

# Cultivating beneficiary citizenship in urban community gardens in Metro Manila

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## Abstract

This paper introduces ‘beneficiary citizenship’ as a way to understand a form of urban citizenship that has emerged from shifts in state–citizen relations. Through the case of state-initiated urban community gardens in Metro Manila, it examines beneficiary citizenship as conditionally granting urban dwellers welfare, entitlements or recognition in the city in return for their transformation into good, responsible citizens. Beneficiary citizenship captures the dual forces of neoliberal technologies of government and alternative citizenship claims that are simultaneously present in various participatory and community-centred state projects. Case study gardens established in a resettlement housing project, in a poverty reduction programme and in a gated village in Metro Manila all seek to cultivate good citizen traits deemed worthy of being granted recognition in the city through a transformation of self and the community. Yet, beneficiaries in these projects also use their good gardener/citizen subjectivity to mobilise ends different from those intended by garden projects as technologies of government. Community gardens therefore become spaces where urban dwellers articulate citizenship by combining various strategies granted by their participation in the projects, exceeding attempts to order and contain urban life.

## Keywords

community gardens, Metro Manila, neoliberal governmentality, urban agriculture, urban citizenship

## 摘要

本文引入“造福公民”的概念来理解国家-公民关系转变过程中产生的一种城市公民身份。通过马尼拉市由国家发起的城市社区花园的案例，本文考察了“造福公民”的概念如何有条件地给予城市居民各种福利、权利或承认，以换取他们转变为优秀、负责任的公民。在各种强调公民参与和以社区为中心的国家项目中，新自由主义政府治理技艺和替代性的公民身份主张并存，“造福公民”这一概念正抓住了这双重的力量。我们通过案例研究，考察了马尼拉市在一个安置住房项目、一个脱贫扶持项目以及一个封闭小区中建成的三个花园，这些花园都旨在通过促进居民自身和社区的转变，培养被认为值得在城市中给予认可的良好公民特征。然而，这些项目的受益者也发挥他们良好的园丁/公民能动性来动员调动，以求实现不同于作为政府治理技艺的花园建设项目之初衷的目的。于是，社区花园成为城市居民通过结合他们参与项目所获得的各种策略来表达公民身份的空间，超越了政府规制和控制城市生活的最初企图。

## 关键词

社区公园、马尼拉市、新自由主义政府治理、都市农业、城市公民身份

## Introduction

How urban life is shaped by changing state–citizen relations continues to be an important question amid ongoing shifts in urban governance and politics. In Metro Manila, the recent turn to more participatory, inclusive and collaborative modes of urban governance has emerged in parallel with dispossession, eviction and marginalisation of those deemed unworthy of a place in the city. These conflicting processes of inclusion and exclusion have reconfigured how urban residents mobilise diverse citizenship practices and strategies to make claims to urban life. One emergent form of urban citizen engagement with the state has been their enrolment as beneficiaries and participation in various community-centred state projects.

The intersections of processes of inclusion and exclusion have led to what I call ‘beneficiary citizenship’, a form of conditional urban citizenship where urban dwellers are granted welfare, entitlements or recognition in return for their transformation into good, responsible citizens. This type of citizenship that has emerged in Metro Manila is distinctive in its construction of a beneficiary subject through participation in projects initiated by a benevolent state willing to recognise those historically excluded or rendered expellable from the city. Different from other grassroots strategies, it entails the consolidation of citizenship claims and technologies of government: urban dwellers come to see themselves as being part of the city through engagement with the state and its conditionalities. Yet, as urban dwellers work within the structures of participation in beneficiary citizenship projects, they are also able to access opportunities of forwarding interests beyond the project goals. I use

beneficiary citizenship therefore as a term to capture the tension between being identified as beneficiaries of state welfare by embodying self-reliant, good citizen subjectivities while presenting possibilities for urban dwellers to mobilise citizenship claims that exceed the governmental aims of these state projects. The dual forces of neoliberal technologies of government and alternative citizenship claims embedded in community-centred beneficiary citizenship projects present a way to understand multiple articulations of urban citizenship within state attempts to instil an urban order.

I take the example of urban community garden projects initiated by the state to illustrate the ways that beneficiary citizenship is formed and articulated in various sites throughout Metro Manila. Although urban agriculture has long been practised by residents, urban governance reforms have led to a recent emergence of state-initiated community garden projects that promote food security and nutrition but also a transformation of habits and desires of participants.

Using three case studies of urban community garden projects, I discuss the tensions in the dual dimensions of beneficiary citizenship. First, case study gardens established in a resettlement housing project, in a poverty reduction programme and in a gated village all seek to cultivate good gardeners who embody good citizenship traits such as self-reliance, hard work and strong community relations. The goals of these state-initiated projects attempt to produce subjectivities deemed worthy of being granted citizenship, recognition and belonging in the city. Second, beneficiaries in these projects also use their good gardener and good citizen subjectivity to mobilise goals different from those intended by gardens as technologies of

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government. Community gardens therefore become spaces where beneficiaries articulate citizenship by combining various strategies granted by their participation in the projects, exceeding attempts by these technologies to order and contain urban life.

The succeeding discussion draws from interviews with 12 beneficiary gardeners and four project administrators in three case studies from four cities in Metro Manila conducted between 2017 and 2019 as part of a broader research project on the spaces of urban agriculture. These are also supported by interviews with 27 officials from 16 local government units involved in urban agriculture initiatives. The three case study sites were selected based on recommendations from local officials, who suggested successful urban agriculture projects within their jurisdictions. For each site, I employed a snowball sampling method for participants that started with state project administrators and community garden project officers, and proceeded with other member gardeners, who were mostly women. Participant observation in the gardens complemented the interviews, which were transcribed and coded for emergent themes. The next section surveys trajectories in thinking about urban citizenship and urban agriculture, and discusses their intersections through beneficiary citizenship. The following sections then present narratives from three case studies to demonstrate the two dimensions of beneficiary citizenship in urban community gardens in Manila.

### **Beneficiary citizenship as conditional urban citizenship**

Work on citizenship – defined as membership in a political community and associated rights and responsibilities – has broadened from its legal and formal sense to the various everyday practices and performances that constitute political membership in multiple communities (Purcell, 2003; Staeheli

et al., 2012; Yiftachel, 2015). This expanded use of the term and its rescaling beyond the nation-state have enabled urban scholars to underscore the importance of the urban in citizenship. It has also reframed citizenship within the terms of various urban questions, including inhabitation and right to the city (Blokland et al., 2015; Purcell, 2003), confrontational urban insurgent citizenship practices (Holston, 2009), the entanglement of the legal with the everyday through the ordinary (Staeheli et al., 2012), and urban infrastructure as a medium through which citizenship is articulated (Lemanski, 2018). More than merely a status achieved, citizenship in these works is understood as an ongoing process of positioning that makes urban life.

At one end, citizenship as a lens to urban politics has been construed as disruptive and corrosive of hegemonic hierarchies, part of strategies used especially by the marginalised (Holston, 2009). Yet, as groups mobilise diverse interests, urban citizenship struggles also fragment and exclude (Blokland et al., 2015) through entanglements with neoliberalising processes in ways that can either undermine or reinforce the existing urban order. Subjectivities cultivated through governmentality – the conduct of others – are one such example of arrangement of rationalities and practices aimed towards desirable ends. While urban scholars have acknowledged the implicit linkages and overlaps of citizenship and governmentality (Holston, 2009), sustained discussions on how such relations develop in particular contexts remain necessary. The transformation to a citizen requires active participation within a community (Rose, 1996), taking the form of various techniques of government that include directing acts towards self-management and construction of particular identities. Citizenship in this sense becomes partial and conditional, granted only to those who conform to state goals and meet target outcomes, earned by

particular conduct towards becoming a 'good citizen' (Blokland et al., 2015; Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014).

In this paper, I focus on beneficiary citizenship, a type of conditional urban citizenship that has emerged in Metro Manila facilitated by participation in state projects. While there has been a move to decouple citizenship from the state and to distinguish between nation-state and urban citizenship, beneficiary citizenship instead emphasises their coming together: urban dwellers come to see themselves as being part of the city through their multiple engagements with the state. Unlike other forms of urban citizenship, beneficiary citizenship embodies tensions between two forces. On the one hand, becoming a beneficiary connotes building a specific relation with the state, which structures and limits the citizenship practices and claims that people make. On the other, promoting citizenship opens up possibilities of practices and agendas that might extend beyond state aims. As beneficiary citizenship grants some degree of recognition and welfare to urban dwellers through neoliberal governmental citizenship projects that seek to instil self-help, they also plant the seeds for alternative or other conduct, or what Gordon and Stack (2007) calls 'room for manoeuvre'.

In Metro Manila, decades of neoliberal reform beginning in the 1990s have produced a patchwork of spaces of exclusions and have ushered in systematic eviction of the marginalised and the undesirable urban poor (Choi, 2016; Ortega, 2016; Shatkin, 2004). The urban poor, in turn, marshal a host of strategies to claim belonging and right to live and make a living in the city through various degrees of engagement with the state. Lacking secure tenure and facing the threat of displacements, they have always mobilised insurgent citizenship claims to belonging and right to the city (Alvarez, 2019; Ortega, 2016) and have employed

various strategies to demand housing and other services, ranging from everyday resistance and encroachment to organised collective action that have included barricading slums to be demolished and occupation of idle socialised housing (Arcilla, 2018; Dizon, 2019).

Yet alongside these insurgent citizenship claims, more inclusive, participatory, collaborative and apparently less antagonistic relations between the state and urban residents have developed and entangled in complex ways with urban political struggles, adding consensual participation to their mix of strategies. For Manila's urban poor, beneficiary citizenship projects seek in part to rectify their disallowed political participation, long deemed illegal by the state and with limited recognised rights (Hutchison, 2007). This stigma is rooted in the moral antagonism between the middle class and the urban as non-citizen others blamed for many urban ills, which has justified expulsions and relocations of tens of thousands of informal settlers out of the city (Alvarez and Cardenas, 2019; Kusaka, 2017; Seki, 2015). But the emergence of participatory and collaborative modes of state projects among the urban poor has sought to create a different citizen engagement with a more benevolent state in the wake of good governance reforms. Together, these processes of expulsions and inclusions have contributed to beneficiary citizenship as a new form of conditional citizen-state relation with its own mode of ordering urban conduct.

Several examples from Manila target urban poor as beneficiary citizens, including state projects such as the Community Mortgage Program (CMP), the People's Plan, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (Bridging Program for the Filipino Family) and community garden projects. The CMP enables informal settlers to secure legal land titles through self-help as a community, transforming them from illegal

squatters to legal residents (Hutchison, 2007). The People's Plan presents a participatory approach to resettlement planning and housing as part of broader efforts to democratise evictions (Alvarez, 2019). The Pantawid Program is a human development programme that features a conditional cash transfer scheme, where households are given monthly cash allowances and livelihood programmes upon meeting conditionalities regarding their health and education (Seki, 2015). State-initiated urban agriculture projects mainly focus on the management of community gardens that serve as a centre-piece for building community relations and enjoining participation from residents.

These beneficiary citizenship projects share similar characteristics. They are projects of a benevolent state that grant some degree of entitlement, autonomy, decision-making and participation in urban life to marginalised and excluded urban residents. Project goals seek to cultivate a responsible, empowered urban citizen through self-help, self-reliance, volunteerism and harmonious community relations, while promoting the virtues of diligence, hard work, discipline, cooperation and initiative, in effect shedding old attitudes and traits associated with the non-citizen slum-dweller. The community becomes the focus of the ordering of the conduct; it is where active urban citizenship is produced and realised, and its success relies on a functioning sense of community through individual or household transformation. Projects entail identification of qualified beneficiaries through particular criteria of membership. Benefits are dependent on specified conditionalities, which need to be met in order to maintain continued membership status as a beneficiary.

Beneficiary citizenship projects have produced multiple exclusions: between identified beneficiaries and non-members, and among members who meet and those who fail conditionalities (Hutchison, 2007; Seki,

2015). They hint at a radical promise of political participation and recognition of the marginalised in the urban polity. However, in practice, the state limits the urban resident's ability to participate and delineates their terms of engagement. In these projects, the non-negotiables tend to be the most contentious and sensitive issues, which are not up for contestation beyond tokenistic modes of participation (Alvarez, 2019). Beneficiary citizenship also transfers the burden of citizenship work on to the residents, who often lack the capacity and knowledge to manage projects effectively, and has opened the door for the active role of civil society in mediating state-citizen relations (Alvarez, 2019; Hutchison, 2007).

It is important to consider that beneficiary citizenship has not completely colonised both state approaches to urban governance and citizen engagement with the state. Indeed, as states are comprised of multiple, conflicting interests, some agencies or officials remain resistant to granting welfare to the urban poor. In the provision of socialised housing, the state housing agency continues to elide time-consuming democratic participation and community planning in favour of quicker eviction and relocation schemes (Arcilla, 2018), while various stages of land use planning also continue to be dominated by top-down approaches, despite inclusive governance policies (Saguin et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, a rich body of work on urban agriculture continues to explore questions of politics and of the meaning of community in community gardens. McClintock (2014) summarised two opposing understandings of urban agriculture politics as a contradiction: on the one hand, it promises to act as a radical opposition and alternative to structural inequality; on the other, it perpetuates modes of neoliberal governmentality through a focus on individual responsibility for self-help amid economic restructuring (Pudup, 2008). Urban gardens have been seen as

opportunities for increasing citizen participation and fostering civic engagement, in line with the right to the city (Shillington, 2013), urban ecological citizenship (Travaline and Hunold, 2010), food citizenship (Barron, 2017) and DIY citizenship (Crossan et al., 2016). But cases have also shown how gardens become spaces of exclusion and a source of conflict in their attempt at building a community (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014). More significantly for this paper, the production of particular citizen-subjects is organised by government through community garden projects (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014; Neo and Chua, 2017).

Neoliberal governmentality as a lens to urban agriculture has situated the promotion of self-help in light of the retreat of the state's responsibility for provision of social services (Ghose and Pettygrove, 2014; Neo and Chua, 2017). Various subjectivities, including the consumer, entrepreneurial and volunteer subjectivities, have been cultivated (Barron, 2017; Pudup, 2008). The volunteer subjectivity, for example, requires citizens to work through active participation and techniques such as responsabilisation, individual transformation and self-actualisation (Barron, 2017; Neo and Chua, 2017; Pudup, 2008) that direct desires, experience and goals aligned with those of the state and the neoliberal order.

Beneficiary citizenship in one sense operates through the modes of governmentality documented in the urban community garden studies above through the production of good urban citizens who actively participate in civic life through organised community gardens. Embodying characteristics of a good, successful gardener would produce a good urban citizen. However, it contains crucial differences, particularly in the nature of citizen-state relations and the involvement of the state in these projects. Beneficiary citizenship gardens in Manila show how the state permeates the project in various degrees.

This is particularly significant in Global South cities such as Manila, where the state's developmental agenda enmeshes with systemic exclusion and non-recognition of the urban poor, creating hybrid, in-between states of grey space (Yiftachel, 2015).

Furthermore, a focus on beneficiary citizenship, which connotes oxymoronic tensions between passive receiving and active claim-making and between community and individual self, would highlight important but often neglected dimensions of governmentality and subjectivity studies: how people embody, resist or mobilise the desired outcomes and behaviour expected of them and how alternative or hybrid forms of conduct result in return (Rosol, 2014). Some of these practices that move beyond the binary categories of either resistance or collaboration in relation to techniques of government may be captured by the Foucauldian concept of counter-conduct: how to be governed differently or how not to be governed like that (Rosol, 2014). Other scholars have reworked the concept of DIY citizenship to pertain to practices that aim to do things differently and form new relations that cannot be reduced to merely neoliberal governmentality (Crossan et al., 2016). Urban residents also use various strategies to extract benefits and concessions from the state and other actors by deploying their citizenship-subjectivities (McClintock, 2014). These citizenship practices may be understood as people exercising their freedom to pursue livelihood, as part of citizenship as room for manoeuvre (Gordon and Stack, 2007).

Attention to beneficiary citizenship in community gardens therefore includes not only governmental processes that produce subjects and exercise state power but also the resulting practices and aspirations that extend beyond the intended goals of the projects. It captures conduct, counter-conduct, resistance, acquiescence, collaboration and other practices that define state-citizen relations, and is open to diverse

results and outcomes as people adhere to but also exceed efforts at regulating urban life (Simone, 2010).

In the following sections, I examine three case studies to underscore two dimensions of beneficiary citizenship in Manila: gardens as technologies of government while also spaces of alternative citizenship claims that provide room for manoeuvre. The case studies from various parts of Metro Manila include community gardening projects in a resettlement site for informal settlers, an institutional land for Pantawid Program beneficiaries and a gated village.

### **Beneficiary citizenship gardens as technologies of government: Three examples**

Metro Manila residents have long practised various forms of urban agriculture, often informally and beyond state purview. Urban farming has been a part of the livelihood and survival strategies of recent migrants to the city and informal settlers who have access to urban land for farming. These activities have been constrained by rapid conversion of open spaces and remaining agricultural lands, creating a patchwork of densely built land uses and pockets of interstitial and left-over cultivable lands where residents insert their urban agriculture practices. In contrast, the organised community garden as a state-initiated urban agriculture project emerged more systematically after a wave of decentralisation and neoliberal reforms in the 1990s. The devolution of central state functions to local governments allowed individual cities in Metro Manila a greater say in matters of local land use decisions, which also intersected with the turn to participatory and inclusive urban development centred around the community. Together with national government support, local city governments initiated various forms of urban agriculture



**Figure 1.** A beneficiary gardener tending to her crops.

Source: Photo by PJ Capio.

initiatives, which took the form of piecemeal projects that were established with a variety of structures, goals and participants, often tied to initiatives of local officials (Figure 1).

State-initiated urban agriculture projects in Metro Manila are distinct from other urban farming activities in the city in two ways: their organisation as a project centred around the community and their governmental aims of self-transformation. First, unlike non-organised forms of urban agriculture, state initiatives are formed through a project where the scope, goals and timeline are defined and rendered governable (Li, 2016). These projects work through a broadly defined sense of community. Second, as a beneficiary citizenship project, state-initiated community gardens promote self-transformation and the cultivation of a proper disposition. This is embedded in the five most common goals identified by interviewed local government officials in establishing urban agriculture projects, namely: promoting food security, nutrition, health and household sustenance; educating and instilling discipline and self-reliance; creating environmental awareness and sustainability; providing a source of livelihood and income; and strengthening family and community bonds. The target beneficiaries for these projects are primarily the urban poor (as the sector that would benefit most from nutritional

and livelihood components of gardens), mothers (as conduit of knowledge and benefits to the household) and senior citizens (as having time and interest in gardening).

### *Case 1: Community garden and the work of community in a resettlement site*

Touted as a resettlement housing model, Citizen Village<sup>1</sup> has housed nearly 4000 informal settler families removed from various waterways of the city marked as flood danger zones. Designed as a complete community, the village promises low monthly amortisation for the housing units. In return, beneficiaries sign an agreement that contains a set of eviction guidelines designed to instil responsible behaviour, such as complying with their payment obligations, maintaining good neighbourly relations and participating in 'sweat equity' (contributing at least 500 hours of work in the village). The conditionalities in exchange for the benefits of continued legal status in the resettlement housing are put in place to ensure that only residents with proper disposition for change can stay. Beyond just serving the housing needs of the evicted urban poor, the resettlement housing is a disciplining project of self-transformation to proper urban citizens. As a government assessment put it:

From tragedy victims, they are now empowered model families living in model communities and a character village with disciplined residents. Their perception of themselves and their community has changed. Their outlook transformed from the typical 'squatter' to 'responsible and disciplined homeowners' attitude; from 'walang pakialam' [indifferent] to 'may pagsasamahan' [solidarity]. (DAP, 2018)

A community vegetable farm became a centrepiece project of Citizen Village, one that was designed to play a role in building community and instilling responsibility and self-sufficiency. The project was established

through financial support from a national government agency, technical support from the local city government, and land allotted by the village in 2017. Not all residents were considered beneficiaries of the gardening project as priority was given to households with nutritional needs. More than 300 beneficiaries were eventually identified, although the number of those who actively participated was less than 10% of the expected total.

Gina moved to Citizen Village in 2016 after her household was told to relocate from their creek-side home. She recalled how the farm started with only 18 of the more than 300 identified beneficiaries actively pursuing gardening. All but one of the active members were women, who performed the manual labour of clearing the land, preparing the soil and irrigating the farm. Most of them had no prior farming background, learning primarily from experience and from knowledge passed on by city officials. The active members, organised as an association, were able to set up a system that established duty hours to tend to the various needs of the farm at different times of the day. These duty hours are recorded in a logbook and serve as the basis for partitioning dividends from income generated from selling vegetables within the village, which rewards members who work more in the garden.

The active members were also assigned as leaders of the clusters formed to manage the identified beneficiaries. The association, in coordination with city officials, recognised that only a small percentage of beneficiaries actually devoted time to the garden. Instead, home gardens in the housing units were encouraged, for those who could not dedicate time to the community garden. Home gardeners would grow vegetables outside ground floor units or in laundry spaces in the upper floors. Non-participation in the community gardens was for a variety of reasons, but the material constraints of living in

the relatively inaccessible resettlement site at the urban fringe while working in the city centre meant that many had to commute for hours to and from work. This left very little time for other neighbourhood activities, which were then mostly performed by women who stayed at home.

Beyond providing for the relocatees' nutritional needs, the vegetable garden project was seen as playing a crucial role in building community relations and strengthening trust and neighbourliness. This goal became more important in the Citizen Village as a resettlement site, where informal settlers uprooted from various parts of the city were brought to live next to strangers with no prior social relations. Conflicts occur often in resettlement sites as a result of relocation (Dizon, 2019) and building harmonious relations among neighbours became a key agenda for administrators.

The community vegetable garden project was a site for cultivating new relations among new neighbours: 'We became friends, we used to be strangers but because we worked on the garden every day, we got to know each other' (Gina). Regular encounters through farming in the garden and collective activities such as group cooking and eating strengthened relations of community in a place where none existed before. The garden project served as the fulcrum of socialisation and the construction of a new community through daily farm work. Gardeners also came to see their place within a larger community of residents and their responsibility for providing healthier and cheaper vegetables for the village.

In being able to produce their own vegetables for household consumption, residents were able to demonstrate the spirit of self-help and self-reliance that aligned with the transformative goals of the housing project. In learning on their own how to farm and manage the garden's affairs, members developed skills that would contribute to the

financial success and sustainability of the farm, creating a mix of entrepreneurial-consumer subjectivity embedded within practices that aim to promote sharing and community. The community vegetable garden facilitated the citizenship project of transformation of beneficiaries from past attitudes attributed to informal settlers to legal and 'responsible homeowners' who care about their community.

### *Case 2: Pantawid gardens and the making of a model citizen gardener*

The second example is gardens supported by the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program, the state's key poverty alleviation programme, where identified beneficiaries are provided with monthly cash grants upon meeting conditions. These include regular health check-ups and school attendance for children beneficiaries, and participation in Family Development Sessions for parents, where they are taught responsible parenthood, good neighbourly relations and other topics. These conditions aim to form beneficiaries who are self-reliant and 'productive members of society' (Brono, 2018).

Community gardening projects for Pantawid beneficiaries were established to supplement food security and promote household health and nutrition. The community became an important element of the garden projects, as the programme emphasises the formation of good neighbourly relations and the beneficiaries were already organised according to neighbourhood clusters of 30. Pantawid gardens have been developed primarily on available institutional lands. In two of those facilities, project officials were able to convert unused land for gardening. Selected Pantawid beneficiaries, mostly mothers, helped clear the grass cover, prepared the land and planted the initial vegetable crops. They also received various technical support from other national

government agencies and the private sector, which facilitated training where beneficiaries graduate and are given certificates upon completion. These projects aim to ‘capacitate more beneficiaries into empowered community leaders who are able to help in the development of the nation’ (DSWD, 2018).

As a beneficiary citizenship project, the Pantawid gardens reproduce particular ideals regarding the poor who need state support to improve their capacity to feed themselves and generate additional income through gardening. Pertaining to use of time, these include discouraging unproductive habits that are associated with the poor – gossiping, gambling, hanging around (Seki, 2015), while engaging them instead in productive ones, such as working in the garden. As one project official affirmed: ‘beneficiaries use their time more meaningfully, instead of spending leisure time on other things, they could put it to meaningful activities’. In other contexts, the garden ushered in an apparent change in behaviour, where ‘beneficiaries are often seen gambling but after the establishment of the communal garden, they were able to find an activity to keep them busy’ (DSWD, 2018).

Transformation of the self and the family is a key feature of beneficiary citizenship through the Pantawid gardens, taking the form of healthier choices in eating and improved wellbeing. As a community project, gardening has been considered by state officials and beneficiaries alike as building a ‘bayanihan spirit’ – communal unity and mutual assistance as people work towards a common goal. Initiative, cooperation and camaraderie are at the heart of the Pantawid Program citizenship project. As Fe, a beneficiary, claimed: ‘we are like sisters here; this is where our camaraderie was formed, where we learned how to share with each other, and help each other’.

In the Pantawid gardens, slots were allotted to identified beneficiaries but, as with other organised urban gardening

projects, only a few persisted. In one facility, only 36 of the 800 beneficiaries continued participating, while in one cluster in the other facility only one of the 35 remained. There are a variety of reasons for limited participation, including lack of interest in farming, constraints in managing time at work or home with time required to maintain a garden, and the physical labour involved. Travel time to the facilities deters those who live at some distance. The result is a whittling down of beneficiaries to those who display the virtues of dedication, perseverance and hard work. Tending plants is often likened to taking care of children and the proper growth of crops requires dedication. Beneficiaries would note the necessary adjustments that they need to make to consider the demands of tending to their gardens:

It is difficult but we try our best. I have several children, so what I do is I divide my time. We mothers spend an hour and a half in the gardens every morning and then we go home and come back again at around 3 PM when our children are in school. (Connie)

Those who remain in the projects are often touted as model citizen gardeners, extolled for their exemplary character and dedication even without monetary incentives. Highlighting these gardeners is important in demonstrating the possibilities of sustaining farming in the city despite the many challenges. Anyone can take up farming but success is dependent on a proper disposition and certain virtues. Promoting model citizen gardeners also has the effect of downplaying the constraints that structure participation in community gardens – such as time at work, distance to the garden, and existing social networks – while focusing instead on the ability of beneficiaries to overcome these limitations.

In the Pantawid gardens, the model citizen gardener trope has extended beneficiaries’ understanding of their place not only within the community but also within the

whole city. It is a citizenship claim that reiterates that they are useful, productive members of the city. As beneficiaries who persisted despite the many challenges and constraints of gardening in the city, model citizen gardeners see their role in building healthy communities and cities, for which their work has value and benefit for others through the vegetables that they produce, and the herbal medicine that they distribute for free to help relieve common ailments. Rita summarises this outlook: 'We help ourselves so that we can help others. The work we do is for the whole city, so that everyone can benefit, to help the rest of the city.' Through their self-help and their work as model citizen gardeners, beneficiaries can share their work and the rest of the city can partake in the fruits of their labour.

The community garden as self-help has not only produced empowered, responsible citizens who make more productive use of their time and transform attitudes, but has also engendered a sense of belonging, purpose and value of being part of a broader community. Beneficiary citizenship in the Pantawid gardens created model citizen gardeners who are able to overcome the material conditions and challenges of farming in the city.

### *Case 3: Community, self-help and volunteerism in a gated village garden*

The third case is of a senior-citizen-led community garden project in the far north-eastern corner of Metro Manila. The garden project differs from the two other cases in two ways: membership is limited to residents of a gated village and the project was initiated by a village-based association. Yet it embodies beneficiary citizenship in ways similar to the resettlement and Pantawid gardens, especially in their engagement with the state.

The quarter-hectare community garden was established in 2015 as a key project of a senior citizen association comprised of around 100 members. Initially a grassroots initiative, the project became a beneficiary of a local government urban agriculture programme that distributed technical and knowledge support to various garden projects throughout the city. The association requested assistance from the city and has since benefited from training, receiving seeds and other support. They took advantage of a state project so that they could avail themselves of urban farming benefits.

The local city government has promoted the association's garden as a success story and model for the more than 100 other beneficiary garden projects that they officially support. Many of the communities they assisted in setting up gardening projects eventually gave up despite ample financial and technical assistance. In explaining this high degree of discontinuance among beneficiaries, city project managers and agriculturists stressed the importance of attitude and interest in farming, and strong community ties, in the success of garden projects. These characteristics of community and volunteerism have been displayed by the village association and are what sets them apart from other less successful beneficiaries. Officers, such as Vickie, would affirm: 'The city government saw in us a sense of cooperation, our volunteerism. We don't get salaries, everything is voluntary here.'

Without commitment to gardening, nothing. That is how you filter those with interest and those who do not. Even if the city government gives you nurseries and other forms of support, if the group is not interested, nothing will happen. (Cora)

Similar to the Pantawid gardens, the community garden in the gated village served as a model for good gardener citizenship. The

emphasis, however, in this case is building a sense of cooperation, unity and volunteerism, especially in the context of fragmented neighbourly relations, neighbourhood conflicts and a history of limited infrastructural access. The senior citizens' association was established in part to serve as a counterpoint to perceived poor management by the homeowners' association of village matters, such as deteriorating facilities, rise in crime incidence and the incursion of informal settlers in village property. For members, it is through cooperation that they are able to solve village problems and become united as a community, while at the same time leading to a 'holistic realisation of the self' (Cora). They see their volunteerism and active participation as a result of their desire to work towards a common goal, which has been facilitated by the garden project.

The community garden became an instrument of state engagement to show that they are worthy of state support because they are able to get things accomplished, unlike most other beneficiaries in the city. It became a proof of their transformation of self and neighbourly relations by displaying characteristics of self-help and being at one with other members of the community. In effect, beneficiary citizenship through the community garden in the village manifested from the bottom up. The community made themselves visible to the state by seeking to be beneficiaries of the city urban agriculture programme and aligning with its goals of self-transformation and self-help.

### **Beneficiary citizenship gardens as spaces of alternative citizenship**

Beneficiary citizenship also contains a second dimension: how urban residents mobilise their beneficiary citizen positions for ends that are different from or that go beyond the intended goals. As the previous sections have noted, project goals of

community gardens often include securing food security and incomes, and self and community improvement. Yet beneficiaries use community gardens in ways that might exceed these governmental techniques and aims, in their efforts to exercise their freedom to pursue livelihoods (Gordon and Stack, 2007). In making use of the space granted by their participation in state projects, they deploy various acts of collaboration, encroachment, resistance, counter-conduct and other strategies.

In Citizen Village, Merly used her beneficiary citizenship to allow her to farm beyond the designated spaces of gardening. Merly relocated to the village and immediately became an active participant in the community garden project. Prior to moving, she cultivated plots in vacant lands near her creek-side home and earned income from selling vegetables and fruits. She brought her strong interest and love for planting to the village and to the garden, sharing with the group her invaluable experiences in farming. Because she was now in her 70s and found it difficult to walk daily to the community garden, she instead substituted her membership in the community garden with maintaining gardens near her home. She has since cultivated various kinds of plants, including medicinal herbs and other vegetables, in empty lots outside her ground floor unit. Because the small garden space allotted outside the homes limited her ability to farm, she often went beyond the designated space for gardens by planting vegetables and corn in nearby unused land. She called herself a 'squatter in gardening', alluding to her recent transformation to a legal homeowner in the village who followed the imposed ordering of housing space yet one whose gardening practices still transgress the formal designated spaces.

Merly mobilised her good gardener status – as a valuable member of the community garden and a pioneer and exemplary home

gardener – to extract various concessions from village administrators. The administrators had encouraged her to cultivate herbal plants, which they saw as providing broader benefits for the community in terms of their medicinal and disease prevention value. She acceded to this request even though she preferred growing vegetable crops for food and extra income, enabling her to bargain with the administrators to cultivate crops and in places where she would not have been permitted otherwise. This has allowed her, for example, to open up the possible use of fences near the basketball court to grow vines, which are officially prohibited because their dense and unruly look would be out of place in the aesthetic sense of order that the village sought to promote. Merly's example illustrates a mix of practices and strategies that engage with the state in various ways through her earned village citizenship.

In the Pantawid gardens, beneficiaries see the opportunities offered by gardens to fulfil or address various needs or problems of urban life. Vivian enjoyed gardening and had extensive farming experience in her home province prior to migrating. But the lack of space in the slum where she resided prohibited her from practising any form of farming. She used the opportunity of being counted as a Pantawid garden beneficiary to realise a desire for gardening that she could not pursue because of lack of access to available land. She also used the high degree of non-participation to claim the nearby plots left by beneficiaries who stopped, cultivating more crops and selling the harvest. For other Pantawid garden beneficiaries, the community gardens served as a venue to escape from city life and household problems, and their gardening successes have enabled them to demand access to more land and resources beyond that allotted to them.

In the gated village, members of the association mobilise a good gardener subjectivity to strengthen their claims to contested space,

similar to defensive citizenship (Yiftachel, 2015). The emergence of shared community spirit and cooperation underpinned the community garden's establishment and success, which served as the basis for the association's engagement with the city government to advance claims on other village issues, most notably the decade-long land conflict with informal settlers. The informal settlers cultivated parts of a well-irrigated open space near the village's edge that the senior citizens' association wanted to use for the expansion of their community garden.

The association sought a more active state presence in the village by 'opening' it up for local government use. Members have discussed the possibility of striking an agreement between the government and the village to use vacant village lands for urban gardening upon the private landowner's approval. The association is pushing for this to allow them to expand their farming activities to many other unused lands in the village while strengthening their claim on the contested land also used by the informal settlers. In effect, they are deploying their earned beneficiary citizenship to be governed more deeply by the state as a pre-emptive way of reclaiming urban space, which reflects the exclusionary effects of citizenship that reinforce urban fragmentation (Blokland et al., 2015).

In all three cases, as in many state urban gardening initiatives, non-participation of intended beneficiaries remains a major concern for project managers. Despite free seeds and seminars and regular exhortation to take up gardening, the everyday life of many urban residents prevents them from participating. Long commutes to work that leave little time for time-demanding gardening have meant only a few beneficiaries continue with state-organised projects. In a way, the issue of non-participation suggests counter-conduct from beneficiaries. On the other hand, for those who continue to participate in these beneficiary citizenship projects,

gardening presents a way to claim or reclaim spaces and aspects of urban life beyond the project to enable livelihood, political and other pursuits. Reading these practices – resistant, collaborative, subversive and shades in between – as various strategies of claim-making in city-making demonstrates how people and the things they do often exceed attempts at regulation.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed the term beneficiary citizenship to capture particular state–citizen relations that have emerged amid urban restructuring in Manila. Beneficiary citizenship has been cultivated through various participatory and collaborative projects initiated by the state that conditionally grant welfare and entitlements to often excluded urban residents in exchange for their transformation to responsible and self-reliant urban citizens. I examined the example of urban community gardens, established and promoted by the state to improve urban food security and income while also improving self-help and good citizen virtues.

Beneficiary citizenship in urban community gardens illustrates two dimensions: as technologies of government that work through community and notions of self-help, and as sites for participants to achieve ends beyond those intended. As technologies of government, the community garden seeks to cultivate good gardeners who embody good citizenship by ridding themselves of traits associated with their former non-citizen status. In the Citizen Village, the community garden was established to help realise the goals of the housing project to transform resettled informal settlers into responsible homeowners. The garden also served as an important space for socialisation and building of new community relations where none existed before. In the Pantawid gardens, beneficiaries were expected to transform to more

productive citizens through better use of time spent in gardening. Work in the gardening project also expanded their citizenship horizon to the neighbourhood and the broader city in seeing their place through the value of their harvests. As model citizen-gardeners, they also showed that urban agriculture is achievable despite the challenges of farming in the city and the material constraints of life for the urban poor. In the gated village, members of a residents' association saw the community garden as a site for building a sense of community and self-help to help address neighbourhood problems. In contrast to other beneficiaries of local government support, they sought to demonstrate that cooperation, mutual aid and volunteerism are key ingredients in the success of urban gardens and the community.

Yet, the same community gardens also serve as sites for beneficiaries to articulate citizenship beyond intended goals of the state projects. Deploying good gardener subjectivities allows urban residents to appropriate the garden for strategies that trouble easy distinctions between citizen and state relations as either collaboration or resistance, and gardens as producers of either neoliberal subjectivities or alternative citizenship. In the case studies, individuals and associations used their positions as good beneficiary citizens to, among others, extract concessions with village administrators on use of gardening space beyond the designated areas, to derive and gain more benefits and access to improve urban life, and to reclaim contested land through recourse to state regulation. These strategies show multiple degrees of citizen engagement with the state and how they often exceed the state project of ordering urban life.

The case studies demonstrate both the technologies of neoliberal governmentality that seek to transform conduct in the city and the practices of citizenship that align or

go beyond the community gardens as a state project. Attention to these two dimensions also captures the contradictory politics of citizenship that have been documented by urban scholars in understanding urban claim-making and politics of inclusion and exclusion, solidarity and fragmentation (Blokland et al., 2015; Lemanski, 2018). Beneficiary citizenship expands our understanding of the multiple, often contradictory forms that urban citizenship can take in a changing city.

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- Names of the study sites and research participants have been changed for anonymity.

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