

## Structuration and Disaster Preparedness in an Urban Housing Resettlement Area: The Case of Disiplina Village in Valenzuela City

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### Abstract:

*Resettling people from disaster prone areas to safety places is one way to reduce their vulnerabilities (Chafe, 2007; Peñalba, et. al 2010; Reyes, et. al 2011). In 2009, Typhoon Ondoy resulted in many homeless families along Tullahan River in Valenzuela City. In partnership with business and industrial companies based in Valenzuela, resources were pooled together and the idea of a resettlement area called Disiplina Village was formed. By resettling these households, they will be prevented from residing back to the declared inhabitable areas. This is the start of the city's direction towards building an informal settler-free city. Today, Disiplina Village is on its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of implementation and the City Government of Valenzuela is continuously doing its part to achieve the goals of*

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*Disiplina Village Project as the first disaster-preparedness urban housing project in the city.*

*This paper aims to probe the newly established and crystallized structures in Disiplina Village. Applying Giddens' structuration theory, the research explores the resources and rules provided by the City Government of Valenzuela to the resettled families. The creative response of these resettled families as human agents with newly created structures, rules, and resources is also analyzed. The paper used qualitative data gathering techniques such as semi-structured interviews, case studies, and FGDs among related officials and key-informants of LGU-Valenzuela and resettled families in Disiplina Village.*

**Key words:** Structuration, Disaster Preparedness, Rules and Resources, Structures, Anthony Giddens, Housing Resettlement Project

## **Introduction**

Informal settlement is a perennial problem in Metro Manila (Peñalba, et. al 2010; Reyes, et. al 2011). The number of squatters living in dangerous areas such as river banks, esteros, under the bridges, and along the railroad system has significantly increased through the years. Especially in Tullahan River, households living by its river bank are prone to flooding which destroys shanties and makeshift houses.

In 2009, the wrath of Typhoon Ondoy resulted in many homeless families along Tullahan River. In partnership with business and industrial companies based in Valenzuela, resources were pooled together and the idea of a resettlement area called Disiplina Village was formed. By resettling these households, they will be prevented from residing back to the declared inhabitable areas. This is the start of the city's direction towards building an informal settler-free city.

The village is located in a 1.9 has. Lot in Brgy. Ugong. Initially a partnership among LGU-Valenzuela City, Gawad Kalinga, Meralco and Maynilad, three buildings, each housing 16 units were initially built in 2010. Through the renowned Filipino spirit of Bayanihan, sweat equity was provided by the future residents. Certificates of Occupancy were awarded to these households after they have transferred to their dwelling units. The successful resettlement of these households attracted additional participation from San Miguel Corporation which pledged PhP45M to construct additional buildings in the area. Perception of other informal settlers also improved and became more willing to participate in the project. As of date, there are already 15 buildings constructed with 238 households residing in the community. The residents do not own the units. A minimal amount of PhP300 per month is paid for lease which goes to a trust fund that will be used for future housing projects of the city. Disiplina Village is on its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of implementation and the City Government of Valenzuela is continuously doing its part to achieve the goals of Disiplina Village Project as the first disaster-preparedness urban housing project in the city.

In this regard, the present study examines the new structures, rules, and resources given to the relocated families of disiplina village by the City Government. Moreover, we would like to probe the engagement of the former with the crystallized rules and resources, and as well as their practice of agency.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Much has still to be understood about the structure-agency dynamics of in-city relocation. The City Government of Valenzuela creates new mechanisms and strategies in achieving and attaining the vision and mission of Disiplina village project as the first disaster-preparedness urban housing

project in the city. What are the rules and resources given to the relocated families of Disiplina Village? What are the new structures produced and reproduced in the relocation site?

Disiplina Village is different from other resettlement areas in two aspects. First is the empowerment of the community. The households relocated here are organized (Kapitbahayan) under the Disiplina Village Council. Under which are groups of households and each group has a community leader and building leader who conducts regular monitoring which also act as a coordinator with the council. For continued quality living in the village, residents actively participate in community empowerment programs. These include Kapitbahayan trainings, values formation seminars, implementation of the community development plan and mentoring of the community leaders on self-governance. Second is the enforcement of stricter policies on dwelling. Drawing from experiences of other LGUs with housing programs, the city crafted a “Home Space Agreement” which binds beneficiaries to clear policies of residing and eviction. This agreement is assessed and renewed twice a year. How do relocated families adjust, engage, and deal with new rules and resources of Disiplina Village? How do they practice their agency and reflexivity within the structure of Disiplina Village?

### **Theoretical and Analytical Framework**

The present study is primarily anchored on Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory. We would to explore the structures produced and reproduced in Disiplina Village including the rules and resources given by the LGU-Valenzuela City and its partners in the project. Moreover, Giddens’ concept of practice of agency through reflexive action is also employed to help evaluate the engagement and interaction of relocated families with new structure of rules of resources in Disiplina Village. This does not mean that changes happen instantaneously.

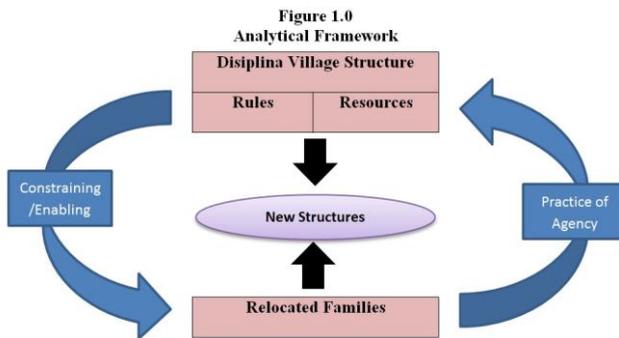
Rather, this study recognizes the possibility for change and that freedom of action is always there, regardless of its degree or extent. In doing so, this study infers Giddens' structuration theory (1984), although not entirely so as not to be confined and obligated to elaborate on the complexities of theory.

Among these considered notions is that actions create or reproduce structures through their repetitions, along with the resulting patterning of social relations over space and time (Haralambos, 2004: 969-971). The daily activities of individuals ensure the platform upon which social structures come to exist or to be reinforced. In this sense, Giddens' views on social action comes across as less deterministic, one that understands social action within a context of pre-existing and presently in-progress structures, from which human agents can acquire the stock of mutual knowledge, and use the structures' aspects of rules and resources to attain objectives.

Rules refer to generalizable procedures and formulas of doing things while resources are the utilized material manifestations such as technology and goods (allocative), and non-material forms of structures (authoritative) such as influence or authority. Their instrumentality or recognition as resources is dependent upon human actions. Structure then can be seen as an enabler of possibilities while governing modes of action. It assumes a recursive feature: being both medium and outcome of practices. Structuration refers to the conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and the reproduction of systems; the latter are actually the reproduced relations between actors and collectivities, organized as regular social practices (ibid.)

In as much as the influence of structures is taken to be less absolute, so too is the human agency's potential tempered with a 'realistic' notion. Human action needs to be understood as demonstrating the reflexivity and knowledgeability of actors, which may have unintended consequences and carried out without reference to its unacknowledged conditions. They do

not necessarily transform or reproduce society as human agents intend it to be (ibid: 970). In fact, their actions involve reproducing relationships of autonomy and dependence, as the notion of power can be defined. Hence, it may be said that while human actions have many possibilities, there are constraints owing to relationships created from social interactions that can limit the range of possibilities. Nevertheless this condition does not diminish the human quality to have acted otherwise, affect others or make a difference. Power, as the 'transformative capacity' entrenched in agency, guarantees in society the potential to change their lives or live them according to how they want to under their present circumstances (ibid.).



## **Structuration in Disiplina Village**

Figure 1.0 shows the analytical framework of the study. It could be seen that the structure of Disiplina Village would be best scrutinized by probing the existing rules and resources given and offered by the City Government of Valenzuela together with its partners. The present structure of rules and resources of Disiplina Village can be constraining and enabling. It constrains the agents to act within the structure because of some rules, but it also gives an opportunity for them to produce and reproduce new structures. In this case, the structure of Disiplina Village shapes and influences the patterns of action of

relocated families, but they are also capable of creating new structures and practicing their agency. The entire cycle of how the structure influences the relocated families and how the latter producing and reproducing the former is evidently the process of Giddens' structuration which is the main focus of the study.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

The research study used a descriptive and qualitative approach and focused on a field research type of design. The researchers believe that the study could be best achieved when the data gathered could be expounded on and explained thoroughly instead of relying on predetermined answers as done in surveys. Interviews have the capacity to describe, explain and explore issues from the participants' perspective. Furthermore, interviews, as a method of data collection, are most fittingly used in situations requiring open-ended questions and where the interviewers have to record precisely the answers given by the participants. It is on this reason that the researchers undertook an interview method as a better recourse to obtain more credible and reliable sets of data.

### *Key-Informants of the Study*

The key-informants of the study are the head of the families of Disiplina Village Phase 1 in Barangay Ugong. The researchers used purposive sampling to select the respondents. This sampling is based on the discretion and sound judgment of the researchers regarding the characteristics and profile of the representative samples.

### *Data Gathering Procedure*

The primary source of the data came from the interview conducted between the researchers and key-informants. A set of

guidelines called the Participant Information Sheet were prepared by the researchers to assure the interviewees that any information obtained would be solely used for academic purposes and would be kept confidential. The interviewees also agreed that the duration of the interview would be audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. They have also completed a profile sheet to provide data that could later be used for comparisons, clarifications, and data validation. The interviews have then commenced at the pace of the interviewees' answers and elaboration on the questions. Then the researchers transcribed all the recorded interviews for data gathering. Irrelevant information, which was recorded, was then taken out and relevant information was left. The researchers have read thoroughly the transcripts to get a sense of the whole, jotted down ideas, and were then able to identify major points within sub points of the interviews, and their relationship with each other. This method of data analysis is called Tech's approach whereby the data are first analyzed in the language in which interviews were conducted. Aside from the interview, the researchers also employed relevant library and internet researches in order to have a more plausible research study. From these researches, the researchers were able to gather load and acquired significant information that became helpful on the research study.

## **Discussion**

### *Resources: The Emergence of Disiplina Village*

In September 2009, the wrath of Typhoon Ondoy did not spare the City of Valenzuela as it did in most of Metro Manila and all other cities that it crossed. The overflowed waters razed through the Tullahan River and swept away houses and shanties along its banks, and left some 1,860 families homeless and hopeless.

As quick as the local government provided these families help to ease their immediate needs is the response of the city's partners in service, after Mayor Sherwin T. Gatchalian called on them to help these families rise from the devastation of Ondoy. Businesses and industries in the City of Valenzuela started to respond by pulling together resources for the relocation and rebuilding of these communities in a safer place, and providing them with better facilities.

Funds were raised for the construction of housing units for these families to take them away from danger zones along Tullahan River. It was coursed through *Dakilang Handog Foundation, Inc.*, while the City Government provided the initial 1.9 hectare city property in Barangay Ugong as the relocation site. The City Government shall also provide the infrastructures and facilities for the development of the new community.

Phase 1 has a medium-rise 56-cluster housing building that will accommodate about 900 families displaced along Tullahan River. Each building is composed of 16 units with 8 units on the ground floor and another 8 units on the second floor. A unit has a total area of 28 sq.m. (Main floor is 16 sq.m. + 12 sq.m. loft). The Village will have a Multi-purpose Covered Court, a Daycare Center, a Health Center and a Livelihood Training Center.

Resettlement (Bang and Few, 2012) can be a disaster risk reduction measure most especially when the residents affected by disasters cannot return to their original site because of the prevailing conditions of contemporary risk. In the case of Valenzuelanos living beside Tullahan River, the location of their houses are declared as a permanent danger zone which hinder them to rebuild new shanties or homes in their previous area. In resettling the people into safer places, the hazards poses by the surrounding and future disasters are lessened at the same time alleviates them for the notion of poverty encrypted in their minds. Through the initiative of the local

government of Valenzuela headed by then, Mayor Sherwin T. Gatchalian; business and industries share efforts to raise fund for the construction of the village to relocate them away from the danger zones.

In the case of Disiplina Village, the displaced victims by the Typhoon were utilized to become part of the construction process and are required to render minimum number of hours to ensure their spot or unit in the village. Because of the partnership between the government and the displaced victims of the typhoons, the actors now share a similar interest of establishing a new community for the displaced victims of the typhoon Ondoy.

#### *The Typhoon Victims: Staging and Sweat Equity*

The Valenzuelanos affected by typhoon Ondoy were relocated in a temporary shelter settlement that would enable them to refrain from establishing again their homes beside Tullahan River that is now declared as a danger zone. Staging refers to the place where the affected families are temporarily sheltered as they take part in the construction of the medium-rise building that would soon accommodate the families affected by the typhoon. The staging area serves as the place where the families leave their children and temporarily reside as the construction is still on-going and participate in sweat equity. All families are required to render at least 1,500 hours in the sweat equity, which include, the construction of buildings, before they could secure a unit.

Each family may send as many members they could provide to fulfill their 1,500 obligation in the sweat equity, however, upon completing at least 500 hours, the family will be sure that they have already secured and reserved a unit in the village. The hours rendered by any of the members of the family will accumulate to the total hours rendered by the family that they represent. Upon rendering 1,500 hours, the soon-tenants or renters will pay for their electricity and water connection;

and as soon as their basic commodities are available, they will then be allowed to transfer and assume their unit. Take note however, that the local government does not allow renters to assume their units until such time that their basic commodities are already connected and available inside their units.

Sweat equity gives an impression to the soon-tenants or renters that they have take part in the establishment of their new home and identified the diffence of their new home to their previous domicile. This also resonates with the statement of Maniel Agno, a resident of Disiplina Village when she said:

....” Nung nasa staging po kami alam ko pong safe yung mga anak ko lalo na po yung isa kong anak kasi special child po siya. Lagi po kaming sumasama dun sa sweat equity para po mabilis din po kaming makakalipat sa bagong bahay po naming...dito po kasi di na kami natatakot katulad nung sa dati naming bahay na sa tuwing umuulan po eh natatakot po kami.”

....”When we were still at the staging area, I know that my children are safe most especially my child who has special needs. I always participate in the sweat equity so that our we will be able to transfer to our new home quickly...living here allows us to have peace of mind compared to our previous place where we are always afraid every time it rain.”

Structuration in the case of sweat equity is evident because the typhoon victims are compelled to render minimum number of hours to secure a slot in the village. The structure gives the actors the privilege to uphold their interests and at the same time adapt to the needs posed by the newly formed structure. In turn, as the victims of the typhoon are in need of new shelter, they are now compelled by the providers of the resources in this case the government to work and utilize the resources they are capable to provide in a way that they will also uphold the interest of local government of instilling the idea of ownership as they have worked on the establishment of their new home or unit in the village.

*The Residents of Disiplina Village: New Home, Life, Rules and Home Space Agreement*

After rendering 1,500 hours in the sweat equity and as all the basic commodities such as water and electricity are already available in the building, the families are then allowed to transfer in their unit: a raw box-type, without interior paint, and capable of having a second floor but all at the expense of the family. As they start to occupy the unit, they need to pay 300 pesos in the local government of Valenzuela, particularly the Housing and Resettlement Office (HRO) for the rent; contribute to the weekly “butaw” which is used for the operating expenses of the neighborhood association, and follow rules and regulations inside the Disiplina Village.

The residents of Disiplina Village are governed by the so-called Home Space Agreement created by the local government to preserve the beauty and the facilities of Disiplina Village at the same time force the resettled families to preserve and maintain their new home. As stipulated in the Home Space Agreement which presents a set of policy guidelines that has the capacity to evict resident who do not comply to the rules inside the village. The eviction guidelines are the following: (Briefer on the Disiplina Village by Valenzuela City Planning)

- a. *that residents take care of the units and no alteration should be done;*
- b. *that they maintain good relations with the neighbors;*
- c. *that they comply faithfully with their obligations; lease, utility, bills, etc; and,*
- d. *that they participate in the “sweat equity” system.*

Using the Home Space Agreement and the Eviction Guidelines, the tenants are evaluated every month to ensure that they are complying with the rules governing them in Disiplina Village. Once a family received three failing marks or a mark below 75 percent, the family will then be a subject for eviction in the

village. They are evaluated by the people from the Housing and Resettlement Office, City Social Welfare and Development Office and the block leaders. Note well that there are block leaders in each building. The tenants are graded based on the following criteria:

- I. 25 percent – Rent compliance and paying of bills (electricity, water, etc.);**
  - Tenants must be able to pay their rent and bills on-time and avoid the disconnection of basic commodities.
- II. 10 percent – Ensuring that no pets will be brought inside the village;**
  - Tenants are not allowed to bring pets inside the village or inside their units.
- III. 15 percent – Sweat Equity;**
  - Families who successfully rendered 1,500 hours and already assumed a unit could still participate in sweat equity and offer their hours to other families lined-up to secure a unit in the village.
- IV. 10 percent – Peace and Order;**
  - Tenants are expected to maintain good relations with their neighbors and surrounding units and buildings.
- V. 15 percent – Maintenance of the unit;**
  - Tenants must maintain their units and avoid
- VI. 15 percent – Attendance in values formation seminars and LGU sponsored meeting;**
  - Each family must be able to send a representative—ideally the head of the family in all values formation seminars and meetings sponsored by the local government of Valenzuela.
- VII. 10 percent – “butaw”;**
  - A weekly contribution of 5 pesos that will be used as the operating fund of the renters association, and is compulsory to all renters.

These rules are premised in the idea of the local government which is at the top of the structure; that Disiplina Village may suffer the same fate encountered by other resettlement areas in the Philippines, and thus, by establishing rules such as the Home Sharing Agreement, the renters are bounded to follow rules so that they may continue to maintain their units and establish harmonious relationships among the residents of Disiplina Village. The rules set are expected to be followed by the residents and thus allows them to adapt and fit to the standards set by the structure that at some point suppress their normal habits and culture as rooted way back in their previous domicile.

### *Change in Lifestyle*

Because of the rules set in Disiplina Village in line with the motive of the Local Government Unit to preserve and maintain the soundness and the environment of the resettlement site, the lifestyle of the people were also affected and in turn, changed their habits and even the normal or ways we consider as naturally occurring in most Filipino neighborhoods. As we roam around the village, we noticed that there are no individuals who hang their clothes outside their units, which in accordance with the agreement. We have seen some of the households hanging their clothes inside their units, which is we consider as a complete defiance from the tradition of Filipinos. Hence due to the structure, the residents are compelled to adjust so that they will able to follow the rules. However, we have also encountered a resident who shared to us that their electric service was disconnected; and in order for her family to continue using electricity, she asked her neighbor if they could actually share and connect to their neighbor's home. This is in complete violation of the rules and thus will have demerit in the evaluation of their household. She reiterated her problem by sharing that:

....” Yung asawa lang po kasi yung nagtatrabaho tapos may 11 po kaming anak kaya di po talaga nagkasya ngayon kasi po nagloko yung refrigerator namin. 2,000 po yung bill naming kaya hindi po naming nabayaran...wala pa nga din po kaming second floor kasi yung asawa ko lang po yung naghahanap buhay.”

...” My husband is the only one working for the family. We have 11 children that makes our earning not sufficient especially now that our refrigerator got broken that caused our bill to raise up to 2,000 pesos making it impossible for us to pay...we were not even able to construct our second floor because my husband is the only one earning for the family.”

The case of this resident, which we will censor the identity due to the sensitivity, of the issue shows how the people adapts to the structure but at the same time address their needs in private and allow interactions and agreements between neighbors to address their needs. Furthermore, as we asked the residents more on the rules that they know and how these affected their lives, most of them answered about the rules that govern drinking liquors and throwing parties. Aside from the restrictions on hanging clothes outside their units, the rules about drinking and parties comes at second. Most of the residents said that a number of heavy drinkers were forced to stop or if not turned to become average drinkers due to the rule that hinders them to stay outside and drink liquors and at the same time, the village has a 10pm curfew that cuts all parties and drinking sessions even being done inside their unit.

Due to the structure and the rules that emerged through it, the residents of the village are tamed to do things that they used to do when they were still living in their previous home and adapt the rules inside the village. Take note however, that following rules inside the village is very important as it may constitute sufficient reason for you to receive failing marks which in turn, may be used against you to be evicted out of the village.

Thus, due to the structure being followed and the rules that emerged from it; the residents of Disiplina Village acknowledges that they need to follow the structure and rules and hence, adapt their lifestyles and practices in accordance to the rules stipulated in the agreement. The idea of possible eviction, gives authority to the dominance in the structure as they have the power to compel the residents to adhere to the structure and new rules.

## **Conclusion**

The structure produced by the emergence of the Disiplina Village as the first local government unit initiated in-city relocation project revolved around the strategy of LGU to achieve its goal of maintaining the soundness of the project. This objective resulted into the establishment of different hierarchical levels under the LGU you to ensure that these goals will be achieved. Aside from the establishment of rules and regulations, the structure also created groups in the hierarchy that will help ensure that the goal of the government will be attained. Starting from the LGU that heads the over-all mechanism in the village as the provider of resources, a localized set of leaders emerged in establishing more personal supervision among the residents of Disiplina Village, considering that these leaders are also residents of the village.

Due to rules set by the structure, the residents in the village are compelled to adapt to these rules as their tenure in the village are threatened. In turn, to lessen the level of coercion on the part of the government, values formation seminars and different talks are being done to allow the residents to understand the objectives behind the rules being applied and imposed in the village. Thus, the threat allows the structure to manage it dominance over the residents in the village and due to this allows the people in authority to achieve their goals.

However, as some of the rules are stiff and strict that does not allow abrupt or instantaneous changes to happen; the residents in turn, make different ways to adjust and at some point deviates to what is expected from them by the structure. This deviation from the structure allows interactions between other members of the community in the goal of achieving their own interest and at some point, even pulling the other resident to deviate from the rules set in the village. Hence, we could treat this as another type of interaction that emerged due to the stiff and closed rules that emerged in the structure.

Therefore, the rules and the newly emerged structure allowed all the actors to adapt in the new system and thus enable them to live in harmony with the structure and those we consider as dominant and have the capacity to manage them. Because the rules set are stiff, the sole responsibility to adapt and adjust in this structure revolves around the residents whose interest is premised on staying longer in the village and avoid possible eviction by following the rules and regulations set by the structure executed inside the village.

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