easy for you to reach out to your peers.*
> – Field notes, 10/03/18

> *We tap the LGBT groups to help us generate the numbers we want to generate… to reach the people we cannot reach.*
> – Interview excerpts, 02/26/2018

The first statement is lifted from a more extensive extract on volunteer recruitment that I have already cited in Chapter 6 as shared by Luisa, Youth4Health's senior staff. Her statement seems to point to how PLHIVs have lived experiences and knowledge that would allow them to develop a relationship of empathy with their peers. In a way, she considered being a young person living with HIV as a valuable resource for the organisation and had, indirectly and slightly, veered away from the framing of PLHIVs as 'key affected populations' (cf beneficiaries or those needing

help). Furthermore, these volunteers were seen to have not only the knowledge but also the networks. The second statement was part of a conversation between Tomas and me about a meeting with gay and bisexual groups with whom Youth4Health was hoping to establish partnerships. Tomas' statement made me realise that he had a high regard for these groups' capacity to access communities that the organisation itself could not reach. This account reminded me of a conversation I had with some youth volunteers on how they were using gay hook-up sites to scout for potential clients. One of them said *I know what these gays do and want; because that's also what I do!* [Field Notes, 18/10/2017]. Taking these statements together, I sensed that both Tomas and Luisa placed a high value on the lived experiences of PLHIVs and the embeddedness of the gay and bisexual volunteers in the wider LGBT community. In a way, they characterised them as experts and professionals – 'identities' that the organisation's formal structure (see Chapter 2) chiefly attributes to licensed medical professionals.

I discussed in Chapter 2 that Youth4Health distinguished between policy and programme volunteers. When I came across this categorisation, I was struck by how Youth4Health's policies seemed to regard different 'types' of volunteers to be capable of doing certain 'types' of tasks. In their categorisation, it seemed to me that volunteers who were qualified and licensed health workers were associated with tasks needing expertise and professionalism while community-based volunteers' tasks were those that were more instrumental, such as information dissemination and distribution of contraceptives. However, as I continued my fieldwork, I realised that the volunteers I worked with did not call themselves programme and policy volunteers, but rather, more commonly, as peer educators or peer counsellors. For instance, in Chapter 6, I described how youth volunteers took pride in and, at times, were motivated by how they climbed up the ladder of volunteering positions – from being youth volunteers to being peer educators and then later, peer counsellors. I also noticed that many volunteers identified themselves with the programme they most engaged with – like a 'turf'. For example, I met volunteers who solely participated in maternal health programmes and shied away from other tasks.

8.1.3. Constructing the experts

In the previous two subsections, the identity of the 'expert' has been discussed in different ways. For some staff members of the Youth4Health, the expertise of volunteers who were living with HIV rested on their lived experience of the disease and therefore their ability to relate more to the key beneficiaries of the organisation. In Land4All, the government official linked expertise of the

land application process with socioeconomic status – those who were better off had the capacity to understand the process more readily, compared to those who had a 'squatter mentality'. In this subsection, I will extend this discussion of how the 'expert' was constructed in both organisations. Here, I build upon some of the insights presented in Chapter 5, particularly my discussion on how certain forms of knowledge gained in certain settings were placed in higher positions, within a hierarchy of knowledge constructed by the volunteers. In this subsection, I discuss how such hierarchy translated into how certain identities – particularly that of the expert – were ascribed to volunteers.

Perhaps the most important aspect of being identified as an expert was if one was considered to have a strong degree of knowledge over certain processes. For instance, when I asked Mila why she thought Susan was the best person to lead their organisation, *she said that it is because Susan is smart, she knows the processes and the ins and outs of the government, she works in sales, and she is good with people* [Field Notes, 14/09/2017]. Part of Susan's role was to help association members understand the loan application processes and documents, and, based on Mila's statement above, she was capable of doing this partly because of her knowledge of how the government works. For me, this high regard attributed to an individual's knowledge of bureaucratic processes was understandable because the association needed to be precise in their application – such as knowing which offices to go to for a particular requirement or document. In addition, Mila also acknowledged Susan's skills in working with people – partly because she works in sales. This suggests that, for Mila, social skills were also important as well as what could be described as functional skills.

In Youth4Health, there seemed to be a similar expectation that volunteers communicated the right information during community lectures and health teachings and correctly performed medical procedures involved in HIV testing. Based on my observations, an 'authority' figure was often needed to validate if something was done correctly. He/she also served as the arbiter whenever confusions arose. This could be illustrated by the account below of RJ's return demonstration of a community-based HIV testing procedure, after participating in a three-day workshop on the topic. When selected volunteers and staff attended a major or critical workshop or a seminar (such as new updates on HIV testing), it was customary in Youth4Health for them to share the key learnings and updates with the rest of the members who were unable to attend. After one of the meetings, RJ (a volunteer) was asked by Luisa, a senior staff, to perform the test on Tomas (another senior staff) while other staff members (e.g. nurses and medical technologists) and volunteers observed.

RJ disinfected Tomas finger by wiping it using a cotton ball, with alcohol, narrating his steps as he went along. Luisa came closer to get a better look, and someone said, jokingly, 'Oh no, Ma'am Luisa is grading you!' RJ laughed, and Luisa clarified 'You need to wipe the finger from the centre out'. RJ appeared a bit tense but then said 'Yes ma'am.'

RJ proceeded to wipe the finger with dried cotton. Tomas told him, sounding irritated, that this shouldn't be done anymore because the finger has been disinfected by the alcohol and air-dried. If you have the finger contacted with another object [i.e. the dry cotton ball], *it might get infected again. RJ disagreed and said that during the training, this was how he was taught by the instructor. He continued that because some clients become very sweaty out of fear of needles, you need to wipe the sweat. Tomas disagreed and said that it wouldn't take that fast for someone to sweat. RJ replied, irritated, 'So why don't you just do this instead of me?'*
– Field Notes, 11/09/2017

There was palpable tension on the need to be exact in the steps in conducting a medical test. Three actors – RJ, Luisa and Tomas – attempted to work together to share such information as accurately as possible with the audience. In a way, RJ could be considered *an* expert (as opposed to *the* expert) in the situation because he had the most recent knowledge about the procedure. However, it could be inferred from the account that such a role shifted at various moments. Luisa stepped in at some point to clarify even more specific details, such as wiping the client's finger from the centre-out. At the outset, Luisa was placed by the audience in a position of authority – like an evaluator of the accuracy of RJ's actions (i.e. *Luisa is grading you!*). In the second half of the account, there was an apparent point of contention between RJ and Tomas. RJ backed his claim by referring to the trainer who had facilitated the workshop. He argued that this was what he was told to do by someone who was knowledgeable. Tomas, on the other hand, seemed to have relied on his own understanding of the situation. This disagreement was not resolved. Not only does this account highlight the collaborative and combative nature of 'making sense' of and mediating information, but it also shows how they drew upon people they considered as experts and authorities to 'back them up' over a disagreement.

Land4All also engaged with individuals who were not part of their association, but they thought had the knowledge about certain processes (perhaps even more than or to complement that of Susan's). Atty Subaldo, a retired engineer and lawyer, was hired by the landowner to help the association in the land conversion[36] process. The idea was for Atty. Subaldo and his team to

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[36] The land that the association seeks to purchase is classified as 'agricultural' and has to be converted to 'residential' for the acquisition to continue. The land conversion process is lengthy and requires a lot of documentation.

single-handedly accomplish this extremely complex task, thereby removing the responsibility from the association members. During my fieldwork, however, the volunteer leaders continued to be involved, quite intensively, in the process:

> *...I asked Susan how she felt during the meeting with Atty. Subaldo and his team last week. She said 'My nose always bleeds when I talk with him, sir! I feel as if it was graded recitation all over again'. Although she expressed that she is learning a lot of things from Atty. Subaldo who she felt knew a lot about the process. She told me that Atty. Subaldo is a man full of networks. He knows important people, and she suspects that the land conversion is being expedited because he knows someone from the higher-ups in the government office.*
> – Field Notes, 05/11/2017

In this account, Susan seems to frame Atty. Subaldo as a highly valuable resource for the organisation. First, as Luisa above, Atty. Subaldo was considered by Susan as an expert. Susan's comment 'my nose always bleeds' is a Filipino expression, often referring to someone saying things so complex that the listener's nose starts to bleed from trying to comprehend. She also seemed to frame herself as a student learning from and being graded by Atty. Subaldo (i.e. *as if it was graded recitation all over again*) like a formal assessment in school. Second, Susan pointed to Atty. Subaldo's networks. He knew 'important people' that the association could then access through him. Specifically, his connections with 'higher-ups' in the government meant that the association's application would be expedited. Presumably, Atty. Subaldo's network in the government could help the association through the bureaucratic hurdles.

The example above also appears to link expertise with a certain social and organisational position. Earlier, Luisa – the longest-serving member of the organisation, a senior staff and a licensed medical technologist – was assumed to be the expert in the situation. Atty. Subaldo was considered an expert because he is a lawyer and had occupied key positions in various government offices. However, I also noted that expertise did not always equate to position or authority. An example of this was when the reporting of HIV results across various clinics funded by an NGO was harmonised, using an online platform:

> *Lilian, a medical technologist working at Youth4Health for over a decade, accomplished the test and had her results ready quickly – but she could not upload them on the online portal. She said that's why she enlisted the help of RJ – since, according to her, RJ is a millennial and knows much about computers and she, an old lady, was centennial!*

> *...when RJ inputted answered both the first and the second question; the tab turned blue. And he shouted, and we were clapping in celebration. Lilian said 'RJ, such an expert... you can now become a med-tech!'*
> – Field Notes, 8/01/2018

In the account above, the 'expert' had more to do with knowledge of a particular task (i.e. with being able to navigate the websites and applications) rather than of a position or authority. Lilian, seen as a go-to person for anything testing-related, knew that the task at hand was not her expertise (partly, as she said, because of her age, referring to herself as *centennial*) and therefore had asked RJ (a *millennial*) to be her teacher. In a way, this nuances what the government official earlier assumed – that social position equates with knowledge. Instead, the role of the expert could change from time to time and be ascribed to an individual who might not be considered predominantly as one.

Discussions in section 8.1 have shown how the dominant ways by which volunteers were framed was in terms of deficit. In other words, volunteers were often talked about based on what they lacked. For instance, informal settlers were thought of as lacking the capacity to comprehend complex bureaucratic information or Youth4Health volunteers were often associated with HIV/AIDS and homosexuality (and the stigma and discrimination around this). These ascribed identities and labels were constructed from and by a variety of sources – mostly from narratives and opinions of individuals (government officials, staff members and volunteers themselves) but also from policy and programme pronouncements. Following Holland *et al.* (1998), these discourses and practices contributed to how certain volunteers were positioned (as in positional identity) within the 'figured world' of the organisations.

Yet despite being dominant, these labels did not exist in isolation and co-existed with other discourses as well. Discussions on expertise illustrate this – for example, how being HIV positive was also considered as having lived experience of being gay, as being embedded and therefore as having an extensive network with LGBT communities. These various ascribed identities – and discourses around who volunteers were – influenced practices within the organisations. Partly, they determined who took on a leadership position (as for Susan) and who got recruited to do certain activities (as in Youth4Health).

8.2. Providers and/or beneficiaries: claiming identities through volunteering

So far, my discussion has highlighted how volunteers in both organisations occupied overlapping positions in what I would describe as a development worker-beneficiary dichotomy. In the examples given so far, informal settlers were framed as 'beneficiaries', and gay men were framed as 'key affected population'. Yet within the same spaces, informal settlers were expected to be 'community organisers' and gay men as 'experts' and 'resource for networks'. This section will further explore these differing identities by focusing chiefly on the narratives of volunteers themselves – who, as will become clearer later, vacillated between the position of being the 'helper' and the 'helped' – and on how they navigated around these identities.

8.2.1. Claiming agency through the construction of the 'other' and the self

As I have discussed in Chapter 5, a common phrase I encountered whenever I asked volunteers in both organisations why they volunteered was: because they wanted to help 'others'. In Chapter 5, I explained how the 'other' was often based on similarities and complementarities (i.e. as family, relative, blood brother). Here, I focus on how the 'other' was framed based on difference. Many of the insights here strongly illustrate how volunteers themselves participated in the process of constructing and ascribing identities. Additionally, I noticed that constructing the 'other' in a particular way – for instance, as subjects of volunteers' compassion and self-sacrifice – consequently framed what the volunteers perceived they could do for them.

I begin by unpacking the 'other' through my interview with Pip, an ALHIV who came from what was described by Youth4Health staff as a 'problematic household'. Pip struck me as a fun-loving, curious young person who actively participated in the organisation's activities as a volunteer. Being a minor with a so-called complicated parental situation, he was being monitored by Youth4Health's social workers to ensure that he took his medication, participated in counselling sessions and attended clinic visits. One afternoon, I spoke with Pip to ask about why he volunteered for Youth4Health:

> *I want to help my fellow adolescents so that they will be aware of what is happening in our community and society…. Others don't really know the meaning of the* [HIV/AIDS] *situation... I volunteer to help spread the word* [about HIV/AIDS] *through conducting activities every Saturday… At least I have helped somehow even if it's just small*
> – Interview excerpt, 12/02/2018

Here, Pip appears to frame 'others' as a group of young people who, although he considered them to be his 'fellow' adolescents, unlike him, had limited knowledge of the HIV/AIDS situation in the country. Pip seemed to have highly problematised this perceived lack of awareness, considering the way he expressed this concern to me during our conversation. He spoke about 'others' almost with a deep sense of worry and urgency, because – as if lecturing me – he explained that most newly diagnosed HIV cases come from his age group. His narrative then suggests that he saw himself in a position of a 'knowledge source'. This was because first, he had the virus and had therefore experienced living with it; and second, he was a trained peer educator. It then appears that being able to contribute – no matter how 'small' – to expanding these young people's knowledge of the issue strongly framed his motivation to engage in this volunteer work.

The second account below is from Seth, a fresh Social Work graduate, who was assigned as case manager for Pip and a couple of other ALHIVs. This role meant that he was in charge of more complex counselling situations (for example, with a young person coming from an abusive family). At times, he stood in for a minor's parent so that the latter could get tested for HIV. Seth volunteered in Youth4Health because of the following reasons:

> *…To give hope, to understand one's self… to give courage. To advocate for those who cannot speak. In our profession, you have to be generous. You know how engineers build bridges? That's what we do too – although we don't have the money and we won't be rich… we even give our own money to those who need it more! But the bridge we build is for those people who have fallen… we are the bridge to guide them…. in solving their problems.*
> – Interview excerpts 12/12/2017

As this account illustrates, Seth framed the 'other' as those who are voiceless and lost – and, therefore, needed advocates and guidance. The 'other' was also someone who was marginalised or who had *fallen* from an implied 'right' track in life. Like Pip, Seth's understanding of who these 'others' were, framed what he thought he could do for them. Seth discussed this in light of his profession: *The misunderstanding about social work*, he told me during an interview, *is that we only distribute canned sardines, instant noodles and relief goods!* [Interview excerpt, 12/12/2017]. Arguing against this, his account above illustrates that for him, social work has a more profound, seemingly moral mission. As a novice social worker, he felt that he could fulfil such a mission through volunteering in Youth4Health. His analogy of describing himself as a

voice seems to be accurate, given that, as social workers, they stood in for parents[37] so that these adolescents could legally access HIV testing services, get diagnosed and be given proper treatment. All of this would be legally impossible without social workers like Seth. His role as a case manager and HIV counsellor, he shared, allowed him to offer adolescents guidance and serve as a *bridge* to help them get on track with life. Moreover, Seth also spoke about ideas around generosity (i.e. giving his own money) which was beyond the legal and structural frameworks of his role as a social worker in Youth4Health.

Even in Land4All, a community regarded by a government office as 'victims', 'informal settlers' and 'squatters', there existed 'others' that volunteer leaders and other community members felt needed help:

> *On our way back to the lot, Susan pointed me to Pedro – a man in his late 20s carrying a sack of wood over his shoulders with a young girl walking beside him. She said that Pedro is very hardworking. Pedro has two kids, one of schooling age, but he did not have money to send him to school. Pedro works odd jobs: cut wood, fix some house problems, carpentry. 'Whatever you ask him to do, he does… as long as he can earn something…' Therefore, Susan feels that Pedro needs to be included in the list of people who joins the CMP. 'I really pity him actually. We will look for ways that he joins us because you know what, he perseveres…'*
> – Field Notes, 16/07/2017

In this account, Pedro, the 'other' – while also experiencing similar uncertainty and vulnerability as Susan – was framed to be experiencing a more serious situation. The way Susan introduced Pedro to me – an outsider – seemed to suggest that she had a deep understanding of Pedro's 'pitiful' situation and the inspiring hard work that he exhibits. Presumably, this was because of having lived with him in the same community for decades. Recognising such inequality then seems to have strongly framed Susan's motivation to help Pedro and ensure that he was included in the government programme – something that I felt she could readily facilitate, given that she was leading the organisation. Susan often told me that it was industrious people like Pedro who should not be *left behind*, even though their financial situations might not be as stable as other community members.

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[37] Current Philippine laws require that anyone under the age of 18 must secure parents' consent prior to getting tested. Youth4Health facilitates this by having a social worker sign a secure so-called "proxy" consent. Since many adolescents would rather not get tested than tell their parents about their potential situation, they choose not to get tested. No diagnosis means no proper treatment.

The Hiligaynon term for 'others' that was often used by the participants was *iban*. Interestingly, *iban* not only connotes 'another person' but also slightly highlights a sense of difference – sometimes of negative nature – between the speaker and the person he/she refers to as *iban*. This second meaning seems to influence more strongly how the volunteers constructed *iban* in the accounts above: someone who, to a certain extent, is different and unequal from them. Recognising and being troubled by these inequalities seems to have framed their motivations for giving and volunteering: Pip intended to 'share' his knowledge to those less aware; Seth wanted to be a voice for adolescents who could not access services; and Susan wanted to be a conduit for Pedro to potentially achieve land tenure. In other words, volunteering was sometimes understood and practised as a tool to flatten these inequalities. In a way, these narratives also seem to highlight how volunteers indirectly rejected some of the ascribed identities attached to them (as discussed in the previous subsection), claiming instead their capacity to be active actors in development.

Take, for instance, the speech of RJ below during the AIDS Congress – a regional gathering of policy-makers, NGOs, volunteers and PLHIVs, including their families. RJ was invited to speak at the plenary in front of a large audience. I remembered how terrified he was and how, in preparing his speech, he had enlisted the help of a number of volunteers (including me) and staff to help him. Originally, he wanted to talk about the challenges and issues faced by young people, but he was reminded by the programme committee that the speech needed to be about him and his experience as a volunteer. When it was time for him to deliver the speech,

> *RJ took the stage and appeared extremely confident; he had no written speech or even a piece of paper as a guide. He was wearing a simple shirt – the one that he always uses during community health teaching – it had the logo of the organisation at the front and the hotline number at the back. He stepped off the podium and took centre stage, everyone was applauding... 'I was only a drag queen before' he continued and enumerated other jobs he did like waiting for a restaurant, selling bread in a bakery, entertaining in a bar, 'but now I'm not only a volunteer but also an HIV counsellor and peer educator'...*
> – Field notes, 04/10/2018

I had heard about his story many times before, but this was the first time that I heard him speak about it in front of a large audience. It is difficult to describe now, but when I was sitting down at the table with all the Youth4Health volunteers, our pride was palpable. For me, the public declaration of him re-telling his story – recognising his past and recasting himself as 'someone else' (*not only a volunteer but also an HIV counsellor and peer educator)* – was a powerful claim

to certain identities that he previously had no access to. It was an indirect rejection of the identities previously ascribed to him – a gay man who had not finished formal school – and represented himself in a new light, with more agency, knowledge and skills.

In my experience, however, dominant identities were not always rejected. For instance, when RJ shared earlier that he was being profiled as HIV positive because he was gay and was volunteering for Youth4Health, he later admitted that he would at times use people's presumptions to encourage them to undergo testing. He once told me that he once pretended to be HIV positive in order to convince the person he was speaking with on Facebook, not to be like him or suffer like him. The person ultimately sought testing in another clinic near his place of residence.

Turning to Land4All, the use of assumptions and stereotypes was also evident. For instance:

> *I started writing 'informal settlers' on the project document, and a woman came up to me and said: "Do not call us squatters. I'm tired of it. Call us homeowners!"*
> – Field Notes 07/08/2017

> *Speaking to the officer, Susan sounded like she was begging. She said that they are very poor, squatters, and they will be evicted soon. This is why they need the documents to be processed faster*
> – Field Notes 13/12/017

In the first account, the woman exhibits a resolute rejection of the term *squatters* to describe them. This exchange took place when I was helping the volunteer leaders to write a project proposal for a livelihood programme that they were hoping to submit to a government office. I had wanted to use the term squatters or informal settlers because I thought that this would better represent their problems and improve their chances of obtaining funding. But one of their officers told me to remove it and explained that squatters sounded very negative, as if they were bad people or irresponsible and that was why they did not have a land of their own. She rejected the stereotypes attached to such labels because, she told me, they were doing something to change their situation. In a way, she did not want to be 'written' or 'fixed in text' using these stereotypes. In the second account, Susan presents a very different narrative, using the terms' poor' and 'landless' to describe their community to a government official assigned in issuing a particular certificate. Unlike in the first account, Susan was using and playing out the labels – and potentially the stereotypes attached to them – that the woman in the first account rejected. She was using these labels to their advantage, to further their case and to expedite their application.

Taken together, these accounts form a strong narrative that frames 'others' as those who, in certain aspects, were more disadvantaged and/or vulnerable than 'them', the volunteers. These examples highlight the relational aspect of positional identities (Holland *et al.* 1998) particularly how the volunteers seemed to identify themselves and their position in relation to another's vulnerability. The volunteers seemed to feel that they were in the position to offer and provide these 'others' with services that otherwise they could not readily access – which signals a strong sense of agency among the volunteers. Through the way they spoke about themselves and the kind of relationships they discursively created; they implicitly rejected the deficit labels that were dominantly being attached to them. However, at times, they also used these labels and stereotypes to their advantage, especially when it assisted in achieving a particular goal.

8.2.2. *"But how about me?" identity negotiations*

> *'Sometimes, even money for transportation, I get embarrassed to take* [from the association's funds] *but how about me?', visibly upset Susan laments over her own expenses while doing the processes related to their CMP application, that day, she missed her sales target...* 'Indi na ya makita sang tawo' *[other people cannot really see that].*
> – Field Notes, 16/07/2017

When I introduced the two cases in Chapter 2, I emphasised that most of the volunteers I worked with also experienced similar issues and challenges as the people they were 'targeting'. Many volunteers in Youth4Health were also adolescents living with HIV or living in low-income households. This situation was even more apparent in Land4All where similar to a mutual-aid or self-help group, they were volunteering for something that was thought of as a remedy to a shared (and urgent) problem or issue. To a certain extent, the volunteer leaders were experiencing similar issues and challenges (although, as I have discussed earlier, to varying degrees). They too had been evicted, their houses had been demolished and their financial situation was precarious.

The sentiment Susan expresses in the account above (and the title of this subsection) *but how about me?* illuminates that the discourse of agency that has emerged so strongly in the discussions so far, co-existed with a recognition that they continued to have needs and concerns. In Chapter 6, where volunteers carrying out HIV testing through the night without being given any food, commented how this was the difficult thing about being a volunteer: much was demanded from them but Youth4Health, at times, could not even feed them. As discussed in

Chapter 6 (see particularly the section on 'volunteering as a cost'), volunteers at times, needed to spend their own money to fulfil certain volunteering tasks.

In this subsection, I investigate some of these challenges experienced by volunteers in the process of volunteering. In making these issues visible, I show how claiming for agency was not a one-way course and that the process of volunteers 'repositioning' and negotiating their positional identities was a messy and shifting one.

The individuals who said that they had the capacity to help others also recognised that they had very immediate needs as well. For instance, I have noted that the emotional component of working with HIV/AIDS clients appears to have impacted several volunteers at Youth4Health – especially those who, themselves, were immunocompromised. For example, a few weeks before leaving the organisation, the volunteers received the surprising news that one of their long-time HIV clients had passed away. *He was a great dancer and still joined Dinagyang* [a dance competition] *in January,* said one of the Youth4Health staff [Field notes, 16/03/2018]. While this was a surprise to many, the one person that I and Seth (the social worker) observed to be most affected was Marty, the nurse case manager (also a volunteer) in charge of monitoring the client. *I tried to talk to him* [Marty]*, remember, Seth told us, but he also said that Marty needs time to slow down. I agreed. Seth said that Marty has been losing sleep because of a new project, and now this. The staff member said he might be blaming himself because he could have done better* [Field notes, 16/03/2018].

In the conversation, I could sense that staff members and volunteers were already getting worried about the emotional toll that the news was having on Marty – who himself, was HIV positive. It could be inferred that, through these conversations and actions, he was being repositioned also as the 'other' needing help, even while being seen as one of 'them', a volunteer offering help to others.

Claiming for one's social position was also influenced by the kind of knowledge that one was thought to have related to the hierarchies of knowledge discussed in Chapter 5. For instance, I shared earlier how the construction of an 'expert' depended on one's knowledge about a particular task (and not always about positions and educational status) but that claiming an identity as expert was not always straightforward. This is illustrated in the following interaction between RJ, the volunteer, and an HIV screening client:

I talked to the client who seemed nervous about the procedure and asked if he were okay. He quickly responded, yes. He then went on to say that he is familiar with the process and already has two [bachelor's] *degrees. He said that he is from the medical field – a medical technologist.*

RJ heard this, paused a bit and said 'Wow'. He looked at me and gave an anxious smile. Perhaps it was this anxiety that caused RJ to rip the gloves he was putting on.
*The client quickly noticed and quipped: 'Oh, it ripped, that's 6*0! [as if grading RJ]. *RJ laughed anxiously. I told the client that he sounded like a clinical instructor to which he replied: "Well, I am a clinical instructor". RJ said, giggling, that he now feels scared because he is pricking someone from the medical field. 'Apologies sir, I'm not from the medical field. I was just trained to do this'. I heard the man said, under his breath, 'Supposedly it is someone from the medical field'.*
RJ used his hand and not the mechanical pricker. It went smoothly. After the procedure, the man said, 'I'll give you a 70 grade' and laughed.
– Field notes, 16/08/17

In this account, the tensions between various value judgements towards certain forms of knowledge affected the interaction between the volunteer and the client. The client strongly voiced his opinion regarding the need for a medical professional, presumably trained in a formal institution (like him, a medical technologist), to perform a medical procedure. It seemed to matter less both to RJ and the client that the former had performed this procedure successfully many times before. For me, RJ could be considered an *expert* in this HIV screening process precisely because of his experience in administering this procedure with a wide variety of clients, on various occasions. However, the client's declaration that he was a double degree holder and a medical technologist had reversed the power positions between him and RJ (i.e. raising the question of who is the expert?). Although they were working in different contexts, the shifting of power implied that what the client knew from being in a formal medical institution was more valuable compared to that of RJ who was *just trained.* The reversal of power relations led to a situation in which, while it was RJ who was performing the procedure, the client regarded him like a student – and not an experienced service provider – who was being tested if he was doing the right thing. The tension also seemed to unsettle RJ's confidence in performing the task, causing him to make mistakes like ripping his gloves. The presence of a person from the medical field seemed to have raised questions about the legitimacy of the knowledge RJ had.

A final example below relates to a letter that Susan and Atty. Subaldo were writing, discussed in Chapter 6.2, to a government office requesting the reversal of their decision to fine the association for an inspection fee. Remembering the discussion in that sub-section, Susan was not only learning about writing the letter but also how the government worked and was given an

'opportunity' to challenge the bureaucracy and recast what the government thought they, as informal settlers, could do.

> *I told Susan that their adviser had a valid point. The office is asking for too much money for a 'coconut inspection fee' for a piece of land that did not have coconuts in the first place! Susan agreed and said that it is unfair, but also it is complicated – we had to write letters, process additional forms, etc. We were riding in a jeepney, and it was quite noisy, so she needed to shout when she expressed: 'But fight against this bureaucracy? Us? They don't think we know anything. We will just lose! And I'm tired.'*
> – Field Notes, 08/12/17

Susan emphasised how other institutions whom they were supposed to work with held certain assumptions about what knowledge they held (and in this instance, the knowledge they lacked). Although Susan clearly understood that there was an anomaly with this particular government requirement (i.e. coconut inspection fee), she also seemed to believe that they (i.e. their informal settlers' association) were seen by such 'bureaucracy' from the point of view of a deficit. This particular discourse by *others* about *their* knowledge appeared to have been powerful enough to demoralise her and suppress possible action (i.e. *we will just lose!*). The bureaucratic processes (i.e. writing letters, processing additional forms, etc.) that might accompany any possible action were seen by Susan as quite complex and contributed to her feeling that they would inevitably lose.

The accounts in this section further expose the complexity and the negotiability of claiming certain identities. As Holland *et al.* (1998) and Wenger (1998) point out, negotiating identities is an ongoing and constantly shifting process. Examples in this section show how volunteers under certain circumstances, shifted across different identities– such as that of an expert, a provider and/or a mentor. Their 'claims' for certain social positions (cf Holland *et al.* 1998) were influenced by the challenges that they continually faced, the hierarchies of learning/knowledge held by various actors in the organisation and within the wider (bureaucratic) power structures that they were part of.

8.3. Conclusion

This chapter problematises what it meant to be a 'certain kind' of person in both organisations, in terms of how they were spoken about and/or spoke about themselves in relation to their volunteering, the kind of knowledge and skills they were thought to have (and what they thought

they had) and the activities that they participated in. I have discussed in this chapter how many of these identities were ascribed. In other words; they came in the form of a label (with associated stereotypes and assumptions) that came from various sources: from policy pronouncements to staff members to the volunteer themselves. The dominant identity ascribed to the volunteers was that of deficit, often attached to their vulnerabilities. Language played a key role in the process of labelling as the volunteers were ascribed with characteristics based on what they 'lacked' through labels such as 'victim', 'landless', 'key affected population' and 'promiscuous'. These languages facilitated various forms of 'othering' through the micropolitics of language (cf Grillo 1988) as well as constructing and maintaining certain identities through words (cf Woolard 1998; Blommaert 2006). Small and grand narratives, everyday activities in the organisation and self-proclamations contributed to how they were positioned, in certain moments, within the 'figured world' of their organisation (cf Holland *et al.* 1998). However, these dominant labels co-existed with negotiations and claims of agency. I use the term 'claim' because such discourses – which focused more on what volunteers were capable of doing – were often evident in the volunteers' self-narratives or in the way they spoke about themselves. I found that participating in volunteer work allowed them, under certain circumstances, to challenge these dominant identities and to assert their agency.

Perhaps distinct to 'vulnerable' volunteers was that the discourse of deficit was so embedded that the shifting of positional identities remained contentious and ever-changing. I have shown how volunteers continued to recognise the many challenges they faced – many of which were similar to the development problems that the organisations were trying to solve. The process of being ascribed identities, challenging them through discourses and claiming agency were always in the process of negotiation (cf Wenger 1998). I hope to have done justice to the complexity of identities involved in the processes of volunteering, learning and literacy in the organisations I worked with. These identities were multiple, but they were also different (sometimes, starkly) and fluid – which meant that they could change over time depending on the space and the actors involved (see for instance the interaction between RJ and the client who was a medical technologist). The evidence presented in this chapter has shown how 'vulnerable' volunteers, through volunteering, were able to 'claim spaces' that were often denied to them and/or those that were dominantly not thought of as theirs.

Chapter Nine
Discussion: Exploring volunteering, learning, literacy and their links

9. Introduction

This study has sought to understand the adult learning and literacy dimensions of volunteer work in which 'vulnerable' youth and adults participate. To do this, I conceptually framed – and ethnographically encountered – learning, literacy and volunteering as social practices embedded in the participants' everyday lives within and outside two organisations. In this chapter, I bring together the key themes from my empirical chapters and deepen the analysis using the concepts presented in Chapter 3 and in relation to the literature that I have reviewed in the preliminary chapters of this thesis. I build upon the findings in the previous chapters and attempt to make explicit connections between them, towards a cohesive argument. A key aim of this chapter is to bring together aspects of my findings that I found to be significant and distinctive in the context of 'vulnerable volunteers'.

9.1. Discourses around volunteering and learning

The accounts of the volunteers and other actors in the groups (see Chapter 5) paint a picture of volunteering as a helping activity done for others without expecting something in return. I drew up this definition based on how these volunteers spoke about volunteering – often gathered through interview data and conversations with me and/or their colleagues and friends. However, the lens of discourse compelled me to go beyond volunteering definitions described and discuss whether and how "development discourse [e.g. including volunteering definitions] has crystallized in practices that contribute to regulating the everyday goings and comings of people…" Escobar (1995:104). In this subsection, I explore not only how volunteers talked about volunteering – here, I focus on motivations, monetisation and learning – but also how narratives and actions influenced and/or were being influenced by, practices, experiences and identities.

9.1.1. Unpacking volunteers' motivations and the demonisation of the monetary

The most commonly expressed motivations for volunteering among the participants may be described as 'others-oriented' and 'self-oriented'. I use the term 'others-oriented' to refer to those factors that I found to have motivated volunteers because of their desire to contribute towards the development of another person, family members, their immediate community and/or the wider, common good (see Chapters 8 on the construction of 'other' as different and Chapter 5 on 'other' as similar or belonging to the same community). For example, Pip in Chapter 5 shared that he volunteered *to help my fellow adolescents,* especially those were unaware of the HIV situation in the city. Susan of Land4All explained that she volunteered partly out of pity for others. On the other hand, 'self-oriented' motivations drove volunteer practices that were geared towards helping and/or developing one's self. In Chapter 5, volunteers expressed that these 'self-oriented' motivations were diverse: gaining small stipends and allowances, obtaining work experience that would later give them a 'competitive edge' in the job market, fulfilling their spiritual 'calling' and being able to pursue one's passion. Embedded in the volunteers' expressed motivations and understandings seemed to be an implicit discourse around benefits: their narratives tended to assume that volunteering was an activity that led to some form of material and/or intangible benefit that may be for the self or for others.

Many volunteers held value judgements as to who should benefit from volunteer work. Based on my data, the dominant understanding was that volunteering was done for the benefit of another – often someone who was in need. Volunteering for personal gain was rarely spoken about explicitly and was seen as problematic by some staff and volunteers themselves. In instances when volunteers did speak about benefits towards the self, I found that many tended to valorise intangible benefits (e.g. spiritual fulfilment, personal enjoyment and happiness, contributing to a society where one belongs) and devalued (or rejected) material merits and motivations. In Chapter 5 for instance, a young volunteer commented that gaining money cannot measure up to the joy and happiness one feels in helping others. *If you're happy about what you do, it's okay not to have anything in return*, said volunteer Anita. I found that these intangible expressed motivations powerfully brought volunteers back to volunteer work (or retained them) despite the many challenges they faced.

In the wider literature on volunteering, some commentators have pointed to the increasing individualism in people's decision making as to where, how and why they volunteer (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003; Rehberg 2005; Rochester, Paine and Howlett 2010). This tendency was

thought to often be driven by what has been characterised as more 'reflexive' motivations, like developing one's self, accruing social capital; loyalty to a cause and not a specific organisation, and the rise of more sporadic and short-term engagement (Macduff 2005; Rochester *et al.* 2010). Hustinx (2001:57) noted that the phenomenon of individualisation was "widely considered as the most dangerous threat to volunteering… eroding solidarity [and] generating purely self-interested motivations…" However, I realised that these concerns partly derived from the framing of volunteer motivations as static and monolithic. In my research, I found that 'self-oriented' and 'community-oriented' motivations were not mutually exclusive. For many of the volunteers, they co-existed to varying degrees and complemented and/or contradicted each other. For instance, RJ, whom I referred to extensively across different chapters, said that he volunteered for many reasons: to contribute to the education of young people with HIV/AIDS, being part of the LGBT community and also to gain experience that might prove helpful when he looks for a job in the development sector. Hustinx (2001:58) aptly puts it: "considering individualisation as a threat to volunteerism assumes that there is only one possible outcome of the process of individualisation: an individual motivated by pure self-interest… [a greater freedom of choice] does not mean that a desire for expressing solidarity is excluded from the range of possible options."

In my study, volunteers and staff seemed to frame the receiving of money through volunteering to be the most problematic 'benefit'. The tendency to demonise the monetary component of volunteering – especially by paid staff and the associated public – can be encapsulated by the statement by Youth4Health's finance officer in Chapter 5 when she complained how a volunteer always talked about money 'as if volunteerism was gone.' I saw this discourse as having parallels with volunteer frameworks such as that of the ILO (2011) whose definition of volunteering was uncompensated work either in cash or kind. If volunteers require some form of stipend, the amount must be below market-level wages. The UN Volunteers' definition centres on motivations. Volunteers can receive payment, but this should not be the main personal driver for volunteering (Davis Smith 2000).

Focusing on the experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers, my study has unearthed a more complex relationship between volunteering and monetisation. In Chapter 5, I found that many volunteers considered the little stipend they received for volunteering not as 'extra' but a chief source of income. This included young volunteers in Youth4Health who, as young as 15, were already expected to contribute to the family income. The volunteer leaders of Land4All – Susan who worked full time as a sales agent and Mila who worked as a freelance manicurist – had experienced seemingly significant (yet rarely recognised by community members) opportunity

costs: the time they spent in volunteering competed with time they could have spent in paid opportunities for income. As described in Chapter 5, these concerns were not invisible but were rarely spoken about. *Damo naman na istorya* [there will be so many gossips] was Susan's reason to keep these complaints at bay. Not only were these concerns at the periphery, they were also eclipsed by more dominant discourses, such how the staff members in the previous paragraph problematised incentivisation and the framing of the volunteer as the selfless 'hero'. Following Escobar's (1995) notion of discourse, these more dominant narratives may have shaped significant policies and practices in the groups. For instance, both organisations employed a reimbursement scheme for their activities which rested on an assumption that the volunteers had resources to use to begin with. In Chapter 5, I discussed how Susan, having become tired of asking for reimbursements for expenses for which she had no official receipt (e.g. public transport), ended up shouldering the expenses herself to avoid people gossiping. In Chapter 3, I indicated that Cornwall's (2002) notion of spaces of participation encouraged me to look at the various other spaces that these volunteers occupied and participated in. I saw volunteers not only as members of the groups, but also as mothers in households, employees in workplaces and students in schools. This way, I saw what Graham and colleagues (2013) described as the 'blurring boundaries' between volunteering, employment and livelihood, particularly in resource-poor contexts.

In this sub-section, I have argued that reframing volunteering as a social practice, embedded in peoples' lives and realities, (see Chapter 3 for an extended discussion of this) has allowed for an analysis of volunteering activities, motivations and identities as part of the wider ecosystem of spaces and institutions (e.g. homes, work, school) within which the volunteer groups were a part. This way, a more context-relevant view of the role of monetisation and volunteering that is reflective of the realities of 'vulnerable' volunteers, has been brought into relief, rather than more absolutist conceptualisations. Additionally, this conceptual shift has allowed for a reframing of volunteer motivations as a spectrum rather than binaries. Volunteer motivation can slide across both ends of individualism and altruism, depending on time and context. In a way, this has been an attempt to better account for the complexity of volunteering as a social practice and the 'volunteer' as a social identity that co-exists alongside many others.

9.1.2. Different learning/knowledge, different values

I will now turn to volunteers' discourses around learning and knowledge, particularly those that they saw as related to volunteering. In Chapter 6, I showed that many volunteers considered the

groups that they volunteered with/for as a space of/for learning. However, I found that many of their narratives were strongly polarised between formal schooling and learning in/through volunteering. This was especially common among the youth volunteers in Youth4Health who were still in school or had recently left. The dichotomy was described in many ways: 'learning in school' vs 'learning in real life'; 'textbook principles' vs 'knowledge that was responsive to real-life challenges'; 'basic education' vs 'learning in the battleground', 'general' vs 'context-specific'. These polarisations gave me the impression that for the volunteers, learning in/through volunteering was more useful. However, I also realised that many volunteers continued to place prime value on a diploma/certificate gained through formal education to better their lives and careers. Experience (for which read: knowledge and skills) gained through volunteering then received additional currency in that it could contribute towards securing a good job and better life in the future. I am reminded of RJ who, despite being a long-term volunteer, continued to think of volunteering as a 'stepping stone' to a career in social work; of Glenda, the volunteer midwife, who started volunteering because the hours could count as 'credits' to fulfil requirements for the midwifery board exams; and of Susan, Land4All's president, who repeatedly shared that she wanted to get formal training and become a 'certified community mobiliser', a job that was well paid.

Yet, learning through volunteering was also seen as valuable in itself and serving different purposes. As shown in Chapter 6, Anita's strategy to convince her mother why she should work for free in the organisation was to state that, through Youth4Health, she was learning how to protect herself from teenage pregnancy. Tito attributed the learning he gained in volunteering to the revision of his previously held assumptions around rape and premarital sex. Some volunteers also expressed that previous learning was applicable to their volunteering tasks. For instance, a volunteer board member of Land4All explained how working as a housemaid to the family of an architect helped her to understand land and housing regulations (see Chapter 6). She then used this knowledge to advise the volunteer leaders. In a way, she came to participate in the organisation by bringing her 'funds of knowledge' (Moll *et al.* 1992).

Because volunteers needed to navigate complex processes and information as part of their volunteering, I found that being known to be 'knowledgeable' about specific processes (e.g. applying for a government certificate or rapid HIV testing) placed them in a position of authority. They were given legitimacy to perform certain, at times, more complex tasks. In Chapter 6, I described how some members of Land4All believed that the reason why Susan was elected to be president was that she was considered by many as smart and strategic. In Youth4Health, volunteers could progress from being a peer educator to peer counsellor, depending on which

level of training (given by an official provider) one completed. As I described in Chapter 2, these different titles meant one could perform different and successive tasks (i.e. a peer counsellor was allowed to do everything that a peer educator did, plus being able to conduct one-on-one counselling sessions).

These patterns seem to be in line with Cornwall's (2002) argument that one's construction of his/her identity or being constructed by others as a certain kind of person (e.g. 'beneficiary', 'support', 'volunteer', 'leader') frames an individual's possibilities for engagement and participation (also see Escobar 1995:109; Grillo 1997). In volunteer research, Hustinx *et al.* (2010:422) describes how there seems to be an agreement within volunteer literature that those who have higher socioeconomic status, including educational background "tend to fulfil more prestigious and meaningful tasks" particularly within more formal organisations. My research shows how volunteer identities – both ascribed and performed – have the tendency to "influence what people are perceived to be able to contribute or entitled to know or decide" (Cornwall 2002:8), for instance in a volunteer organisation. Against these constructed 'hierarchies of knowledge', the 'vulnerable' volunteers were able to claim social positions and challenge some of the dominant identities ascribed to them (I will discuss this further in Section 9.2.2).

In this subsection, I have argued that there was a strong polarisation between learning in school and learning in 'real-life' (as in volunteering). The former was seen as more academic while the latter was more relevant to daily life and problems, and therefore, was often considered as more valuable. However, the prime value was still given to getting a diploma or similar formal qualifications. As I have shown, alongside volunteering 'experience', these were seen by volunteers as contributing to better employment prospects and a ticket out of poverty. Finally, certain learning and knowledge were also strongly linked to the identity of the 'expert', often fulfilling more complex and prestigious tasks in the organisation. Apart from knowledge, there were several factors and indicators that framed certain volunteers as certain kinds of persons. I will look at them more closely in the next section.

9.2. Differing identities in volunteering

When I introduced the two organisations in Chapter 2, I highlighted that the volunteers in my study came from the same community they were serving. The volunteer leaders of Land4All were also landless, informal settlers and evictees. Many of the volunteers supporting the HIV/AIDS

programme were also adolescents and youths living with HIV. I found that they often shifted and/or straddled between being the ones being cared-for' (e.g. beneficiary) to the ones 'caring' (e.g. volunteer/development worker). Because of this, I felt that they presented an interesting case within which to discuss the fluidity and multiplicity of 'who is a volunteer'.

9.2.1. The volunteer and/as the beneficiary

I will now look at the discursive practices within the two organisations wherein individuals (e.g. staff members and volunteers themselves) and texts (such as policies and programme documents) assigned and/or constructed certain attributes and characteristics to the volunteers. As presented in Chapter 6, the sources of these discourses were varied and included those originating from elsewhere, such as external NGOs they worked with and government officers/officials.

In analysing policy and programme documents, I found that the most dominant labels used to describe the participants in my research drew on notions of resource deficits. In Chapter 6, I discussed how individuals were dominantly labelled by policy documents, government officials, community members, paid staff and fellow volunteers as 'poor', 'victims', 'key affected populations', 'squatters', 'landless peoples', 'people living with HIV', 'OSYs (Out of School Youths)'. In Land4All, these labels were reflected in policy and programme documents that form the basis of the CMP. In fact, being an 'informal settler' or a 'victim' of demolition and displacement were prerequisites to accessing this particular programme. Mechanisms were in place to verify one's vulnerability and victimhood: site visitations and interviews by government staff, using criteria such as overall household income, number of dependents and lack of land title. Funders of Youth4Health specifically stated in their project deliverables that the organisation needed to target key affected populations of HIV/AIDS: adolescents living with HIV, transgirls, gay men and men having sex with men. In these characterisations, the participants were being framed in terms of 'needs' and 'lacks' and ascribed as recipients of development programmes. Using the work of Escobar (1995:41), it becomes clear how these labels are important in the functioning – and even the existence – of these groups: they help set the "rules of the game". Constructing and maintaining these labels – through discursive practices – seem to help ensure that problems remain to be solved (e.g. the persistence of 'victims').

I found that these "client categories" (cf Escobar 1995:41) also carried with them assumptions as to who these individuals were and what they were capable of doing. For instance, in Chapter 6, a

government official spoke about how the community members (and the volunteers) in Land4All had a 'squatter mentality'. In her account, she linked this mentality quite strongly with lack of education and, therefore, lack of capacity to understand the bureaucratic processes of CMP at a level where they could engage productively. During community lectures, some health educators in Youth4Health 'joked' about gay men as being promiscuous, which made them more prone to HIV. At times, this sounded like a warning or a punishment.

Drawing from Escobar's (1995:110) ideas of labelling, these policy documents and individual accounts seem to reduce individual volunteers into a single 'case' through a mechanism (in this instance, being written into policy and programme documents and being part of their implementation) where "the whole reality of a person's life is reduced to a single feature or trait". Some volunteers were being framed as certain kinds of persons with certain deficits which would then be fulfilled by certain development programmes. As Cornwall (2002:6) commented, categories such as the ones described "do not exist outside the spaces made for them by development agencies". In a way, this is reminiscent of what Escobar (1995:41) describes as the process by which "development proceeded by creating 'abnormalities' that it would later treat and reform". In this instance, the assumed deficit lies in the volunteers' vulnerabilities.

I also found a tendency to attach these deficit characteristics to entire communities. Such homogenising often involved little recognition of the power relations and inequalities within communities. While the term 'community' within the development field is often linked with favourable concepts of solidarity, cohesion and unity (see for instance in Chapter 3 critiques against the use of 'community' in 'communities of practice'), my findings show that certain groups – e.g. LGBT community, 'squatters', 'informal settlers', 'out-of-school youth' – were ascribed with highly problematic labels. My findings show that there were hierarchies and gradients of vulnerabilities even in often supposedly homogenous informally-settling communities and LGBT communities. In Chapter 8, I deconstructed what many volunteers referred to as the 'other' needing help (e.g. Pip talks about volunteering to help 'others'). In many of the volunteers' accounts, the 'other' was framed as someone *more* vulnerable. The 'other' was described by volunteers themselves as 'voiceless', 'pitiful', 'lacking awareness', even though they all belonged to or identified themselves within, a single community.

Additionally, Susan's account of Pedro in Chapter 8 added another layer to Pedro's identity: he was not only poor or informally settling, but he was also deserving of help because he was hardworking. In short, it was not enough to be considered poor; one had to be hardworking too so

that she considered that he deserved to be part of the programme. The construction of vulnerability in terms of deficits, therefore, not only came from policies, programmes and government/NGO staff, but also existed among and within the community members themselves. There was some sort of distancing where the speakers constructed themselves in relation to another's vulnerability and therefore placed him/herself in a position to help – a process that can be seen in terms of Foucault's (1982) subjectification based on division and limits. Following Foucault (1982), individuals such as the volunteers in my research subjectified/constructed the 'other' by separating him/herself from the 'other' on the basis of what the 'other' was incapable of doing. Holland and colleagues' (1998) concept of "positional identities" could take these ideas further by arguing that how someone was positioned (and/or positions him/herself) within a web of social relations had implications for what he/she could "claim" to do within a particular space. It helped me to understand that the relationship between Susan and Pedro was no longer only that of collegial neighbours but that of a more powerful 'giver' and a grateful 'receiver'. Within this relationship, Pedro could not 'claim' his space in the programme without the mediation or support of Susan.

Still, I found that a sense of belonging and shared identity formed a strong basis for volunteer action. Volunteers gathered together and helped each other on the basis of their similarities, akin to what Gee (2016) describes as identity on the basis of one's 'affinity group'. For Gee (2016), one's identity can be based on a set of shared endeavours or practices that bind people together. Many HIV/AIDS volunteers identified with People Living with HIV because most of them were also living with the disease. Volunteer leaders of Land4All were also informal settlers and had experienced similar uncertainty as the people they were leading. Mutual aid and self-help are terms often used to describe volunteering that happens within communities, driven by the experience of a shared problem (Davis Smith 2000; Perold and Graham 2017) – characteristics that were observable in the case studies of my research.

So far, I have argued that the process of labelling – the most dominant of which was deficit-based – was very strong and pervasive within the two groups. These discourses came not only from external organisations or documents but also from the volunteers themselves and members of the same community. Despite the pervasiveness of any label, Escobar (1995) still maintains that there can be potential and space for renaming or rejecting these labels. I will now turn to whether and how volunteers challenged these dominant identities.

9.2.2. Challenging the dominance of deficit?

I found that alternative ways of framing volunteer identities were interspersed within the dominant discourses of deficit. The same CMP policy that labelled informal settlers as victims, also constructed them from the point of view of agency. In fact, those who had studied CMP praised this land tenure programme because it is founded on 'community ownership' (Berner *et al.* 1998; Porio *et al.* 2013; UN-Habitat 2012) at least at the level of policy pronouncement. Within Youth4Health, the lived experiences of adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) were considered by the organisation leaders as strong assets for the organisation. In Chapters 5 and 8 several staff members insisted that being an ALHIV had a huge advantage for their work, as these volunteers had empathy, lived experience and relevant knowledge. Because of their status, they were thought to have credence and expertise and were therefore prioritised in volunteer recruitment. Because of such deep, contextual understanding they were being positioned at a higher level in the 'hierarchies of knowledge' I described earlier. However, these alternative identity framings did not go so far as to overturn dominant identities: they just allowed for other ways of 'seeing' volunteers that then influenced certain practices (e.g. volunteer recruitment).

I found that sites of struggle and rebellion were in the small moments and events. Foucault's (1972) concept of micropower has been particularly useful in this regard. His ideas helped me to look into how micro-processes of everyday activities and discourses could be sites of resistance, relabelling and strategy. For instance, I found that volunteers relabelled themselves through the way they spoke about their transformation to each other, to me and in public events. In Chapter 8, I discussed how a volunteer directly rejected being called (and written as) informal settler because it was often associated with someone who was lazy, incapable or powerless. I described how during a regional HIV/AIDS conference, RJ's speech sounded like a declaration of a transformed self – from formerly being 'merely' an entertainer in a gay bar, to being at the frontline of the HIV/AIDS response in the city, 'saving lives' in the process. What both volunteers seem to be doing here through dialogue is similar to what Holland and colleagues (1998:72) describe as the act of redefining the 'contours' of one's identity by responding to (and not only 'receiving') other's words and discourses. In a way, engaging in this "always demanding job of being in dialogue with others" allowed for the '(re)authoring' of the self through discourse. And these acts potentially disrupted and challenged (even at a micro-level) dominant 'ascribed' identities (Holland *et al.* 1998:189).

This resistance to labels was not only at the level of 'speech' or self-proclamation. Experience also seemed to be a key factor in challenging these dominant deficit discourses. In a way, RJ was able to utter those words because of his extensive experience as a volunteer for HIV/AIDS. He had conducted free testing, engaged in peer counselling, delivered health classes. His 'transformation' gave a glimpse into how, through voluntary action, 'vulnerable' volunteers were taking on roles and identities that were predominantly not ascribed to them. The 'vulnerable' (through discourses and volunteering practices) were being recognised and/or recognised themselves as an 'empowered young person' (instead of a victim), a 'service provider' (instead of a passive recipient), a 'health educator' (instead of an unaware learner). Using Holland *et al.*'s (1998) idea of positional identities, volunteering could be seen to have provided them with the opportunity to claim positions and spaces that were otherwise not reserved for them because of how they were framed as being certain 'kinds of persons'.

I also found that dominant identities were not always rejected but were also used strategically to achieve certain purposes. Susan in Chapter 8 described herself and members of the association as poor, victims and incapable, so that the government office expedited their application. RJ got tired of explaining that he was not HIV positive to a person he was talking to on Facebook, so used this false 'status' to educate him in how to avoid contracting the virus and not 'follow his footsteps'. Apart from rejecting these ascribed identities (as in the previous paragraphs), under certain circumstances, volunteers seemed to be treating these stereotypes as monolithic and unified so that they could be used to their strategic advantage.

In this section, I have complicated the notion of volunteer identity. I have shown that the volunteers were subjectified by others (and subjected themselves) both as agile service providers (agency) and thankful receivers (deficit), depending on circumstances and time. I have shown how volunteers coming from 'vulnerable' backgrounds were often framed in terms of 'deficit' and 'lack', which seemed to be in tension with the idea of the volunteer as having 'agency' and being 'empowered'. In this research context, volunteering as a practice that 'vulnerable' youths and adults engaged with, allowed them to challenge dominant identities of deficit ascribed to them but also to use these essentialisms strategically to their advantage. I take Holland and colleague's (1998) notion that positional identities are ever open. Therefore, Gillette's (2003) argument that volunteering can take marginalised individuals out of boxes and categories, might warrant some revision in light of Holland *et al.* 's conceptualisation of positional identities. The same RJ who spoke so confidently during the national workshop also complained that he needed support in delivering his volunteering tasks. The same Susan who was leading a group of over

150 households, would ask, 'but how about me?' (see Chapter 8.2.2) when thinking about the expenses she was incurring as part of her volunteering. In other words, neither RJ nor Susan simply transitioned from being a 'victim' to being an 'empowered actor'. I argued that volunteer identities can be seen as always in the process of negotiation. Still, there remain questions that puzzle me, particularly with regards to the process of being ascribed identities based on deficit, challenging such identities and claiming agency whilst also recognising that one has needs and vulnerabilities. To what extent does the discourse of agency curtail or eclipse the challenges and needs that volunteers face? How about the other way around? To what extent can we recognise and highlight volunteers' needs without falling back into the discourse of deficit?

9.3. Learning (and shaping) practices in/through volunteering

By engaging in various volunteering practices, I found that vulnerable youths and adults learned how to 'become volunteers' in organisations. As will be clearer in this subsection, learning in/through volunteering may be best described as learning how things 'were done' to participate as volunteers in these organisations. This includes understanding, shaping and/or taking part in a 'shared enterprise' or goal (e.g. increased awareness on HIV/AIDS; securing individualised land titles). Similar to the diversity of discourses around what volunteering was, I also found that volunteers' learning practices were highly influenced by the way that they understood and valued certain kinds of learning and knowledge. As I unpacked these learning processes, I also explored traces of identity (re)formation, seeing identity as part of wider social practices (Wenger 1998). Taken together, this learning process may be described as learning through 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger 1991).

9.3.1. Learning and shaping practices

The activities that volunteers 'did' as part of volunteering, such as delivering HIV/AIDS community classes lectures, preparing budget proposals and writing letters, along with many others, formed a collection of "experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015:2) that volunteers could draw from and/or could contribute towards, as they continued their membership. My aim in this sub-section is to spend a little time considering how these activities came to be and how they shaped the practices within the organisation. In Chapter 3, I suggested that communities of practice (Wenger

1998) and spaces of participation (Cornwall 2002) have histories. They are socially produced and continually shaped by those who inhabit them. Taking a cue from Wenger (1998), I make this historicity visible by describing the practices I observed as products of learning and learning as the engine of such practices.

I found that the two organisations seemed to have different institutional histories, partly because of differences in how long they had been operating. Youth4Health had been working on sexual and reproductive health for more than three decades, while Land4All, as an organisation, began just a few months before I started fieldwork in 2017. The way things were done in Youth4Health seemed to be more established, entrenched and automatic. I remember that when Pip needed to get oriented about an HIV101 session, it appeared that RJ knew what to do like the back of his hand, as he had repeatedly delivered the session himself and had observed others delivering it. In contrast, the way Land4All volunteer leaders engaged with organisation-related tasks could be best described as finding their footing. For example, Atty. Subaldo had to instruct Susan on what to write on a letter of appeal to a government office almost word by word and included seemingly basic information such as the size of the paper for printing the letter.

Wenger (1998:96) makes an important point that practices within communities are so ever-changing that "it is not so clear where they begin and end… [they take] a while to come into being, and [they] can linger long after an official group is disbanded." Therefore, it was not always possible for me to chart a trajectory of how certain practices – activities, stories, experiences – had developed within the organisations, including those that were transferred from other contexts. While Youth4Health had been working in the sector for many decades, its focus had shifted several times over the years, partly depending on the requirements of the funder. During my fieldwork, for instance, the organisation had to set up a project on proxy consent which necessitated a wide range of new processes to be set up, including recruiting social workers to join their roster of volunteers. In Chapter 8, I described how the reporting process of HIV tests was suddenly computerised, which required long-serving medical technologists to seek help from newer, more technologically-savvy volunteers.

I also found that many of the activities that volunteers engaged with were not necessarily geared towards organisational goals. For instance, volunteers participated in community dinners, attended weddings, took part in afternoon chats, Christmas and birthday parties – showing that activities also produced, supported and strengthened interpersonal connections and relationships that went beyond formal tasks within the organisations. While Land4All as an organisation was

newer, the association members and volunteer leaders had been together for almost seven decades – generations after generations of relationship-building through being neighbours and relatives. Because of these extended relationships, the volunteer leaders carried certain knowledge about the community that became useful as they added another layer to their relationships, this time, as association members. For example, volunteer leaders had knowledge as to which members were less conflict-averse, which households might be difficult to involve, which neighbour had expertise in accounting and who had worked in housing before.

Although some volunteers could be considered as newcomers or novices in certain practices, many of them had experiences of volunteering in the past. They were involved with other volunteering practices in schools, universities and the local community – aside from those they engaged with through Youth4Health and Land4All. In conversations with RJ, for instance, I found that he had organised fund-raising activities with other groups in the past. A similar observation could be made about Anita, who volunteered in her school prior to and even while volunteering at Youth4Health. Mila, the treasurer of Land4All, had previously held a leadership role in a women's cooperative.

In both groups, the history of learning could not only be described as *organisational* learning because, for Youth4Health, important relationships and practices were created and maintained outside of the organisational tasks; and for Land4All, learning and collaboration predated it becoming a formal organisation. These histories were not only institutional but also individual and collaborative. These findings show that generating and sustaining practices as part of learning in/through volunteering was an ever-open process of negotiation, (re)discovering, (re)producing and of different communities coming together and evolving. Wenger (1998) notes that while there can be a level of agreement about the task goal, there will be different permutations of practices by which that goal is achieved. The volunteers, as part of a "medley of people" (Wenger 1998:75) brought together by a goal, drew from previous experiences to do this.

9.3.2. Learning (and shaping how) to work in certain ways

In Chapter 6, I presented three interactions which I will now discuss in relation to how volunteers were learning to work in certain ways within the two organisations: Susan's attempt to write a letter to the government complaining about excessive fees they needed to pay for certification; the interaction between Tito (a youth volunteer) and Youth4Health staff that transformed a draft,

handwritten budget into 'formal' budget plans ready for staff members' approval; and the exchange between RJ, a volunteer who had served for a long time in Youth4Health and Pip, a new volunteer (previously a 'client'), where the former was orienting the latter on how to deliver a community health lecture on HIV/AIDS.

As signalled in the conceptual chapter, learning – particularly the interaction between participation and reification – is central to sustaining, recovering and/or revising these shared and ever-evolving practices (Wenger 1998). Despite the availability of a training manual (which Wenger (1998) would describe as a product of reification), RJ demonstrated to Pip a way of delivering the session in the way that *they always do it* – reminiscent of Wenger's (1998) notion of participation. In Chapter 6, I described this informal session as similar to an interactive role play, with RJ acting as if he were delivering the session to Pip. Pip was repeating what RJ said, almost like a script, staying as close to the visual aid as possible and regimenting Pip's word use in the process. In the case of Tito, while there was no 'manual' or written process on what counts as 'valid' budget proposal, Tito learned this as he went from one Youth4Health staff to another who scratched, annotated, revised and computerised his original handwritten budget plan, to produce one that was 'acceptable'. Susan was almost being told what to write and what to say by Atty. Subaldo, who was supposed to merely assist her in writing. Following Wenger (1998), the learning that was involved here could be described as that of developing repertoire, styles and discourses where meanings were (re)negotiated (i.e. what counts as an acceptable budget plan?), tools were produced and adopted (i.e. a strongly worded letter), new terms were redefined or old ones were abandoned (i.e. refraining from the use of derogatory terms during the lecture). In a way, the volunteers were more than just passive observers, but their "participation [may be understood] as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – [a] 'culture of practice'" (Lave and Wenger 1991:94).

Learning to work in certain ways involved interactions between different actors with various histories of experiences – often between a more experienced community member (e.g. RJ, Luisa, Atty. Subaldo) and a 'newcomer' (e.g. Pip, Tito, Susan) (cf Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015). As I already pointed out earlier, being a newcomer was not only contingent on the length of being in the organisation. Often, it depended on the task at hand. For instance, while RJ could be an 'expert' in HIV, he could be described as a 'newcomer' in project management, often needing hand-holding by more experienced members of staff. Their medical technologist, while certainly not a 'newcomer' to Youth4Health, having worked there for over 20 years, needed intense one-on-one tuition from a younger volunteer as she navigated the

newly implemented digital reporting process. Being able to go back-and-forth from being an expert and novice, volunteers were able to "forge new identities from their new perspectives", influencing what they were expected to able to contribute and perform (Wenger 1998:90).

While Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory seems to suggest that learning to become a member of a community of practice was dominantly achieved informally or incidentally (cf Handley *et al.* 2006), I found Rogers' (2014) concept of learning continuum more useful. There were more non-formal and planned ways by which volunteers were socialised to become members of the groups. Both in Youth4Health and Land4All, there were non-formal, structured induction sessions, orientation programmes, 'leadership' training, peer counselling, ladderised training programmes. These imparted technical skills in addition to the more informal interactions above. For instance, I once attended a youth camp with a strict agenda, curriculum and learning outcomes but they also had fellowship nights and less structured sharing of experiences during breaks. Against these findings, the suggestion of Duguid *et al.* (2010:24) that "informal learning is a more appropriate lens through which to explore the learning activity of volunteers" needed some revision, especially in light of an increasingly training-heavy and professionalised voluntary sector (cf Ganesh and McAllum 2012). To better capture the range of learning activities through which volunteers learn to work, I agree with Rogers' (2014:21) conceptualisation that "each learning event can be viewed then as being made up of formal and informal elements of learning."

When I spoke of volunteers learning to work in certain ways, I did not only mean that they learned workplace-related tasks and skills (as in 'workplace/organisational learning') as learning outcomes from volunteering. I lean towards the conceptualisation of Lave and Wenger (1991:24) that "learning knowledgeable skills" was subsumed by wider social processes and meaning-making. For instance, when Tito accomplished the budget plan, one of the staff nurses taught him how to inflate the budget requested so that he could buy food for more people than he had indicated in the proposal. Susan's exchange with Atty. Subaldo in writing a letter of dissent to the local government officials led to a realisation that as informal settlers, they were almost powerless against this bureaucratic institution. Several times, RJ corrected Pip not only with what he was uttering (i.e. using the wrong English words or technical terms) but even the way he acted. For instance, RJ censored Pip's language when he used the word *katol* (literally translates as 'itchy' but is a derogatory term to call someone who is sexually promiscuous) to describe someone who might be predisposed to the virus. He was told that he was supposed to be respectful, and that such 'foolishness' had no place in the lecture. As these volunteers were

subsumed into a "culture of practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991:94), they also learned certain values, meanings and understandings of what was involved in volunteering.

Yet, within the organisation, there was no single way of working (see previous discussions on a diversity of institutional and individual histories and volunteering experiences) (cf Wenger's 1998 concept of diversity in communities). My research has made visible what could happen when 'new' ways of working – practices but also values, identities and motives – clashed with discourses of volunteering that were linked with notions of solidarity and community. RJ and Pip's friendly banter was no longer acceptable in the context of a community health class; a group of volunteers were able to 'get around' funders' deliverables to conduct fellowship and socialising activities; Mila and Susan came into conflict over whether they should be empathetic or stringent with their neighbours, as they had become association leaders and the latter had become association members. This is in line with Wenger's conceptualisation that sharing in joint enterprises and repertoires does not mean that certain practices replace another: rather, it "is a process, not a static agreement" (Wenger 1998:82) and that "practice is at once highly perturbable and highly resilient" (Wenger 1998:96).

While Wenger (1998) argues that mutual engagement in practices does not require or necessarily result in homogeneity, the recognition of diversity means that certain ways of doing are more dominant than others (like a hierarchy). As I analysed these accounts, I began to see the pervasiveness of discourses of professionalisation within the two organisations, similar to how the voluntary sector might operate like a corporation to ensure quality, efficiency, accountability and satisfy value-for-money requirements by donors (Lacey and Ilcan 2006; Milligan and Fyfe 2005:427). Tito learned that the art contest he enthusiastically organised was not the main goal, which was to gather large numbers of young people and record high attendance. Early on in the CMP process, volunteer leaders of Land4All were told that the programme was not a 'dole-out' and that by taking up voluntary leadership roles, they were accountable in ensuring that their association worked.

In this section (9.3), I have shown how volunteers seemed to be subsumed into much more formal, 'professionalised' and managerialist practices and discourses, by regimenting their language, being taught and learning the 'tricks of the trade', similar to what Ganesh and McAllum (2012:155) describe as "professional restrictions placed around service delivery." (see also Kothari 2012). Significantly, these practices, offer an alternative imaginary as to what volunteering could be like; what was expected of a volunteer and what sort of relationships would

ensue. It could be inferred that these practices linked strongly with paid NGO work. At times, I saw that these more bureaucratic ways of doing seemed to be in tension with volunteering discourses, practices and relationships that were founded on altruism, service to others, self-sacrifice and community building. As the discourses and practices of bureaucratisation became dominant, professionalism became an "operational discipline or a series of behavioural prescriptions" (Ganesh and McAllum 2012:156) that transformed volunteer practices (e.g. not going to an informal gathering with clients), identities (e.g. wearing uniforms, being a 'professional') and relationships (e.g. clients vs children).

9.4. Bureaucratic literacy practices: pervasive and divisive

In the previous subsection and in Chapters 6 and 7, I described how volunteers learned to perform certain tasks while 'on the job' and, in the process, learned to work in certain bureaucratic ways. I will discuss further in this subsection how these processes were mediated by texts. Using a social practice view of literacy to understand the links between volunteering and learning has allowed me to make more visible and critically analyse, the relationships of power that were embedded within relationships and how these were shaped by volunteers' engagement with texts and (literacy) practices within various domains of literacy. Because of the dominance of the bureaucratic literacy practices within the case studies, I took Barton's (2007) suggestion that for researchers to understand the social uses of literacy, a starting point could be to look at how institutions 'use' literacy to plan, record, control and influence and how people participate in such practices.

9.4.1. 'Small-scale traffic of texts[38]' and meanings

I found that the relationship of the two groups with external institutions was built on the basis of unequal power relations: Youth4Health reported to their funders and needed to satisfy deliverables to secure future funding. Often, Youth4Health implemented funders' programmes rather than shaped them. Land4All needed to fulfil the requirements of various government offices so that their application would be accepted. In both cases, these bureaucratic processes were complex and heavily text-based (e.g. the use of forms, documentation, checklists and certifications).

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[38] This was quoted from Kell (2011)

Therefore, the literacy practices I observed while within the 'confines' of the organisation had many powerful, external and bureaucratic influences. In a way, the encounters I observed in the organisations seemed to involve what Kell (2011:607) describes as the "small-scale traffic of texts" – the crossings and travels of literacy across different contexts. The filling out of a client reporting sheet that I observed in Youth4Health involved a document – the UIC form (discussed in Chapter 6) – that came from an international organisation which made its way into daily life in the organisation and, subsequently, into the hands of the volunteers. During community meetings of Land4All, I observed volunteer leaders carrying thick folders and envelopes filled with documents, certificates, scribbled notes and forms coming from government offices, NGOs and universities that many members would never have set foot in.

These texts served different intended purposes, although many of such 'intentions' were not very clear, including whose intentions were at play. More significantly, I saw how some documents were taken up, used and engaged with in the organisation in a way that was not necessarily in line with what was presumably intended, as they 'entered' communities that had different 'economies of meaning' (Wenger 1998). I described in Chapter 7 how the CBS (Community Based Screening) Form which was intended by the external funder (an INGO) to record clients reached (i.e. screened for HIV), was used by the organisation as an attendance sheet, entering data of individuals who did not undergo an HIV screening. The uptake of such a document as it crossed contexts was not straightforward. The volunteers did not directly follow the rules or the tasks, but to a certain extent, recontextualised, reinterpreted and reshaped these texts to fit with their own purposes. In a way, the text seemed to lose parts of its function as it transferred from one context (i.e. the INGO) to another (i.e. the volunteer organisation) (cf Kell 2011).

Furthermore, what 'transferred' was more than just the text. In Chapter 7, I discussed the acquisition of the Certificate of Registration issued by the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board. Based on my close reading of the document's content, the certificate was a powerful document that was intended to recognise Land4All as a legal entity which could progress with its CMP application. But I did not observe this level of detail in the community members' and volunteers' understanding. Based on my conversations, the certificate, more generally, was seen as proof of progress that was hoped to dispel confusions and suspicion in the community. What I saw, therefore, was not only the movement of texts – or as Blommaert (2001, 2004) described, the "trajectory of texts" – but also what Kell (2006) calls the "trajectory of meanings". It was the meaning-making processes that travelled across contexts and at times, took on a written form. For instance, Land4All volunteers attached 'new' meanings to the certificate and used it to respond to

issues (i.e. mistrust) that were relevant to their context at a given time. The text was valued in another way (i.e. antidote to confusion). Therefore, following Blommaert (2004:659), texts' functions and valuations "are a matter of uptake, of reception". His points about 'discourse' could also be said about these texts and documents. They have no 'intrinsic functions', but their values and functions were 'granted' based on dialogical processes and on their "insertion in stratified, indexical scales of social value-attribution" (Blommaert 2001:659).

My findings, analysed using Blommaert's (2001, 2004) notion of functions and Kell's (2006) notion of meaning-making trajectory, offer another layer of understanding to the framing of state, bureaucratic and institutional literacies as having power over and, therefore, subjectifying its clientele (cf Foucault 1982). My research has shown that the exercise of power could also be enacted the other way around: actors in new contexts – while being framed as subjected clientele – also have power over bureaucratic texts. In Youth4Health, specifically, volunteers employed tactics and strategies to 'get around' different bureaucratic texts and processes. They used them as they preferred, without compromising the need to satisfy donor requirements or, at least, attempting to (see Table 6 in Chapter 7 regarding the volunteers' various strategies in engaging with bureaucratic texts). However, being able to exercise power over a certain bureaucratic text seemed to be partly dependent on the form of the text. The key difference between the attendance form and the certificate was that the latter could be described as a 'final product' – the process of its creation had finished before its entrance into the organisation (Kell 2006). However once the former had crossed over to the volunteer organisation, it still continued to be 'created' and the volunteers were part of this co-creation (i.e. filling out of the form). I will look at this issue of text creation more closely in the next section.

9.4.2. Assembling documents of power: dislodging or expanding power?

A significant finding in my research was that these volunteering spaces were not only 'recipients' of external texts and documents but were also contexts where the co-creation and production of texts took place. While much of the data I have presented related to formal, bureaucratic processes, I also observed much more informal ways of producing text. In Chapter 7, I shared Mila's accounting documentation process, written in a local dialect and strikingly different from the structure often seen in formal bookkeeping. I have shown how Mila's accounts were more descriptive (e.g. *this is the cash that was deposited first by our association*) compared to usual phrases in formal bookkeeping (e.g. *account credit*). Using Blommaert's (2004) ideas on text

production, Mila seemed to be 'writing' text with the intention that it would be read by a particular audience (i.e. the community members). Of course, once this document needed to be submitted to the assigned government office, significant changes were expected[39].

The experience of Tito writing a budget plan warrants further analysis in this regard. Tito began with an informal text (similar to Mila's), a handwritten list of materials. This was later revised and annotated to become a different kind of text: a more formal document that could then be entered into the bureaucratic processes of reimbursement. Tito and the staff members not only engaged in writing a document but in constructing what Blommaert (2004) describes as textual design: formatting and structuring the text so that it made sense and became acceptable under certain bureaucratic rules. The journey from Tito's original note to being a budget document seemed to be similar to what Blommaert (2004:657) describes as "generically regimented text production": a process of (co)producing a text that satisfies "generic requirements (real or perceived) of 'official,' 'literate', 'on record' discourse". Using Wenger's ideas earlier, I argued that Tito was being subsumed into a particular 'culture of practice'. Drawing on Blommaert (2004), I extend this to highlight that text (co)production among individuals with different (and therefore, unequal) power relations meant that there was an interaction of different 'textual ideologies' (and in my research, also 'development' ideologies), where one was favoured over the other. In the process of co-creating this text with staff members, Tito's written words and speech were regimented and certain ideologies dominated (partly shaped by external agencies) in regard to what counted as acceptable practice (e.g. inflating the budget).

As my fieldwork progressed, particularly with Land4All, I was struck by how the organisation was starting to formalise their activities and rules – many of which were put in written form (linking to the institutional history section above). For every key decision, they released a Memorandum in English, filled with legalistic terminologies. Instead of the usual ad-hoc door-to-door collection for whatever payment arose, they resorted to a written schedule of fees that was distributed to all community members and was referred to if there were any questions/confusions about payment. Instead of verbally calling the attention of those who did not attend community meetings regularly, they issued warning letters (in English). Bureaucratic literacy was used as a warning and a threat. These practices of co-creating and assembling documents of power seemed to have made the organisation (more) text-saturated. Wenger's (1998) idea of the historicity of practices within communities is useful here. Suddenly, their community no longer consisted of

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[39] I was not able to observe this as the financial check came much later after my fieldwork

just neighbours living on a piece of land; they became an association with processes that were increasingly structured. Some misunderstandings were resolved not by talking to each other, but by issuing a warning letter. Using the lens of Literacy as Social Practice, these texts could be seen to help shape practices within the organisation, and literacy constructed certain values and power relations (Street 1984).

While I recognise that volunteers could reinterpret meanings of texts and use them for different purposes, the bureaucratic nature of some of these documents meant that there was a 'right' way of interpreting and using them at the point when they left the bureaucratic institution. As much as the volunteer leaders of Land4All would think of the Certificate of Registration as proof of progress, there remained the whole enterprise of understanding how this document played out in the strict and methodical steps of applying for a CMP, each step involving small or big, simpler or more complex texts. I have already shown that volunteers engaged with seemingly endless and busy flows and crossing of texts, documents, meanings and wider practices. For texts that carried specific intention and purpose, I then wondered how far do (or should) they "'fix' meaning sufficiently for them to be projected across contexts" (cf Kell 2011:609)? And, more importantly, what literacy and communicative resources were needed to engage with them? What are the consequences, if these resources are not available in the 'new' contexts where these texts land?

9.4.3. Divisive literacies?

The CMP process was so complex and bureaucratic that communities, including Land4All, often struggled to access and understand it – an aspect of CMP that had long been critiqued as one the key weaknesses of the programme (Ballesteros, Ramos and Magtibay 2015; Berner *et al.* 1998; Cacnio 2001). When Susan first showed me the sheet of paper with over 50 items of documents and process steps, one of the first things that came to my mind was: are they just going to be left to figure this out on their own? I had a similar impression during an HIV counselling session in Youth4Health where newer volunteers were suddenly asked to interview young people about their sexual history and mental health challenges, using a form in English that contained several sensitive, personal and scientific statements. These situations relate to a fundamental problematic in literacy inequalities: the "unchallenged and apparently unchallengeable assumption that bureaucratic and administrative clients [in this case, the volunteers] would have complete control over the medium and communicative skills in which bureaucratic and administrative procedures are being carried out" (Blommaert 2001:413). These bureaucratic processes and texts – both

those that were external and those that had been 'assembled' within the organisation – seemed to assume that members of these volunteer communities had all the resources required (cf Blommaert 2001) to engage with these effectively.

However, the varied "economies of literacy", including linguistic resources (Blommaert 2004), that were at play in the volunteer groups did not match those that were used to create these documents (e.g. government and INGOs). For a start, many of such documents were written in English and not in Hiligaynon (the local dialect). And while several community members spoke and understood English, there remained the struggle to understand the legal and bureaucratic terminology that was embedded in many of these documents which required specialist knowledge. The Certificate of Registration, for example, was filled with legalistic 'speak' (e.g. "…in according with the provisions of the Corporation Code of the Philippines") and its materiality also contributed to the formality of the document (i.e. printed in a hard, thick, special paper, coloured-printed, headed paper, with the affixed signature of regional officer). The questionnaire that youth volunteers of Youth4Health conducted had questions (in English) such as: "Are you currently in a relationship where you are physically hurt, threatened, or made to feel afraid?" These presupposed that community members in Land4All could understand what Corporation Code of the Philippines was (or knew where to find out about it) and that volunteers were able to translate phrases such as 'threatened' and 'made to feel afraid' into a local language.

There were strategies around this, one of which was literacy mediation, where community members turned to each other for support: Susan's son who was a university student of political science helped her to understand letters and legal texts; a board member who used to work as a housemaid for an architect, assisted the volunteer leaders to understand housing rules and regulations. I also played a part in this mediation as I was often asked to explain legal documents which I would need to study in advance.

Still, what happened when there was a difficulty in 'taking hold' (cf Kulick and Stroud 1993) of these literacies? What happened when there was a 'clash' between different economies of literacy (Blommaert 2004)? The experience of Land4All provided a not-so-positive answer. Different members had varying literacy resources, attitudes and beliefs. I remember the conversation between Mila, Susan and a couple who were surprised that they had defaulted on their membership. In the account, there was a clear failure from the couple to grasp what the letter was for and what the letter expected them to do. Mila wanted to re-consider and approach the conflict more informally by giving them another chance and (re)explaining the volunteer leaders'

expectations (embodied in the text). Susan, on the contrary, wanted to stick to the rules indicated in the letter. Since the couple were not able to reach the deadline set in the letter to make their payment and to explain their non-attendance, they were excluded from the programme.

Progressively, the original informally-settled members who were unable to engage with the text effectively (alongside a myriad of other reasons) no longer remained in the organisations. They were either compelled to leave or had left voluntarily. They were then replaced by lawyers, teachers and other working individuals – which was counterintuitive to the goal of the CMP programme that was set-up originally for those who were considered marginalised and landless. The issue was not only that they had difficulty satisfying the financial requirements of the programme (as already explained by the government officer in Chapter 8) but also, to a certain extent, that they were unable to engage with the text effectively and grasp the intricacies of the application process, including the documents that were produced by their association. For several defaulting members, difficulty in engaging with the texts led to confusion, fatigue and suspicion. Negative rumours about how the volunteer leaders were using the money intensified and were taken as truth (e.g. that the volunteers were pocketing the money). The association had a complete account of how the budget was spent, including bank statements, but the organisation's circumstances created a literacy-rich environment where members who did not have the literacy resources to 'take hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993) of these texts could no longer participate in the process. Often, these members were the ones who originally started the organisation – landless and informally squatting families – only to be replaced later by lawyers, teachers and government staff. Therefore, bureaucratic literacy practices, here, further intensified existing inequalities and divisions.

These power relationships and processes were mediated by bureaucratic texts. Powerful pieces of texts coming from a 'distance' (e.g. government offices, INGOs) crossing and travelling (cf Kell 2006, 2011) into the organisations and internal documents assembled internally, displaced social life and structured internal processes. Similarly, there were texts that entered the organisation's context and were reinterpreted and reused by the local communities to be more responsive to their contextual realities. Therefore, my research supports the argument that texts' functions and meaning are not static nor intrinsic; rather, there is an opportunity to dismantle and challenge the power they have upon people and their practices. Finally, I argue that failure to 'take hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993) of bureaucratic literacies has the tendency to create and maintain inequalities and divisions within communities.

9.5. Conclusion

Exploring the learning and literacy dimensions of volunteering among so-called 'vulnerable' youths and adults, my main thesis in this study is that volunteer groups could be understood as *constructed* learning spaces that not only 'contain' but also shape and/or are shaped by diverse and, at times, conflicting discourses, identities and learning and literacy practices. Borrowing Cornwall's (2002) spaces of participation, I use the term *constructed* to signal that practices, discourses and identities in learning spaces are ever-changing and evolving. Power dynamics will always play a role, especially in small things, small processes, small texts and small movements (cf Blommaert 2001, 2004; Foucault 1976; Kell 2006, 2011).

Particularly related to 'vulnerable' volunteers, discussions in this chapter have compelled me to think about notions of freedom and agency. I have noted that labels based on deficit co-existed with discourses on the values of ownership, empowerment and agility. Using the lens of 'positional identity' (Holland *et al.* 1998), I have argued that through micro-discourses and in small moments of resistance, volunteering offered a means for these ascribed identities of deficit to be challenged. Yet there seems to be enough evidence to show that volunteers' voice and agency might be curtailed to 'fit' into a certain 'bureaucratic' way of doing that often clashed with more informal relationships of support and solidarity. My research illuminates how grand narratives and agenda such as 'value for money', 'unique contribution' and 'professionalisation' that pervade the development sector affect the experiences of development actors that are at the grassroots level – i.e. local volunteers.

The interplay between volunteering and monetisation has been problematised in my study particularly in the context of 'vulnerable volunteers'. My research has shown how volunteering could place the 'vulnerable' youths and adults at an even greater disadvantage (e.g. not being provided with services that they deliver since they are volunteers; incurring *own* costs through volunteer participation; bureaucratic language alienated individuals who were unable to engage with them). Volunteering spaces, and development in general, seem to be spaces where 'vulnerable' volunteers continue to shift between identifying as beneficiaries who receive and as volunteers who give.

Partly, this shifting relates to the hierarchies of knowledge (which volunteers help create, see Chapter 6) within which 'vulnerable' volunteers were being positioned in various 'locations' at various 'moments' (see for instance discussions on the 'expert' and 'newcomer). 'Local

knowledge', 'lived experience' were words used to describe and value the kind of knowledge that 'vulnerable' volunteers brought into the organisation. Yet the strong discourse and practice of professionalisation, training and upskilling seemed to suggest that such knowledge/experience, while valuable, was also incomplete. Pip, as an adolescent living with HIV, had valuable lived experience, but, to be a volunteer, he needed to know how to be good at health teaching and performing an HIV test. Both required training, orientation and learning, both in non-formal and informal ways. And although this discourse of professionalisation and upskilling might have constrained more informal ways of doing and learning, many volunteers recognised how such skills, experiences and networks could expand their career aspirations and trajectories.

Chapter Ten
Conclusion and Implications

10. Introduction

My starting point in this research was to explore the learning and literacy dimensions of the experiences of 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers. As I engaged with the volunteering literature, I found that these groups have been dominantly framed as beneficiaries of development programmes and that their experiences as volunteers were underexplored. What I discovered through my literature review was in stark contrast with my previous experience of working in the Philippines. There, I witnessed a wealth of volunteer initiatives that were led and founded by groups such as landless and homeless people, youth from low-income households, indigenous groups and 'victims' of natural calamities. My ethnographic research redirected academic attention from a dominantly formal and 'Northern-centric' view of volunteering to a social practice view that opened up the many ways by which volunteering was understood and practised as part of a wider spectrum of 'helping practices' within communities and cultures. The particular focus on the experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers offered an original contribution to the field of volunteer research where experiences of these groups have been under-researched. My research has unpacked, for instance, the complex issues surrounding volunteer remuneration and volunteer identities and how these impacted on participation, inclusion and voice.

However, recognising that much volunteering scholarship frames and measures acts of volunteerism "using supposedly universal or global standard that actually holds a Northern bias" (Butcher and Einolf 2017c; see also Devereux 2008; Hazeldine and Baillie Smith 2015), I wanted to employ a more bottom-up approach to researching their experiences. My point of departure was to explore the "cultural and contextual realities" of volunteering in these spaces, or what Butcher and Einolf (2017d) describe as employing an "endogenous lens" in studying volunteer work. Using ethnography as a methodology allowed me to gain an in-depth and insider view of how volunteering, learning and literacies were interlinked and embedded in the daily realities of the volunteers within and outside the two organisations. This approach contrasts with the dominant methodological tradition within volunteering and third sector studies, which often focuses on the economic assessment of volunteering– studying volunteer work using measurable

outcomes (e.g. increased service provision, human resource savings). Ethnographies of volunteering such as mine can contribute to expanding the ways in which volunteer work is being studied and understood.

The original contribution of my research also lies in taking a literacy and learning lens to explore the experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers. With a special focus on knowledge hierarchies, my research nuances often 'static' views of volunteer identity (i.e. a well-off Northern volunteer) by showing that 'vulnerable' volunteers are not only 'recipients', 'foot soldiers' or 'extra pair of hands' but also leaders, advocates and campaigners. By taking a social practice view of literacy, my research moved beyond the dominant framing of learning and literacies as *outcomes* and/or *preconditions* of volunteering. Instead, they were seen as practices that helped construct and/or challenge power relationships and identities. In this conceptual shift, my research has shed light into how literacy practices were entangled with the bureaucratic and institutional processes of the broader development sector where the two organisations were located. My research revealed that failure to 'take hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993) of these bureaucratic literacies intensified inequalities and reinforced identities of deficit – through dynamics partly mediated by 'small-scale traffic of texts' (Kell 2011) which move across local and non-local contexts. These divisive literacies were in tension with acts and motivations of volunteering that were founded on informal helping, cooperation and solidarity.

Now that I have charted my research journey and key contributions, this chapter sets out to share my reflections on the conceptual and policy/practice implications of my research. I have signalled at several points of this thesis how certain theoretical findings may have implications for policy and practice (for instance, my discussion in Chapter 6 suggested that development programmes could take into account the need for a mediator to support volunteers in engaging with bureaucratic texts). I will reflect on the constraints and opportunities I experienced having conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the context of development programmes/initiatives. I was also involved in several policy conversations (quite serendipitously) when I was writing up this thesis which compelled me to reflect on the potential contributions of and the challenges involved in, integrating ethnographic data in a policy/programme forum. I will conclude with some closing reflections on my journey as a researcher and as a development worker.

10.1. A social practice view of volunteering, learning and literacy: what conceptual contributions to research?

In Chapter 3, I explained that the conceptual lenses I chose to draw from (Blommaert 2004; Escobar 1995; Holland *et al.* 1998; Kell 2011; Lave and Wenger 1991; Street 1984; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015) helped me to frame volunteering, learning and literacy as social practices. I encountered volunteering, learning and literacy as they were understood, talked about and practised in volunteers' everyday realities. I gained insights into these concepts' complex relationships – many of which, I suspect, would not have been visible (e.g. power relationships, the fluidity of volunteer identity, strategies in engaging with bureaucratic texts, literacy as maintaining/widening inequalities) had I taken a different starting point. How does this conceptual shift expand our understanding of volunteering and learning/literacy – and their links?

First, my research highlights the volunteering experiences of 'vulnerable' groups and how these intersect with wider development discourses and processes. I critically examined the complexity of their experiences because of my conceptual shift in understanding volunteering through the lens of participation (i.e. something that people do every day) rather than the dominant lens of service delivery. Yet, I realise that the service delivery model remained pervasive in how volunteer work was understood and structured in the organisations. The 'vulnerable' volunteers were increasingly being made responsible for their *own* service provision (e.g. figuring out bureaucratic processes on their own, paying for their own food during late night activities). Through this, my research provides an original contribution to research on volunteering by highlighting the tendency for volunteer groups – which are often formed and maintained through mutual aid and solidarity – to counterintuitively place vulnerable groups at an even greater disadvantage. For me, this finding raises critical questions for further exploration in scholarship on volunteering and development. When discussed against concepts of development as neoliberalism (see the map I developed in Chapter 3, Table 3) to what extent does this notion frame volunteer work as 'free labour' that could keep NGOs like Youth4Health afloat and could take governments 'off the hook' in providing services (e.g. land tenure to the groups that need them (e.g. Land4All)? Is there a potential for overreliance on these community-based helping activities and, in the process, "exploit [*sic*] the energies of the poorest in the society"? (as what Jenkins (2009:27) argued in relation to a feminist NGO's heavy reliance on long-term women health volunteers in Peru).

In the field of international volunteering, my research contributes to balancing the uneven keel that leans towards experiences of volunteers from the Global North. Butcher and Einolf (2017c) – in the first anthology of volunteering in the Global South – noted the 'invisibility' of Global South

experiences in volunteer definition frameworks which were thought to be universal. Earlier, various pieces of work (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011; Baillie Smith *et al.* 2017; Laurie and Baillie Smith 2018) had already noted how such a skewed focus helped shape an image of the Global South as 'hosts' and 'recipients' of development programmes from the Global North. Hazeldine and Baillie Smith's (2015) global volunteering report highlighted how dominant definitions of volunteering had been dangerously presented as 'universal' when, in fact, they were born from studies of volunteer experiences from the US, Europe and Australia.

My research responds to the need identified by these scholars to look into volunteering 'cultures' in these underexplored contexts and how cultural and contextual specificities shape the face of volunteering motivations, forms and impact. However, there seems to be a slight danger here in widening the North-South divide – therefore leading to further polarisation – if volunteer research only teases out differences in volunteering in these two geopolitical spaces. I suggest that exploration into the tensions and complementarities between the 'universal' and the 'particular' may be looked into, instead of pitting one against the other (cf Hazeldine and Ballie Smith 2015) by exploring whether and how dominant discourses and practices of volunteering are disseminated, reproduced, and/or resisted in different volunteering communities. My analysis of how external discourses and processes shaped those that were in the two organisations, through Kell's (2011) trajectory of meanings and Blommaert's (2004) trajectory of texts, may be useful in tracing how the 'global'/ 'universal' permeates local groups and organisations through literacy practices. My research has shown traces of this – for example, how the vocabulary of Youth4Health volunteers was regimented by staff stating that they should use *person living with HIV* instead of *HIV-positive* because the former is the internationally accepted term. Perhaps, this exploration could be an impetus to a wider agenda of decolonising volunteering, volunteer research and/or development practice and research more generally.

Second, at the heart of my thesis' conceptual contribution was its departure, at the outset, from framing the discussions only around 'benefits' and 'deficits' – thereby asking a different set of research questions. If I begin to answer grand questions such as how can volunteering and learning benefit the vulnerable youth and adult volunteers, there is a tendency to naively presuppose that first, volunteering is unproblematically beneficial to the volunteers (the only question is how). And, second, that 'vulnerable' individuals lack something and, therefore need a certain degree of intervention which volunteering and learning can provide. Framing the question this way has the tendency to treat multidimensional concepts such as volunteering, learning and literacy as "stable factors" that lead to certain benefits or transformation, not taking into account how the nature of

volunteers' involvement may change over time (Hustinx *et al.* 2010:423). This framing may also underplay how the accompanying issues of power relations and inequalities impact volunteering activities.

So, what is the added value of applying a learning and literacy lens in the study of volunteering? The conceptual lenses I used also allowed me to reframe learning in/through volunteering as more than something that volunteers *bring to* (an asset) and later *gain through* (a benefit) volunteering. Unlike previous studies linking volunteering and learning that focus on learning outcomes (Elsdon 1995, 2000; Elsey 1993; Ross-Gordon and Dowling 1995; Schugurensky *et al.* 2010), using 'literacy as a social practice' (Street 1984, 1993) and informal learning (Rogers 2014) allowed me to venture beyond what volunteers learn. Instead, I was able to explore how learning and literacy interplayed with wider power relationships and cultural values. In short, I focused on *processes* rather than *outcomes*. For instance, I not only framed bureaucratic literacy as something volunteers learn (that they previously 'lacked'). Using the concepts of 'economies of literacy' (Blommaert 2001, 2004) and 'small-scale traffic of texts' (Kell 2011) allowed me to venture into more critical analyses of literacy inequalities, mediation of power through meaning-making trajectories and the repositioning of self through text production (see Chapters 6 and 9). This analysis offers original insights into ongoing debates on volunteering and learning, particularly issues around professionalisation of volunteers.

Third, a social practice view allowed for a conceptual shift from a focus on definitions (that, as I described in Chapter 1, is dominant in volunteering literature) to discourses around volunteering, learning and literacy. I drew from Escobar (1995) to conceptualise discourses as encompassing how individuals talk about, value, understand and practice volunteering and learning, including how these constructs and/or represent certain identities (e.g. who is the 'expert'). The diversity of understandings and practices I observed led me to argue that for definitions to better account for the complexity of volunteering as a social practice, popular criteria for defining volunteer work (e.g. free will vs coerced, no remuneration vs incentivisation, formal vs informal) could be better represented as spectrums rather than strict dichotomies (researchers from the Institute of Volunteer Research in the UK have also argued similarly over a decade ago; see for instance Paine, Hill, and Rochester 2010; Rochester *et al.* 2010).

But is this conceptual shift to looking at discourses only making our understandings of volunteering more complex? Engaging in a discussion about the conceptual contours of the "loose and baggy monster" that is volunteering (Lukka and Paine 2001:30) can also make visible

issues and challenges that may have otherwise been hidden. For example, my research and those by others elsewhere (Gillette 2003; Hustinx *et al.* 2010; Musick and Wilson 2007; Toraldo, Contu, and Mangia 2016) note that volunteering is often seen as good, self-sacrificial and as bringing transformative benefits, especially to vulnerable individuals. These dominant framings then conveniently argue that volunteering should be promoted, used and recognised as a development tool. I observed that a social practice approach challenged this seemingly simplistic formulation of *volunteering-leads-to-development* or *learning-leads-to-development.* In this research, I paid particular attention to the tendency of volunteering, learning and literacy to counterintuitively construct and/or enhance inequalities within the organisations, especially against the backdrop of the wider development ecosystem which they are part of. In this way, I am contributing to the academic research that critiques participation in development (Guijt and Shah 1998; Mohan 2014; White 1996; Willis 2011) and to findings of previous studies of volunteering that expose the negative impacts of volunteer work in relation to community cohesion (Lewis 2015) and gender inequalities (Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009).

Fourth and finally, a social practice view complicates volunteers' identities. On the one hand, 'client' categories put individuals into problematic boxes that need intervention. On the other hand, volunteering as a practice is engaged with by individuals to remedy such problems and deliver such interventions. The position of the expert is challenged as volunteers draw from past experiences (knowledge and skills), to engage with a wide range of tasks within the organisation. A social practice view compels researchers to ask fundamental questions such as what community is, who these volunteers are – and think of discursive identities (Gee 2016; Holland *et al.* 1998) as multiple and shifting. These inquiries lead to further research questions. For instance, an aspect of volunteering that emerged from my thesis, but I did not have the space to venture into, is the relationship between volunteering and gender. There seems to be a space to go beyond measuring the extent of women's volunteer work (UNV 2018 has already documented that more than half of the global volunteering is performed by women) and into an exploration of how volunteering intersects with wider gender roles and identities and other tasks women may have at home (e.g. caring responsibilities) and at work (similar to the research on women health volunteering by Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009).

Taken together, the conceptual shift towards a social practice view allowed me to "pry open the 'black box' of volunteering", as suggested by Shachar, von Essen and Hustinx (2019) and its relationship with learning and literacy. A 'social practices' lens may be a useful conceptual tool with which to explore the links between volunteering and learning – looking not only at what sort

of learning occurs (i.e. outcomes) but also at accompanying cultural values attached to learning, local ideologies of what learning is and issues of power and inequalities. My study is a response to the invitation to reject the common construction of volunteering, learning and literacy as monolithic and static. Instead, through qualitative inquiry, it explores how it is socially constructed and how its boundaries and contours are expanded and/or restricted by a variety of actors, texts and practices that occupy it.

10.2. Revisiting my research questions

I wanted my research questions to be focused but also not too restrictive for an ethnographic study. In view of this, my over-arching research question, *How do 'vulnerable' youth and adult volunteers engage with learning and literacy practices in/through their volunteer work?*, has emphasised processes (i.e. the how) rather than outcomes. As I collected and analysed my data, I knew that I had to conceptualise what I meant by 'practices' – an idea that was so central in my overarching RQ. Thinking of 'practices' as more than activities but a much wider concept that links volunteering, learning and literacy into wider power dynamics and cultural practices (see Chapter 3), widened my exploration. Even my secondary subsidiary question, *What kind of learning and literacy practices do volunteers engage with in their volunteer work?,* did not generate answers that were purely about learning outcomes (although the question begins by asking 'what kind')

While this conceptualisation of practices was helpful in expanding my exploration, the use of the term 'vulnerable' presented some challenges. In earlier versions of my RQs I opted for the terms 'poor' and 'marginalised'. However, as I began my fieldwork and analysed my data, the term 'marginalised' was limiting because the volunteers did not always stay in the 'margins' but became leaders, organisers and activists, as in the many examples I have cited. Poor (in the economic sense) was also limiting because financial difficulties, while significant, were not always constant and co-existed with other issues as well, such as health (as in PLHIVs in Youth4Health). The more I engaged in the fieldwork, the more I was introduced to other 'labels': victims, disadvantaged, squatter. In retrospect, I saw how the language ideologies of development actors, volunteers and even my own were in operation as I began to choose the 'best' term to describe the volunteers. Any term I could potentially use carried with it assumptions about these volunteers' identities which, at times, were incongruent with their experiences. In the end, I realised that any term used would have its own shortcomings in accurately capturing the volunteers' situation. I chose 'vulnerable' to signal that there were many aspects to these

vulnerabilities (e.g not only economic but also in terms of health as in Youth4Health) and that they could change (e.g. job insecurity in Land4All). I have used single quotations to signal the term's constructedness.

While the decision of which term to use came much later, I knew early on how these labels could limit, for example, my choice of case studies (see Chapter 4) and participants. During the scoping period, I did cast my net widely in deciding who/which groups to include and not include in my research, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork. Additionally, these early thoughts about the term to use to describe the volunteers, was a useful impetus for me to look into issues of labelling and how they help to shape identities. This was reflected in my second subsidiary question *How is volunteering understood by the volunteers and other actors? How do these discourses shape volunteers' practices and identities?* This focus was also helpful in narrowing my analysis to identify the most significant issues and findings in the context of 'vulnerable' volunteers' experiences.

Finally, I realised that my overarching research question was (perhaps rightly so) academic- and conceptual-focused. I knew I wanted to discuss my research's policy-implications, but I had not anticipated the extent to which I (and my research) was entangled with policy and practice conversations during my fieldwork and while writing up. I decided to shape a research question that addresses these implications centrally, as in my third research question: *How can an ethnographic approach contribute to our understanding of the links between volunteering and learning both in academic and policy/practice contexts?*

Taken together, my research questions served more as a guide rather than a strict map for exploration. These questions proved useful as starting points and foreshadowed problems. However, my ethnographic approach allowed my fieldwork to expand and then later focus my exploration.

10.3. Reflecting on the policy implications of my research

In this section, I reflect on what policy-makers and developers may take away from my ethnographic findings. I aim to contribute to the persistent concern of exploring the links between research, practice and policy – particularly in the field of volunteering development. I am aware that there are levels of policy and practice – and different kinds of policy and practice actors – so

certain implications that I will describe below may be more relevant for organisational, local and/or international policy/practice spaces. Instead of specific policy recommendations, I frame the following as suggestions towards developing a more dynamic approach in policy-making and programme development in volunteering. As such, I decided to end each subsection with some critical questions that will hopefully encourage further conversations.

10.3.1. Creating spaces for/of learning

At various points in this thesis, I have shown how volunteers often learned informally, for instance, through friendly conversations or accomplishing daily tasks with fellow volunteers, staff and government officials. These informal learning activities co-existed with non-formal provisions such as seminars, workshops, multi-day training programmes and learning camps. Therefore, it might be helpful for development workers to think of volunteer organisations as learning spaces where a wide variety of learning happens, with various degrees of formality and informality (Rogers 2014). Additionally, literacy in these spaces may be framed as multiple and diverse rather than promoting a single, unified understanding of literacy as reading and writing. This way, learning and literacies are not only understood as something 'out there' in the confines of a training hall or learning manual but also as things that development workers can (re)structure, encourage and support, as part of their organisations' daily activities. Against this backdrop, policy-makers and practitioners could explore questions such as: are there opportunities for volunteers to talk about and process their experiences (e.g. in a structured group activity) and learn from them? How are volunteers learning within the organisation? How do they regard/value such learning, say, in comparison with other opportunities (e.g. in training or in school)? What will programme evaluations look like if volunteers' learning, literacies and insights are included in the process? The experience of Land4All also points to the constraints experienced by volunteer leaders in engaging with bureaucratic information and texts that cannot easily be remedied by an orientation programme or a seminar-workshop. For development programmes and organisations that involve several bureaucratic/institutional processes, perhaps there is a need to ask: who takes on the role of the 'educator' or literacy mediator in these processes? Particularly in smaller, grassroots organisations, can this role be integrated into programme designs and activities and if yes, what contributions would it make?

10.3.2. Expanded volunteer definitions and typologies

My research has revealed that various actors within the organisations had competing ideologies around what volunteering was, including the kinds of provisions volunteers were entitled to receive. These differences in understanding were also reflected in the variations in volunteer support, management and provisions in the organisations. For policy-makers and programmers, having conceptual models that recognise various permutations of volunteering practices (see for instance Millora (2020) for a typology of volunteering in the 21st century) means that while there is a *dominant* way of doing volunteering (e.g. service delivery through a formal organisation/platform of support), it is not the only way (e.g. mutual aid, campaigning and activism). It may then be helpful to ask: what modalities of volunteering (or what sort of combinations) could best achieve the envisaged development impacts? Particularly for national and international volunteering/development policy actors, to what extent does a development agenda promote certain forms of volunteering (e.g. national volunteering through the state) while co-opting and/or supporting others (e.g. self-help and mutual aid groups)?

A concrete example of how an expanded understanding of volunteering could help develop a more dynamic approach to policy conversation is Volunteering for Development (V*f*D). V*f*D seems to have taken centre stage in the international development policy-making in recent years (see, for instance, VSO's DfID-funded Volunteering for Development programme). On close reading, V*f*D seems to frame both volunteering and development as static and unproblematic concepts where the former leads to the achievement of the latter. Making claims about (and designing programmes and policies based on) the potential links between volunteering and development must take into account the complexities of varied expressions of voluntary action. This may minimise the promotion of volunteering and development as if they have coherent meanings. If we disaggregate 'development', V*f*D could mean many different things – volunteering *for* GDP growth, peacebuilding, women's empowerment, educational access, water security, etc. Perhaps there is also a need to revisit the use of the preposition *for* – as it connotes volunteering as a vehicle/tool towards development which, conversely, is an automatic, desirable product. It does not seem to consider how volunteering may not always be 'good' and may be *against* development. Since volunteering and development are complex concepts, it might open up the discussion if policy-makers and practitioners, especially those at the level of international aid and development, move beyond a question of *how can volunteering lead to development?* What could be explored are questions such as: who defines development? What kind of

'development' does volunteering facilitate and for whom? Under which circumstances can volunteering lead to development?

I have also argued that recognising the various roles and realities of volunteers outside the organisations where they work, changes the face of financial reward within volunteering (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 9). Thus, I concur with Hazeldine and Baillie Smith (2015:13) on the need within policy and programme spaces for an "urgent debate, informed by further research, on the ways different forms of remuneration of volunteering are shaping volunteering activity." Reflecting on my findings, I suggest that the policy and programme inquiry (and response) should move beyond asking whether money/stipend/incentive needs to be given to the volunteer (and if yes, how much). Rather, it should ask how to support and incentivise volunteers, financially or otherwise, for instance, towards improved access to volunteering opportunities, by considering the various challenges that they may face.

10.3.3. Enabling environments?

Earlier in this chapter, I noted the tendency in development discourses to celebrate volunteers' heroic work. When it is the 'poor' that volunteer, there is an accompanying narrative that they become active and empowered actors of development (Gillette 2003). However, a close examination of these changing roles and processes such as I have done in my research (and also the work of Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2009; Lewis 2015) reveal that under certain circumstances, participation in volunteer activities could place 'vulnerable' volunteers at an even greater disadvantage. Against these findings, policy-makers and practitioners should consider appraising the volunteers' constraints and opportunities and interrogate whether and how the 'environment' they are creating is addressing these issues. Commentators on volunteering in emergencies and protracted crises (Hazeldine and Ballie Smith 2015; UNV 2018) have already suggested creating 'enabling environments' where systems are in place that take serious account of volunteers' safety, security and well-being. Could the same be said about longer-term, development-oriented projects such as health and land use? I must offer a caveat in this suggestion on enabling environments, as it also needs to take into account volunteers' agency (i.e. not only focus on what volunteers 'lack'), including informal safety nets already existing in some communities. Questions for discussion could include: how can development programmes better recognise the needs of the volunteers to ensure that they are able to engage with volunteering safely and securely, while also taking into account volunteers' agency? In what ways do these issues and

challenges intersect with socioeconomic status, gender and age? How can such nuanced understanding be taken into account in policy-making and development planning?

10.3.4. Recognising existing diverse practices and identities

My ethnography has shown how volunteers turn to each other for support to engage more effectively with the complex information and unfamiliar practices brought about by bureaucratic processes. Volunteers drew from previous knowledge and skills and at times, from those they engaged with in other spaces to learn together and get the job done. Drawing from changing approaches to literacy projects in the 90s, Street (2001b:1) has already suggested that "before launching into literacy programmes and interventions, it is necessary to understand the literacy practices that target groups and communities are already engaged with" My thesis has also shown that when bureaucratic texts travel across organisations (cf Kell 2011), the meanings and values attached to them by volunteers and community members may differ from what was originally intended (Chapter 6). Value attribution and interpretation of texts were contingent on many aspects, including pre-existing social hierarchies (I discussed this in relation to Blommaert 2004 in Chapter 9). Additionally, volunteers' roles were not exclusive to that of a service-provider or foot-soldier that help out with logistical tasks. Volunteers also took on the roles of leaders, campaigners and activists. Shore (2012) notes the tendency of policy literature to assume that subjects are passively constructed: policies bear down upon individuals "like an immutable force majeure". My findings suggest a more dynamic relationship between policies/programmes and their 'subjects'. Volunteers were actively challenging, reinterpreting and reusing policy/programme documents, so that they became responsive to their everyday contexts and needs. Drawing from these findings, policy-makers and practitioners could reflect: how are volunteers engaging with policy/programme documents and processes? What potential contribution could recognising volunteers' pre-existing systems of support, 'funds of knowledge' (Moll *et al.* 1992) and banks of skills make in designing and implementing development programmes? How can practitioners better recognise and diversify the roles and responsibilities that volunteers may fulfil in the organisations?

I recognise that creating a list of recommendations – while a common practice at the end of academic research such as mine – also requires further thinking into how these recommendations can translate to actual actions. Therefore, I have proposed the suggestions above with an awareness of the challenges and constraints that they may present. My experience of doing

ethnographic research of volunteering has revealed some of the challenges and opportunities of implementing such a methodology in a development programme context. I will turn to this next.

10.4. Doing ethnography within development programme contexts: constraints and opportunities

The inquiry into ethnography's role in policy-making and practice is not new and has been critically explored in areas such as development and aid programmes (Mosse 2017), project appraisal (Pottier 1993) and literacy and development policies/programmes (Papen 2005b; Robinson-Pant 2001b, 2008; Street 2001b). In this section, I will extend these debates in the context of programme planning and policy-making around volunteering and development. While there have been several in-depth studies (ethnographies and those that have strong participant observation components) of community-based volunteering in Global South contexts (Banerjea 2011; Jenkins 2008, 2009; Lewis 2015; Shachar 2014), the researchers offered few reflections on the challenges they faced in conducting ethnographic research in settings that were tightly linked with development programmes and policy provisions (e.g. volunteering as part of local health systems, national volunteering programmes, local volunteering in aid-funded programmes). The aim of this section is to explore these opportunities and constraints in relation to my fieldwork experience in two settings that were highly intertwined with varying development agendas.

In writing this section, I recognise that there are different ways that ethnography and policy-making/programme planning could intersect. Pottier (1993) and Mosse (2017) describe one such common scenario where anthropologists are invited to contribute toward a project's life-span in various capacities such as advising on programme design, implementation and evaluation. Ethnographers are thought to be able to get 'better' data that could then be used to improve practices. In these situations, the ethnographer and the development planner engage in sometimes messy negotiation of assumptions and expectations about/around qualitative research – including key research aims and questions that guide the project (see, for instance, Robinson-Pant 2001b). On the one hand, my experience was slightly different from what I described above because I was not directly constrained by or responsible for, the agenda of an external aid agency or development organisation. My research aims and questions were originally devised by me and later shaped by my field experiences. My process, then, was more reminiscent of Street's (2001b) description of ethnographers' role in policy-making and programme development: the starting point was to find out and take account of 'what was going on' and only then was I able to reflect on how to improve certain approaches (see previous sections). On the other hand, my experience

also had some similarity with what Pottier and Mosse described above because while I was not directly/formally invited to contribute to the policy-making and programme processes of the organisations, I was implicitly expected to take on an informal role of an adviser on the basis of my research.

Through ethnography, I had the opportunity to witness first-hand how the policies (e.g. housing laws, consent for HIV testing) and programmes (e.g. community land tenure programme, adolescent sexual health counselling) were encountered by volunteers, staff and community members. I saw the activities required so that the policy/programme agenda could operationalise in these communities and the identities that they helped construct (e.g. the 'poor', 'key affected population'). Alongside these, I was also in a position to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of implementation issues and how they appeared more and more complex as I continued following the volunteers' stories. As an ethnographer, the more I spent time in the field, the more I found it difficult to paint the identities, challenges and experiences of the volunteers using a broad brush – for instance, the way government officials in my study would generally tag informal settlers as 'victims' or as having 'squatter mentality' (see Chapter 5 for my conversation with a government official on this). I realised that teasing out an issue's components and complexities presented an opportunity to highlight more pain points that policies and programmes could then address. When I presented my early findings with Youth4Health, for instance, one of the programme staff commented that "these [findings] made us see things that we did not know were a problem", particularly relating to my accounts on how some volunteers felt less confident about medical procedures (such as the HIV screening) when their clients were medical practitioners. It struck me that my ethnographic findings were not just complicating issues but, to a certain extent, were making visible specific implementation challenges that (hopefully) engendered insights for action.

Being faced with and experiencing these complex issues, a key challenge that I encountered was how to minimise my tendency to take on an evaluative lens and then think in terms of interventions. During the early days of my fieldwork, I sent my preliminary fieldnotes to my supervisors in the UK – two of whom are experienced ethnographers – who signalled that some of my accounts read like programme assessment. For instance, I wrote that volunteers rolling out HIV testing in a public area *was not conducive* or was *not a best practice example* [reflective note, 16/08/2017]. I had to remind myself that my main task as an ethnographic researcher was to document and understand how these policies and programmes were encountered by the volunteers. It was not primarily to evaluate how good (or bad) the implementation was – and then make claims as to how it should

happen (i.e. the temptation of making a list of recommendations or best practices). My tendency to think in terms of interventions was partly influenced by my previous experience as a development worker in the Philippines. Conducting ethnographic research in development programmes, I straddled these two identities: a researcher and a development worker. Similar to what Mosse (2017) described, the ethnographic process compelled me to explore dilemmas and personal connections to the field instead of concealing them.

I described in my methodology chapter how my ethnographic exploration has also been a personal journey. As a participant observer, for example, I experienced the discomfort, frustration, confusion and anger that came with dealing with highly bureaucratic institutions. There were many times when I thought about how these processes could be streamlined and made easier for end-users. I was formulating suggestions on how the volunteers could be engaged more effectively in institutional processes. At the same time, I wondered to what extent could I (or should I) suspend my judgement of what I thought qualified as an 'acceptable' or 'best' practice and then suggest what to do. On the one hand, I felt that as a researcher, I did not have much power to change the shortcomings of the policies/programme that I was observing. In fact, when I asked the volunteers to fill out financial forms that I needed to submit to my fieldwork funder[40] in the UK, I felt that I contributed to the processes that I was critiquing in the first place! I was also aware that the primary purpose of my research was not to 'change things' in the organisations. Reading literature in this area, I was struck that instigating change was a remit oftentimes associated with the development worker/policy maker and not with the ethnographer. Robinson-Pant (2001b:168) aptly describes the common assumption that the development worker "…is usually seen primarily as initiating change in people's behaviour (a catalyst) an aim which is disputed or ideologically unacceptable to many ethnographers who may wish to remain observers of change that is happening irrespective of their actions." On the other hand, I felt that I could not simply abandon my identity and tendencies as a former development worker. I found myself in an awkward position similar to that described by Pigg (2013) in relation to global health and development, where anthropologists face dilemmas on how best to move across the opposite ends of the spectrum of "just sitting around" and "really doing something".

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[40] I was able to secure £400 funding for each organisation to use for any activity they wish to conduct. I received this as part of a fieldwork grant from an international organisation in the UK. This was in lieu of usual 'tokens' given to research participants of research projects.

I did have the opportunity to 'do something', and this was partly facilitated by the various roles that I was given (and some I inevitably had to take on), apart from being 'their researcher[41]'. I became co-implementor (e.g. accompanying volunteers to HIV screening in clubs), documenter (e.g. co-producing a report on a youth camp), adviser on project design (e.g. assisting on Land4All's livelihood programme bid) and mediator (e.g. helping explain to Land4All's volunteers the CMP process). In hindsight, I realised that I sometimes took these roles unknowingly and may have overperformed. Again, what was helpful in this regard were my supervisors' reminders. When I sent them my fieldnotes, they drew my attention to how I was writing, as if I was more of an implementor of the activities rather than an observer (for example, I would write *"we went to the club to prepare the testing kits…"*) and urged me to reflect on the implications of such positionalities in my research process (I discuss this also in my methodology chapter). For me, being able to take on varied roles was a way to use what I knew then (e.g. my earlier research findings), not necessarily to challenge grand policies/programmes head-on but influence micro-processes within the groups if/when possible – a manageable action on my part considering the constraints. Straddling my identities as a researcher and a development worker, I struggled to find a balance between (or, to move across) observing, evaluating and acting.

When I returned to the UK to write this research, I found myself in a role similar to that described by Pottier and Mosse above. Because of my experience as an ethnographer and being a Global South researcher, I was consulted by a couple of volunteer-involving organisations to work with them on policy-focused pieces. Having just finished fieldwork, I was optimistic about exploring the potential contributions ethnographic data (such as the data I gathered through my fieldwork) could make in these policy fora. For instance, I was asked by a UN agency to revise a two-decade-old model of volunteering typology that proposed four distinct types of volunteering: service delivery, campaigning/activism, mutual aid/self-help and participation. Faced with the task, I thought about Susan and RJ, the key individuals in this thesis. Their volunteering activities could not be simply filed under one of these discrete boxes. Therefore, I suggested a conceptual shift towards thinking of these four 'categories', instead, as 'elements' that may be present in various intensities, depending on the volunteering practice. In short, I proposed to complicate the previously simple model.

On several occasions, the policy specialists of the agency appreciated the level of detail and complexity in the model I was proposing (i.e. I suggested to move beyond strict boxes and into

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[41] Some volunteers introduce me to others by saying, Chris is "our researcher". I have discussed implications of this in Chapter 4, under the section on reflecting on my positionality

fluid spectrums). However, since this work will be a basis for discussions during a high-level political forum, they also reminded me that the model has to have a certain degree of simplicity – i.e. "we still want those boxes" (as shared by one of them) – so that it remains accessible to a wider audience, instead of being "too academic" (as commented by one senior staff during my online presentation). Two things struck me in this experience. First, it made sense to me how policy actors would need to put a fence around arguably complex concepts such as volunteering, learning and development in order to make targets more defined and visible. Just like Robinson-Pant's (2001b) reflection on conducting ethnographic research for an aid agency, I felt like my research data may lead to more questions than answers for policy-makers and practitioners. There remains the question of data usability – what sort of (ethnographic) data becomes useful in these spaces? I agree with Rogers (2001) that, as a researcher, I can make visible the complexity and multiplicity of sides and choices of a single issue whereas policy-makers, he emphasised, need to take sides. In a way, policy-makers and developers need to choose a version of a definition to make an issue 'simple' enough to warrant a feasible intervention. Second, my experience highlights the importance of communication: how can I better communicate the complexity I encountered through my ethnographic research to a policy/programme audience, so that it becomes useful for them? Drawing from Rogers (2001:216), the academic and the practice/policy spaces may be considered "(unequal) 'discourse communities'". This means that actors in these spaces operate with different ideologies, starting points and agendas. So, there remains the question of whether and how spaces are created for these varying discourses to be discussed and shared.

10.5. Conclusion

I write the remaining chapters of this thesis as the Philippines, the UK, and many other countries around the world begin lockdown measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through our Facebook chats, I learned that Youth4Health refocused some of its programmes towards home delivery of anti-retroviral medications to ensure the safety of its HIV positive clients and volunteers who are classified as high risk. Land4All had to suspend many of its core activities as government agencies closed down and community members were quarantined at home. Amidst the confusion and insecurity, my experience and research taught me something certain: that volunteering responses of various kinds and scales would flourish. While I was tucked away at my desk, writing my thesis, I was also witnessing the wealth of volunteer activities all over the world. It was a strange time to be finishing a thesis on volunteering. As someone who has volunteered and worked in the development sector for many years, experiencing the pandemic

felt like it was relevant to 'do' and not only to 'write' about volunteering. Yet my experience in writing this thesis has given me insights on how 'writing about' and 'studying' volunteering is not necessarily divorced from practice and policy implications (as I have talked about above). Additionally, the value of academic work should not be judged only by whether and how it can contribute to 'real-life' outcomes.

Brian Street (2001b:126), in an edited volume of ethnographic research of literacy projects around the world, made a poignant statement about research's role: "Research… I believe, has a task to do in making visible the complexity of local, everyday, community literacy practices and challenging dominant stereotypes and myopia." In a way, I took on a similar task through this ethnography of volunteering, learning and literacy. I began this thesis by describing the dominant ways by which volunteering is understood and studied in the literature. I argued that a focus on understanding volunteering in/through 'formal' organisations or platforms of support has failed to take into account the everyday community volunteer activities participated in by individuals who, themselves, come from 'vulnerable' backgrounds. Often these groups are framed as beneficiaries of volunteering and not volunteers themselves. There is also a large interest in international volunteering, although the focus has often been on the experiences of the 'international volunteer', often those from so-called Global North countries. Against these dominant framings, I have argued that learning is often seen either as an asset that volunteers have and can contribute to volunteer organisations, or as a benefit to volunteering that then leads to a list of learning outcomes.

I identified a clear gap in the literature (i.e. exploring the experiences of 'vulnerable' volunteers) and explained that such a gap was accompanied by an imbalance in the way volunteering in the Global South has been studied – often, communities in this region are seen as backdrops within which volunteering by international volunteers occur. Apart from contributing towards filling this research gap, I also took on a different conceptual starting point (see Chapter 3): that volunteering, learning and literacy can be understood and explored not as 'organised' and 'formal' development tools and interventions but as practices that are part of everyday social practices. Taking on such a conceptual lens led me to ask different questions. For example, I moved beyond asking 'what volunteers learn through volunteering?' into 'what sort of learning and literacy practices do volunteers engage with as they participate in volunteer activities?'. I did not start by taking on a dominant definition of volunteering but asked how volunteers themselves understood and valued volunteering. The questions I asked, and my goal of challenging "dominant stereotypes and myopias" (Street 2001b:7), compelled me to take on ethnography as a research methodology, as it allowed me to take on the much-needed "endogenous" lens to

researching volunteering (Butcher and Einolf 2017a) – gaining in-depth insights into cultural and contextual realities of volunteering in these communities, including the power relationships embedded in these practices.

My analyses in Chapters 5-9 aimed to develop a broader perspective on the learning dimension of volunteer work. The chapters have shown that learning and literacy practices intersect with how different forms of knowledge/skills were valued in the organisations, whether and how these were impacted by institutional and bureaucratic processes and the kinds of identities this helped construct/shape (that were, at times, rejected and challenged by the volunteers). Such a social practice view led me to trouble the relationship between volunteering and learning (i.e. beyond the volunteering-leads-to-learning-and-development formula) and has shown, for example, that bureaucratic literacy practices could be divisive – creating and exacerbating inequalities within communities and placing the 'vulnerable' at an even greater disadvantage. This highlights the need to look more closely into how various development agendas – including those promoted by volunteering and development agencies – could take better account of the needs and challenges of the volunteers. I remember RJ who complained that aside from working for free, he also needed to pay for fellow volunteers' food (see Chapter 5).

Although much of my research findings have revealed issues, challenges and constraints surrounding volunteer work among 'vulnerable' groups, I still maintain my admiration for these everyday acts of helping that I have long recognised when I was still working in the Philippines – and even more so in the context of a pandemic. During my first year of this PhD, I came across an article asking: is volunteerism in the Philippines dead or alive? (Virola *et al.* 2010). Immediately, I was struck that this question needed to be asked in the first place – until I found that this inquiry was in the context of measuring the impact of volunteering for the Philippine economy. My research has taught me that volunteerism as a value, volunteering as a practice and volunteers as identities have always been alive in the Philippines – and perhaps elsewhere. They just take on many different forms, depending on context, culture and in response to the ebbs and flows of wider societal changes (cf Lopez Franco and Shahrokh 2015 on changing tides of volunteering and development) – for instance, members of Land4All were already engaging in person-to-person helping activities as neighbours and friends, in addition to now being an organised association. Such a conceptual shift will allow us to challenge grand narratives such as *volunteering leads to learning* and ask, *under which circumstances can volunteering lead to what kind of learning and for whom?* For me, what such a shift does is to open up academic, policy and practice conversations around volunteering and learning. In light of this, my thesis does not

claim to provide the 'final word' on these complex questions but is a bid to participate and contribute to these (ongoing) conversations.

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Appendix A

Programmes offered by Youth4Health

Programme Area	Name of Project	Description	Volunteer activities	Partners**	Duration
Family Planning (FP)	FP Outreach Activities	Staff and volunteers travel to government-identified FP hotspots to provide Long Acting and Permanent Methods (LAPM) to voluntary acceptors (i.e. installation of IUD*	• Volunteer assist in the installation of these methods but also during pre- and post- operation interview. They also assist in logistical needs • Volunteers are given daily allowances during deployment	Population Commission, **LGUs**, PHIC	Regular, Ongoing
	Birthing and Lying-in Clinic	Youth4Health is an accredited clinic that provides pre-, intra- and post-natal services such as pre-natal check-ups, normal birth deliveries and post-natal care*	• During emergencies, volunteers may assist during normal birth delivery • CBVs are tasked to 'scout' for possible clients from their barangays and refer them to Youth4Health. In these instances, they will be given incentives	**Popcom, PHIC,** DOH	Regular, Ongoing
HIV/AIDS	Community-Based Screening	Staff and volunteers conduct a new, less-invasive HIV/AIDS screening procedure which provides results in only 20 minutes. The test can be conducted anywhere where confidentiality can be ensured by a trained individual (not necessarily a medical professional) ***	• Volunteers assist in organising CBS gatherings in their own communities. They send letters to local councils for permission, take care of logistics and ensure that clients are present during the test • Volunteers have diversified places where they conduct testing such as, for example, in bars, during parties and eyeballs, in boarding houses, etc. • Volunteers must undergo a CBS training to be able to conduct the	DOH, Popcom, **INGOs**	Regular, ongoing, contract with funders on a 3-month basis

			actual test and must already be a trained peer counsellor as pre- and post-testing counselling is also done by them		
	Free in-clinic HIV Testing	Youth4Health offers free in-clinic HIV testing using an Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA). This is the next-level testing following the CBS. If reactive, the blood is then sent to Manila for the Western Blot. This is the confirmatory HIV examination which then considers a client to be HIV 'postive'. All these services are free if done through Youth4Health	• Volunteers help in the demand-generation by inviting friends and networks to avail of these services. • When in the office, they also assist clients to the laboratory and conduct pre- and post-test counselling	DOH, Youth4Health	Regular, ongoing
	Case-finding and case-management	Although not yet registered as a satellite clinic, Youth4Health keeps track of most of the HIV clients they tested positive. They assist the client in his/her treatment regimen and follow-up examinations	• Volunteers have minimal participation in this project as this is chiefly managed by project staff. However, several volunteers are friends of PLHIV clients and they are encouraged to help follow-up and monitor from time to time.	DOH, **INGO**	Ongoing, contract with funders on a 3-month basis
	One-Care Programme	Seeks to include PLHIVs' friends and families into the over-all management of their health. This is done through house visitation and recently through learning group sessions	• Volunteer social workers design and implement LGS sessions. They also assist in the case documentation.	**INGO**	Ongoing, contract with funders on a 3-month basis.

	HIV 101	Most HIV screening activities are coupled with health teaching using modules and IEC materials from DOH.	• During big events, volunteers assist in logistical preparations ofr HIV 101 lectures. When needed, some volunteers may conduct the lectures themselves	Institutions inviting Youth4Health for the lecture	Ongoing, regular
ASRH	After 5 Programme	After 5 Programme seeks to provide an alternative health service point for adolescents from 5pm-10pm (after class hours but when health clinics are closed)	• Peer educators sign up for 'duty hours' of 4 hours per week. They are given allowances for every hour of being on duty. • Peer educators are in charge of filling out HEADSS assessment form with walk-in clients and log them in a monitoring form • Peer educators lead trainings and tutorial on various topics such as make-up, hair braiding, drawing and the like	**DOH**	Ongoing, 1-year contracts
	Adolescent and Youth Camp	This is an annual 5-day adolescent camp focusing on leadership in adolescent sexual and reproductive health programmes. Participated by adolescent leaders in various municipalities in Iloilo City	• Youth volunteers served as workshop co-facilitators or logistical support during the camp • They are given allowances for every day of participation	**DOH**	Ongoing, annual contracts
	Healthy Young Ones	Healthy Young Ones (HYO) is an information, education and communication material for adolescents covering topics on sexual and reproductive health	• Peer educators *trained* in HYO deliver these lectures to a variety of audiences	**DOH**	Ongoing

	Distribution of free condoms and lubricants	Youth4Health distributes free condoms and lubricants to clients including adolescents above 15 years old. Informal health teaching is included prior to provision of these materials.	Youth volunteers can disburse condoms in the clinic or, more often, they ask for boxes of supplies that they can distribute to their communities	**DOH**	Ongoing

*These services are free if clients are regular, paying members of PHIC

**These services are free to everyone

Institutions in **bold are project funder

Appendix B

Different volunteers in Youth4Health

Volunteers	Description and tasks
Youth	- Youths and adolescents, both in-school and out-of-school often coming from low-income communities 'Youth volunteers' is more of a catch-all term that would include peer educators and peer counsellors.
HIV Envoys and Online Clan (OC) members	- HIV Envoys are alumni of an annual HIV Envoy Pageant (now on its third year) that engages gay men and transgender women in a pageant competition. Participants are then tasked to engage in a variety of HIV advocacy activity for one year - Online clan members are newly engaged groups of gay men who form an online community through Facebook groups. Members of these groups reach up to hundreds of thousands. Youth4Health taps into OC leaders and founders to mobilise their members for HIV-awareness related activities
Peer educators	- Composed of both youths and adolescents both in-school and out-of-school *who were trained* under either the DOH or the POPCOM - Often coming from low-income families in urban poor communities - After training, they can conduct community health classes most often around ASRH - Being trained as peer educators, they can fulfil more specialised tasks such as assisting in the installation of implants, helping out in the logistics of community-based HIV testing - There are programmes handled by Youth4Health that specifically require peer education training (at the least) before one is able to volunteer
Peer counsellors	- Composed of youths and adolescents both in-school and out-of-school *who were trained* to become peer counsellors under the DOH. Often, peer educators undergo training to 'level-up' into peer counsellors - Often coming from low-income families in urban poor communities - Following training, the peer counsellors can conduct community health classes - Only trained peer counsellors can conduct peer-to-peer counselling. Counsellors must be further trained in HIV Counselling to become HIV Counsellors.

	• There are programmes handled by Youth4Health that specifically require peer counselling training before one is able to volunteer • Peer counselling is also a pre-requisite to further training such as, for example, being a CBS motivator
Board members	• Composed of working professionals from various fields: government, health care, media, business • They form the overseeing body of the Youth4Health. They can be arbiters when issues arise in the chapter
Student interns	• From time to time, Youth4Health hosts students as interns and 'practicum-ers' in the organisation. Most commonly, these are students studying to become licensed midwives and need industry experience • Recently, Youth4Health opened its door to senior high school students who were required to spend 2-weeks-worth of industry experience as part of their course • Usually, student volunteers/interns serve short and activity-based terms although a couple would continue volunteering outside school requirements
Field-specific volunteers	• Youth4Health recruits volunteers that have specific expertise and qualifications for a job/project • Volunteer unlicensed midwives – especially those awaiting for their licensure examination – work in shifts alongside licensed midwives • The recent venture of Youth4Health into the management of adolescents living with HIV necessitated the addition of social workers in their team. They manage to recruit one licensed and two fresh graduate social workers
International volunteers	• Recently, Youth4Health welcomed an international volunteer from Sweden. She is a midwife and will work as part of their family planning programmes

Appendix C

Data Analysis Process during fieldwork

Below is an excerpt from my Microsoft OneNote file containing typed-up version of my fieldnotes. Following the ON-TN-MN (Hughes 1994) strategy, the first column contains my Observational Notes (ONs) – descriptive accounts of what I observed. In the second column, I wrote down my Theoretical Notes (TNs) and Methodological Notes (MNs). They are my interpretations or analyses of what I observed which, later during my fieldwork were also influenced by my reading of relevant literature. Each TN/MN corresponds to an excerpt in the first column (color-coded and numbered). Highlighted (in yellow) are 'key terms' I used to describe/represent a particular fieldnote or analyses. Some of the entries in column two relate to my methodological reflections/decisions (MNs). For instance, in Number (6) in the second column, I wrote "Transect walk but talk about memories" – this was a method I was considering at that time to further understand/explore this finding.

Every so often, I would list down Key Concepts (see below) from a set of fieldnotes which was later helpful when I began coding my data via NVivo.

		KEY CONCEPTS HERE:	CM
October	20/09/17 -...	EMOTIONAL AFFINITY TO SPACE	
November	21/09/17 -...	FAITHFULNESS OF LITERACY MEDIATION; HOW INFORMATION TRAVELS	
		DISCOURSES ABOUT WOMEN AND FAMILY	
December	21/09/17 - F...	EMOTIONAL AFFINITY TO SPAC	
		IMAGE OF INEQUALITY	
		RESEARCHER'S ROLE	
January	23/09/17 -...	ROLES OF VOLUNTEERS (VOLUNTEERS AS ADVOCATES)	
		MEDIATION AS POWER-BALANCE	
February	25/09/17 -...	BOUNDARIES OF SOLIDARITY	
		PRO-POOR PROGRAMME?	
March	24/09/17 -		