

# Geography, Society, and Culture: Enablers (or Inhibitors) of Basic Ecclesial Community Development

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**Abstract:** The *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* has mandated the formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities in all Philippine dioceses. Despite this institutional push, the actual promotion and implementation of BECs have faced challenges. Some of these challenges come from implicit or hidden realities: geographies, social formations, and cultures which would affect, negatively or positively, the promotion and development of Basic Ecclesial Communities. This study examines the case of the Diocese of Boac as an example of successfully developing BECs. It delineates Boac's lifeworld, work, everyday life, and disposition toward community involvement which are dependent on Marinduque's geographies, social formations, and culture. It also presents, as counter-examples, cases of other parishes in the country to demonstrate how the absence of 'friendly' hidden realities have led to the lack of development of BECs. This knowledge about BEC's success (or failure) being facilitated (or hindered) by implicit realities goes beyond the presuppositions of existing literature on BECs.

**Keywords:** Basic Ecclesial Communities • PCP II • Society • Culture • Geography • Community Development • Urban • Rural

## Introduction

The *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*<sup>1</sup> (PCP II conciliar document) was adopted

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as a guiding light, a source of orientation and direction, for ecclesial life in the Philippines. It was approved by John Paul II on April 11, 1992<sup>2</sup> and promulgated on April 25, 1992, through a Decree issued by Bernardin Cardinal Gantin, Prefect, Congregation for Bishops of the Vatican.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, the promulgation text was punctuated by the following lines: “With this promulgation, the Council decrees become *obligatory* in all the dioceses of the Philippines in accordance with Canon 8 #2 of the Code of Canon Law.”<sup>4</sup> (italics supplied) One of those decrees mandates the promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities<sup>5</sup>:

Basic Ecclesial Communities under various names and forms – BCCs, small Christian communities, covenant communities – *must be vigorously promoted* for the full living of the Christian vocation in both urban and rural areas.<sup>6</sup> (Decrees, section 3, article 109; italics supplied)

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<sup>1</sup> *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1992); henceforth, *Acts and Decrees*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., LXXXIX.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., XC.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., XC.

<sup>5</sup> “<sup>138</sup>They are small communities of Christians, usually of families who gather around the Word of God and the Eucharist. These communities are united to their pastors but are ministered to regularly by lay leaders. The members know each other by name and share not only the Word of God and the Eucharist but also their concerns both material and spiritual. They have a strong sense of belongingness and of responsibility for one another. <sup>139</sup>Usually emerging at the grassroots among poor farmers and workers, Basic Ecclesial Communities consciously strive to integrate their faith and their daily life. They are guided and encouraged by regular catechesis. Poverty and their faith urge their members towards solidarity with one another, action for justice, and towards a vibrant celebration of life in the liturgy.” (PCP II 138-139)

<sup>6</sup> *Acts and Decrees*, 267.

The mandate finds its clearest illumination and direction in PCP II's vision of the Church:

Our vision of the Church as communion, participation, and mission, about the Church as priestly, prophetic and kingly people, and as a Church of the Poor – a Church that is renewed – is today finding expression in one ecclesial movement. This is the *movement to foster Basic Ecclesial Communities.*” (PCP II 137; italics supplied)

This institutionalization of BEC at the highest level would undoubtedly affirm and further animate BECs that have already existed as early as 1970's or inspire more churches to adopt BEC creation as their primary thrust. However, despite the official endorsement, the actual promotion and implementation of BECs is set back by challenges such as the lack of support from the top leadership, inadequate organizing skills, shortage of lay participation, insufficient funding, outdated programs, and the predominance of a traditional kind of ecclesiology.<sup>7</sup> There are more factors that impede (or assist) the promotion of BECs and this study will examine some of those that are less noticed, namely the pre-existing realities of social formations, cultures, and geographies.<sup>8</sup> The disabling or enabling influence of these intermeshing pre-established realities on BEC promotion

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<sup>7</sup> See, Amado Picardal, “The Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) as Means for Social Transformation,” (November 26, 2011), <https://justmecatholicfaith.wordpress.com/2011/11/26/the-basic-ecclesial-communities-becs-as-means-for-social-transformation/> [accessed 16 June 2022]; Marcello de C. Azevedo, “Basic Ecclesial Communities: A Meeting Point of Ecclesiologies,” *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 601-620

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Kathy Nadeau, “‘Beyond the Dumping Ground’: A Critique of the Basic Ecclesial Community Model as a Strategy for Development in an Urban Site,” *Human Organization* 58/2 (1999): 153–160.

and development is less examined and it is hoped that with the inclusion of such broader factors in the study, the process of analysis and its produced BEC knowledge will be significantly expanded. This approach goes beyond the more immediate and frequently examined intra-Church variables, like the support of ecclesial leadership, the presence of committed lay leaders, trainings, resources, and types of theologies.<sup>9</sup>

It is a hope that this study will serve PCP II's vision of the Church "as communion, participation, and mission,...as a Church of the Poor" and be of some benefit to every BEC promotion in the Philippines and elsewhere.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

To be able to look into the enabling and disabling broad factors in BEC formation, this study examines the case of the Diocese of Boac where BECs have developed and thrived. This step involves the delineation of four realities (lifeworld, work, everyday life, and disposition toward community involvement), which this study would show as congenial factors for the promotion of BECs. As counterpoints, it also presents the cases of other parishes

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<sup>9</sup> See, Amado Picardal, "Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: A Reception of Vatican II Ecclesiology," in *Journeying Towards a New Way of Being Church: Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines*, 21-46 (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2016); F. Mendoza, *Basic Ecclesial Communities: The Context and Foundations Formation* (Mandaue City: Mandaue Printshop Corporation, 2005). J. Delgado, M. Gabriel, E. Padilla, and A. Picardal, eds., *BECS in the Philippines, Dream or Reality: A Multi-Disciplinary Reflection* (Taytay, Rizal: Lexicon Press, 2004); Amado L. Picardal, *Building Basic Ecclesial Communities: Ecclesiological Vision, Strategic Framework, Implication for Priestly Ministry* (Davao City, Philippines: Redemptorist Publications, 1999); Warren Kinne, *The Splintered Staff: Structural Deadlock in the Mindanao Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990).

in the country to demonstrate how the absence of ‘friendly’ realities have led to the lack of development of BECs. Those cases are chosen from a research that examined the impact of PCP II on the BEC programs of ten (10) selected Philippine parishes.<sup>10</sup> I was the director of that project.

The field work started in the early months of 2012 in order to gather various data relevant to the implementation of PCP II’s vision. The following BEC sites were covered: Mandaluyong City (Parish of Our Lady of the Abandoned), Cavite City (San Roque Parish), Rosario, Cavite (Holy Rosary Parish), Gumaca (San Diego de Alcala Parish), Boac (Immaculate Concepcion Parish, etc.), Iloilo City (Jaro Metropolitan Cathedral), Cebu City (Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral), Babak, Island Garden City of Samal (Virgen Dolorosa Parish), Koronadal City/Marbel (Christ the King Cathedral), and Pagadian City (Santo Niño Cathedral Parish). The gathering of data included: 1) documentary materials such as decrees, minutes of meetings, newsletter/program publications, academic papers, announcements, notices, bulletin boards, and letters; 2) interviews, mainly unstructured/semi-structured face-to-face interviews with Key Informants (Bishops, Parish Priests, Directors of Centers, Pastoral Workers, Program Coordinators, Organizers), Focus Group Discussions (among BEC Lay leaders and members), and random Q&A interview with BEC members/participants; 3) extra-site documentation—printed and internet-published articles that deal with the history, progress, and development of various BEC sites and programs in the Philippines; 4) ethnographic notes—based on direct

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<sup>10</sup> Ferdinand D. Dagmang, *Basic Ecclesial Communities: An Evaluation of the Implementation of the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in Ten Parishes in the Philippines*. Final Report for missio-Munich, 2015; henceforth, *Final Report*.

observation of the culture<sup>11</sup> of the parishes investigated; 5) biographical accounts of selected pastoral workers and BEC leaders/members; and 6) reconstructions of the implicit historical, social, cultural, geographical, and theological backgrounds and underpinnings of the various texts and contexts covered by the research.<sup>12</sup>

The research's *Final Report*, which came out in 2015, paid special attention to social, cultural, and geographical elements that provided the broad picture against which specific BEC stories or activities have been viewed and understood—that is, it viewed the data of interlocking actions and activities as these navigate or are moved to navigate through the wider canvas of society, culture, and geographies.

Broad data on urban sites, rural settings, built geographies, religious traditions, non-religious practices, predominant beliefs, etc., composed the larger pictures which function as frames and canvas for organizing, clarifying, or analyzing narratives or details, like the behavior of leaders, tactics of organizers, aims of funding agencies, maneuvers of women pastoral workers, etc. It was important for this research to have paid attention to the nature of such broad data being composed of solidified traditions, shared spaces, cultural memories, axiomatic

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<sup>11</sup> Culture is used to refer to shared beliefs, values, norms, rituals, social organizations, social dispositions, and other shared knowledge and practices that have endured the test of time. It includes the patterned and enduring ways of dealing with nature, people, environments, as well as the sedimented spaces and pathways of pursuits and opportunities. See, Andreas Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory of Social Practices," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5/2 (2002): 243–263; Theodore Schatzki, *Social Practices. A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> N.B.: Although the data-gathering phase started in the early months of 2012, the delivery of the research assistants' final reports only started in October 2013 and the last batch of final reports came in January 2014.

knowledge/interests, and habitual social dispositions—complex realities upon which choices and decisions may also depend.<sup>13</sup> These exist as *powerful* implicit forces that support, modify, or restrict BEC enactments—the consciously adopted programs, projects, and activities that may pursue ends, while enlisting doable measures that produce long-term, intermediate-term, or short-term results. An enactment is like “acting out based on a script or a document”, which is difficult unless one has also the vision as well as the resources, skills, and the favorable conditions for the task. The BEC thrust of a parish may have several programs under its core ministries such as Worship, Education, Social Services, Finance, Environmental Care, and Youth. Under these ministries are appropriate projects and corresponding activities being carried out using available resources amidst a flurry of other forms of enactments (by the State or businesses) that enlist and pursue various kinds of resources. Thus, BEC enactments may interlock with other enactments that unpredictably operate as constraints since the latter may be imbued with different kinds of vision or guided by a very narrow vision.

To arrive at a more wholistic and coherent explanation, this study follows the culturalist-contextual approach to analysis and interpretation. BEC-related enactments are examined with the assistance of various authors of philosophy/sociology of practice<sup>14</sup> whose theories allowed the integration or association of broad data and enactments in a whole process of explanation. Their culturalist-contextual views of practice have made

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<sup>13</sup> See Martin Morris, “Jürgen Habermas,” in Jon Simons, ed., *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 238.

<sup>14</sup> Like Ludwig Wittgenstein, Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, Charles Taylor, Anthony Giddens, Theodore Schatzki, and Andreas Reckwitz; see, entries in the Bibliography.

this study more aware of the power of the implicit, like the everyday-life patterns that condition behavior. I have amplified this culturalist-contextual meaning of practice by highlighting its geographical embeddedness in a rural or urban area.

The use of the concept of geography has also given this study a firm handle on the implicit data of ecology and its “spirits”. In this research, *geography* is understood in the broad sense—it includes both the natural and the built. Both of these are objects of interest and study for planners, architects, geologists, or business developers who regard them as functional or useful.<sup>15</sup> For many of them, these are not objects of moral or spiritual discernment—just part of designs or ventures. Dams are built despite destruction of natural habitats or indigenous people’s hamlets; high-rise condominiums are constructed despite the ordinances that prohibit tall buildings near Rizal Park (Luneta). Some philosophers, social scientists, and environmentalists, however, are more interested in the axiological implications of these geographies for lives, memory, behavior, as well as nature.<sup>16</sup> My concern is similar to the latter group as I have shown how geography either enables or restricts strategies and tactics, specifically the strategies and tactics of BECs situated in either rural areas (imbued with nature’s beauty, bounty, and brawn) or urban areas (imbued with the spirit and power of Coca-Cola, Citibank, BPI, PLDT, Metrobank, Ayala Corporation, JG Summit Holdings, Top Frontier Investment Holdings, San Miguel, SM Investments Corporation, Meralco, Toyota,

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<sup>15</sup> See, Stephan Sonnenburg and Laura Baker, eds., *Branded Spaces: Experience Enactments and Entanglements* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013.)

<sup>16</sup> See, David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001); Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice: Globalization and Community Series* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).



Ford, Globe Telecom, Samsung, Pfizer, Apple, Ikea, etc.).

PCP II's vision is not easy to put into concrete and appropriate action<sup>17</sup> since this is to be implemented through enactments on “rough ground” exposed to “birds, sun, and thorns” (Mt. 13:3-7) and not on the smooth and slippery floors of cathedrals. Nested in spaces imbued with diverse and complex human interests, parishes are also intertwined with numerous pursuits, resources, and strivings. PCP II implementation thus gets entangled—many times sorely entangled—with *geographies; cultures; social arrangements; communities of various shapes and sizes, and; the traditional expressions of Church life*. Such unavoidable entanglements with the pre-established and the implicit would either foster or choke PCP II implementation.

Without devaluing the presence of effective leaders, lay pastoral workers, innovative programs, planning and organizing, as well as various support from local and foreign funding agencies, this study mainly looks into the influence of broad and pre-established realities on Basic Ecclesial Communities. To be able to understand their power, their nature or designs, and how our lives are bound up with them would surely assist programs and projects for PCP II implementation.

The Boac Diocese's BEC thrust serves as the primary example of a promotion of BEC being aided by

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that PCP II is also a product of broad consultations. It assimilated the interventions of representatives who brought with them their experiences and lessons in organizing Basic Ecclesial Communities especially in Mindanao and Visayas. See, Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “From Vatican II to PCP II to BEC Too: Progressive Localization of a New State of Mind to a New State of Affairs.” *Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal, Vol. II*, ed. Shaji George Kochuthara, 308-326 (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2015). See also, *Final Report*.

Marinduque’s broad and pre-established realities.<sup>18</sup> The Diocese of Boac, which accounts for the highest *active* members from their BECs, is able to mobilize an average of 15% from the Diocese’s Catholic population of 248,741 (as of 2020); Babak parish, 8%; Marbel parish, registers 5%; Rosario parish, not even 1% (it has about 300+ active members out of approximately 90,000 Catholics).<sup>19</sup> Data from other relatively successful BEC sites, like Christ the King Cathedral, Koronadal (Marbel), serve to corroborate Boac’s accomplishments.

Other sites, like those of Rosario, Cavite and Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral of Cebu City will show how failure in BEC promotion is *also* due to geographies, social arrangements, and cultures which are not congenial to the BEC thrust. The focus on those influential broad realities does not deny the fact that failure in BEC promotion is *also* due to the presence of leaders who do not possess organizing skills, have no interest in community work, and are not guided by PCP II’s Church of the Poor vision.

### **The Case of the Diocese of Boac**

Bishop Rafael Montiano Lim† (who served from Jan. 26, 1978 to Sept. 10, 1998) is credited for starting the BEC program of Boac in 1982 (10 years before PCP II), which used to follow the BCC-CO model of community organizing.<sup>20</sup> On May 7, 2022, it celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In this study, ‘Marinduque’ is the island-province, while ‘Boac’ refers to the Diocese of Boac which covers the whole territory of Marinduque. The ‘Marinduqueños’ are the people of Marinduque.

<sup>19</sup> Based on *Final Report*, 24ff.

<sup>20</sup> “The BCC-CO is a network of BCC members and workers which provides education, research and publication and alliance work on the building of BCCs. Chaired by Bishop Rafael Lim of Boac, it works independently of, but coordinates with, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).” “Basic Christian Communities

anniversary of the formation and growth of BCCs – locally referred to as Batayang Pamayanang Kristiyano (BPK).<sup>21</sup>

BEC-building, however, is not just the result of episcopal choice, leadership, and commitment to service. Bishop Lim’s efforts and the contributions of his successors (José Francisco Oliveros [Feb. 2, 2000 to May 14, 2004]; Bishop Reynaldo G. Evangelista [February 22, 2005-2013]; Bishop Marcelino Antonio Malabanan Maralit Jr. [March 17, 2015-present]), with the assistance of the clergy and lay leaders, gained tremendous help from Marinduque’s island-provincial-agricultural character. In other words, the *geographical location, society, and culture* of Marinduque provided the Diocese with a huge backdrop/background support for all its enactments in building PCP II’s Church of the Poor. In a broad sense, religion (and BEC) in Marinduque has

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Say PCP II is Great Impetus,” [http://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post\\_name=/1993/05/03/basic-christian-communities-say-pcp-ii-is-great-impetus&post\\_id=43258/](http://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/1993/05/03/basic-christian-communities-say-pcp-ii-is-great-impetus&post_id=43258/) [accessed 18 April 2012].

<sup>21</sup> <http://cbcpbec.com/?p=494/> [accessed 18 May 2013].

In July 2004, Bishop Jose F. Oliveros delivered a report before the First National Congress for Clergy.

“The Diocese of Boac started its BEC program through organizing activities in 1982, using the BCC-CO methodology/approach. This approach has three stages, namely: Awakening, Empowerment and Re-structuring. Every stage has corresponding activities.

After twenty (20) years of organizing, the BCC program has resulted in the formation of one hundred forty one (141) organized BCC units in 100 barrios/barangays throughout the province with 10-15 member families per unit. It has a total membership of 5,000 family units as of the year 2002. To date, about 20% of the BCC units are considered as self- sufficient/governing while 40% is in the sustaining level. On the other hand, 25% is in the initiating stage and remaining 15% has died down. For the integral faith formation of the member families, the BCC has initiated six development programs, namely, economic, health, agricultural, political, ecological and religious-cultural.” “The Filipino Clergy in a State of Mission: Inculturation / Integral Faith Formation,” <http://clergycongress2.org/?p=146>

been shaped and secured by its geography—it has drawn out its form and dynamics from the believers who depend on the island and the sea for their living.

Marinduque island’s “isolation” from the urbanized and secularized centers of the National Capital Region (Metro Manila)<sup>22</sup> may not be too favorable for economic progress and development, but its island-agricultural character provides an environment congenial to the older indigenous forms of life as well as to the newer ways of living out the faith through the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

The analysis that follows explains how Marinduque’s geography, society, and culture could amount to the age-old “hidden” contributors to the realization of PCP II vision of the Church of the Poor. Nevertheless, it also assumes the presence of committed leaders, skilled lay pastoral workers,<sup>23</sup> creative planning and organizing, ground breaking programs, as well as various local and foreign funding assistance.<sup>24</sup>

Marinduque is largely-agricultural and less-urbanized, which also means that communities exhibit 1) groundedness in the island-agrarian lifeworld, 2) less-regimented work among its population, 3) a less commercial or less market-driven character of everyday life, and 4) pre-dispositions toward community affairs.

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<sup>22</sup> Composed of the Cities of Manila, Quezon, Caloocan, Pasay, Pasig, Makati, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Valenzuela, Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Malabon, Navotas, Taguig, San Juan, and the Municipality of Pateros.

<sup>23</sup> See, Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “Women in the Diocese of Boac’s Basic Ecclesial Communities: Pastoral Work and Organizing,” *MST Review* 23/2 (2021): 1-22.

<sup>24</sup> See, Dagmang, *Final Report*, 24ff.

## 1) *Grounded in the island-agrarian lifeworld*

The first obvious observation<sup>25</sup> about Marinduque's lifeworld,<sup>26</sup> and consequently its BECs, is that it is found at the rural/coastal areas—its island-agrarian base. It springs from the rural/coastal *barangays*, where people of lower socio-economic status usually reside. There, the *basic sectors* are found.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Based on ethnographic field work and data from several secondary sources—see *Final Report*.

<sup>26</sup> For Alfred Schutz, *Lebenswelt* or lifeworld is “the world of lived experience,’ which is made up of the life experiences of other people and how they impact upon us as individuals. The *Lebenswelt* consists of physical and social objects which are experienced by us as already existing and already organized. We assume that the *Lebenswelt* was there before we were born; we take it for granted and suspend doubt that things might be otherwise.” Shaun Best, *A Beginners Guide to Social Theory*, London: SAGE Publications, 2003, p. 117. “The lifeworld is the phenomenological terrain of sedimented tradition, shared contexts, knowledge and competencies—a complexity on which every communicative act depends.” Martin Morris, “Jürgen Habermas,” in Jon Simons, ed., *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 238.

<sup>27</sup> Section 3 of Republic Act 8425, or the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act, defines the basic sectors as the disadvantaged sectors of Philippine society, namely:

1. Farmer-peasant
2. Artisanal fisherfolk
3. Workers in the formal sector and migrant workers
4. Workers in the informal sector
5. Indigenous peoples and cultural communities
6. Women
7. Differently-abled persons
8. Senior citizens
9. Victims of calamities and disasters
10. Youth and students
11. Children
12. Urban poor
13. Cooperatives and
14. Non-government organizations

The word “Basic” in the Basic Ecclesial Community phrase may refer to people who live at the base of society. They are the poor farmers, fishers, fruit gatherers, and vegetable gardeners from rural areas; they are also the workers, the self-employed, the under-employed, and unemployed from the more densely-populated areas. Of course, the word “Basic” could also qualify the term “Ecclesial” to mean the core composition of an assembly of Christians. Hence, one may refer to the people composing the BEC as constituting the basic component of what is essentially a group of people called to worship, teach, and serve.

In general, the BECs in Marinduque are composed of members coming from the grassroots and so one could refer to the BEC as a grassroots-level organization that is composed of members who have lesser inclinations toward a city-kind of life.<sup>28</sup> It is true that, historically, BECs have thrived among the grassroots population and that its development and expansion are mainly driven by the active participation of people from the island-agrarian communities. Nevertheless, some BECs have recently been organized in some upper-class subdivisions,<sup>29</sup> although most of these are preoccupied with traditional worship activities.

It is, thus, acceptable to speak of the BEC as both the fundamental ecclesial unit and a unit from grassroots communities. In Marinduque, they are grounded in the island-agrarian lifeworld.

BEC in Marinduque is a case of an ecclesia that acquired its form because of the island-geography and the attendant culture that has also shaped social formations for centuries—in that sense, the BEC also depends on the

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<sup>28</sup> See, *Final Report*, 24ff.

<sup>29</sup> Amado L. Picardal, “The Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: Recent Developments and Trends,” <http://cbcpbec.com/?p=397/> [accessed 10 April 2012].

Marinduque forms of life that have been shaped on account of the natural activities of people who relied on the local geographies for subsistence and meaning. Popular religiosity and the BEC in Marinduque are, thus, geographically-shaped and geographically-fortified—they comprise forms of geo-religiosity.<sup>30</sup>

Since there are neither Makati City corporate businesses nor Ikea Superstore in Marinduque, there is no peak-hour traffic congestion, no stiff competition for bus or train rides, and public space is not swarmed by extremely competitive buy-and-sell or market transactions. Everyday life among the poor farmers and fishers is still defined by a laid-back 4-8 hours work routine, one that is mostly determined by small- and medium-scale farming and fishing activities (not the mechanized mass production types) that bring modest income to families.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the majority of the people in the Diocese, do not belong to the middle-class income groups whose *capacities enable the pursuit of resources and goals* that typically move toward sufficiency and autonomy (a middle-class brand of security), or toward affluence and power.

Consequently, the poorer people—the majority—do not have the resources and capacities to automatically become capable pursuers of careers in Metro Manila. Some of them may possess a future-oriented mentality characteristic of individuals raised in modern urbanized and secularized modern cities; but due to the island-provincial culture (one that is hundreds of years older than the modern business culture—the latter having a

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<sup>30</sup> Geo-religiosity is used here as a concept encompassing historical and cultural/religious practices within a given geography understood as the source and ground of mechanisms for the emergence, development, and institutionalization of religious practices as well as organizations or assemblies.

<sup>31</sup> See, *Final Report*, 27ff.

shorter history), people are still predominantly enlivened by the shared island-provincial social dispositions constantly shaped by years of dealing with the land and the sea. Most people of Marinduque belong to this farming and fishing lifeworld, which is characterized by an island-provincial ecology.

This is what we mean by the BEC being assisted by the geography and culture of the island-province: that even before Christianity touched the shores of Marinduque, people in general were already imbued with the island-provincial culture of hospitality, reciprocity, solidarity,<sup>32</sup> informal camaraderie, inter-personal trust, and simplicity supported by a material life that was neither considered destitute nor affluent—probably poor (but not entirely miserable) and simple (neither complicated nor disposed to sophistication and consumerist behavior). Moreover, most of the poor are unable to be preoccupied with commodities that capture/captivate the middle class and the moneyed. Ironically, their island-provincial poverty relatively “shields” them from the forces of capitalism. This does not mean that the poor are totally immune to profit-making interests or orientation.

## ***2) Less regimented work among its population***

The common people’s rootedness and dependence on the plains, hills, mountains, and seas of Marinduque (the physical world) account for the predominantly agrarian and maritime labor and the other simple everyday life activities that shape society. Those in the hinterlands or those along coastal areas would toil and survive on the

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<sup>32</sup> See, Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “Malasakit (Compassion) and Damay (Empathetic Assistance): An Indigenous World-Embedded Compensation and Resistance at the Margins,” *Unitas* 81/2 (December 2008): 307-336.



natural bounty of the land or the seas. It is evident that the more successful creation or formation of BECs in Boac is not hampered by the people's less-regimented kind of work. BEC work in the city would seem to be possible only if the employed can also organize themselves for community cooperation *after* spending time inside assembly plants or offices (or housework) that require full-time organized contractual work. BEC work is thus doable if contractual jobs would still allow neighborhood-community availability, participation, or involvement. Actually, active members of BECs in urban areas consistently come from among the retired, unemployed, or under-employed: the youth, elderly, and women homemakers. Nevertheless, the presence of pre-existing BECs, no matter how small and gendered,<sup>33</sup> may also inspire availability, participation, or commitment, especially when popular participation is encouraged by dedicated and untiring clerical ministers and lay leaders.

Time after contractual work is not easy to pack and make available for BEC work. Middle-class workers and those always pushed for urban survival seem to lack the inspiration, time, or energy to participate in BEC-oriented activities. Many city dwellers prefer the usual traditional liturgical celebrations at the parish center rather than participate in organizational endeavors that expand the family and foster community.<sup>34</sup> Traditional rituals or customary religious practices seem to be adequate for their "spiritual" needs.<sup>35</sup> After spending

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<sup>33</sup> See, Dagmang, "Women in the Diocese of Boac's Basic Ecclesial Communities.

<sup>34</sup> See *Final Report*, section on Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral, 192ff.

<sup>35</sup> This observation about their lack of involvement should not be explained using the "other-worldly" framework. Their preferences for the traditional rituals do not always mean that they abhor BEC kind of community activities. What is more accurate is that the balance between the devotional and community involvement aspects of faith

time for the less time-consuming or less-demanding traditional church obligations, urban citizens are prone to spend free-time for their families—which would mean time for home management, leisure, relaxation, and rejuvenation in preparation for next week’s new round of contractual employment. These would include malling, shopping, traveling, or staying at home for chores, sleeping, chatting online, watching TV, engaging in personal hobbies, and the like. The working class would also have their own diversions: husbands may spend time drinking or just passing time with their buddies, while wives focus on home-making; the young ones, male more than the female, may idle away their time seeking friends or exciting pastimes. Obviously, many of them are not swayed by ministers, clerical or lay, for the challenging BEC initiatives.

In a neighborhood, more rural than urban, where social cohesiveness is still apparent, BEC participation is more observable, among males or females. While the promise of exciting individual diversions or family hangouts may not be forthcoming, many rural dwellers, especially women, are attracted to BEC activities.<sup>36</sup> One could speculate that BEC time is also a way of passing time—but such “passing of time” constitutes actual broader social integration (or customary synchrony) where the meaning of sharing, participation, celebration, and work is neither contractual nor online/virtual.

Participation in various ecclesial ministries (worship, education, social services, finances, family life, communications, etc.) would still mean working mostly in rural-agricultural environments (not offices or

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is not yet achieved. Applying on them the “other-worldly” analysis is neither helpful nor encouraging since this would already box people outside the community participation happening through the BEC.

<sup>36</sup> See, Dagmang, “Women in the Diocese of Boac’s Basic Ecclesial Communities; Dagmang, *Final Report*, 25ff.

production lines) and among fellow farmers or fishers (and their children) whose occupations are, in general, not restricted by the bundy clock or by the 8-5 waged work. BEC time is thus *still* part of the folks' time that may be allotted for a broader ecclesial-community activities, like training for the choir, theater arts development, alternative livelihood programs, cooperatives' projects, prayer meetings, bible studies, health education, and pastoral work.

It is in BEC space and time where people are also serious in promoting their own programs and projects away from the parish center. Such programs and projects are meant not only to promote traditional prayer and liturgy but also to foster and strengthen community solidarity and in-the-flesh mutual support through social gatherings or livelihood projects—prefiguring more forthcoming BEC-oriented network of activities, like community-based environmental protection, organic farming, health programs, or enterprising cooperatives.<sup>37</sup>

The after-work sharing of time for BEC activities has become an opportunity for the poor to share their joy in working with their fellows. On the other hand, many of us who are not into BEC will think of having fun with members of the nuclear family or close relatives and friends. That kind of closeness is, of course, restricted as these seldom show the broad communitarian sharing that uplifts and sustains people in the wider and real public spaces.

It is thus important to recognize that “unfriendly” geographies, ecologies, and culture would really limit the birth or growth of BEC-type of interdependence and cooperation. This may be far-fetched but it could be of some value to reflect on the presence of cohesive relationships and shared customs that helped in the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

shaping of the Banaue Rice Terraces;<sup>38</sup> and that these built geographies moved people to further shape their communities and customs. Today, however, we are informed about the deterioration of some of these rice terraces due to the erosion of community cooperation.<sup>39</sup> Cooperation or solidarity has also moved toward the cities and created the present-day built urban geographies like offices and factories or similar mass-production sites—also products of social processes.<sup>40</sup>

### ***3) A less commercial or less market-driven character of everyday life***

The tradition-bound cultural resource, with its deep and immeasurably long history, is still part of the lives of many Filipinos. While this is true for people in those areas characterized by agricultural/fishing activities, like San Isidro Parish, Pagadian, or Babak,<sup>41</sup> this traditional cultural capital is already diminishing either through subordination, marginalization, or privatization—happening in dominant commercial and urban societies that encourage and nurture individualistic notions of

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<sup>38</sup> The Banaue Rice Terraces (which traditionally include the Rice Terrace Clusters of Banaue, Mayoyao, Kiangan, Hungduan, and Ifugao): a significant story of a huge undertaking which could not be attributed to the initiative of a single Great Man in the history of the Mountain Province societies. The Banaue Rice Terraces (Tagalog: Hagdan-hagdang Palayan ng Banawe) refer to the 2000-3000 year old terraces that were carved out of the mountains of Ifugao in the Philippines by the indigenous people's ancestors' communities.

<sup>39</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/life/04/07/18/not-just-boracay-banaue-rice-terraces-also-need-help>; <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/13/19/ifugao-rice-terraces-in-critical-stage-of-deterioration-un-food-agency>

<sup>40</sup> See, Hein de Haas, "A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-Capabilities Framework," *Comparative Migration Studies* 9/8 (2021): 12.

<sup>41</sup> Dagmang, *Final Report*, sections on Babak and Pagadian.

security, competition, future-progress orientation, utilitarian-mindedness, and self-interested habitual pursuits.<sup>42</sup> Such dispositions often stifle the Gospel values that the BEC promotes: mutual support/sharing, humility, simplicity, compassion, forgiveness, other-oriented openness, and generosity. Self-interest-bound dispositions may even pull children away from the island-provincial culture of the grassroots communities.

What we are saying is that Marinduque island-province society and culture has the moral-practical resource for any community-building program. Tapping this resource for BEC is one major task—the deep-and-long past and the island-provincial milieu have handed down that huge everyday-life cultural resource/memory which has become available for today’s BEC-building.

Marinduque is less-colonized by Manila, less-dictated by an outside culture, less-influenced by foreign ideas, and less an object of commercial interest. Since it has somehow preserved its traditions in an island-agrarian setting, it has much geographical-cultural conditions (and cultural memories) that pre-date capitalism or modern built environments: This much is offered and given to BEC. As BEC needs the past for its present, it has to take hold of/lay claim to people’s cultural memory as this is embedded in and reflected through their natural spatial coordinates. This suggests and insinuates that people’s cultural memories which become the BECs interlacing components are connected with their natural environment as their venerable lifeblood (the sea and the land trigger the mind with memories of struggles for

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<sup>42</sup> See, Michael O’Sullivan, *Cloneliness: On the Reproduction of Loneliness* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). The author argues that “cloneliness” as an institutional practice of reproduction in society nurtures, normalizes, and reproduces loneliness in order to create subjects who are more willing to accept ideologies of competition, “extreme individualism,” and the stresses of being “interconnected loners.”

survival), platform for work and interaction (farms trigger memories of labor or socialization), framework for orientations (townscapes and neighborhood trigger memories of familiar perspectives), ground for formation (social and environmental maps trigger memories of child rearing or cultural education;<sup>43</sup> trigger repetition of *hiya, utang na loob, malasakit, pakikipagkapwa*), path for pursuits (landscapes trigger memories of direction), and home to ancestors and families (triggers memories of race and lineage, of belongingness and warmth); and not much connected with mega-city commerce and its winkers or blinders. Thus, when Marinduqueños are in BEC settings, they also automatically see themselves in a context wherein they do not have to deliberate over whether they belong in it or not. Their common memory and identity have interlocked with a setup that also reproduces their social bonds, their history, and their spaces—or their common memory could offer rhythms against the enchanting song of the city sirens.

The people's present pursuits and concerns are also addressed in the BEC. The Community Organizing (CO) component sees to it that people rally around their pressing problems, issues, and concerns in life. Hopefully, becoming less-dependent on the powers of capitalism, it is their common memory as a people living (not deracinated) in an island geography that tightly binds them together when they are drawn toward the CO programs. BEC in the sense of an organized people

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<sup>43</sup> See Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, revised and expanded edition, edited and translated by Eugenia Hanfmann, Gertrude Vakar, and Alex Kozulin (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press, 2012). Vygotsky views the process of human development as socially and culturally mediated where children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and cognitive skills through communications with more knowledgeable members of society. See also, M. Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

institutionalizes the memory of the Marinduqueños, as they bring with them their joys, hopes, values, and dreams fashioned and solidified in their common spaces (*mga bundok, patag, at dagat ng pag-asa*<sup>44</sup>). It is through the cultural memory embedded and communicated in the BEC that the BEC itself may also be considered a mnemonic institution.<sup>45</sup> BEC has become a reference point for which Marinduqueños set themselves on their past and their present course. The BEC as a produced space and an organized assembly of people is meant to keep the people's beliefs, rituals, organizations, and community practices more alive and in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

#### ***4) Disposition toward community affairs***

A most obvious project of a BEC is its promotion of community. Members of BECs are regularly involved or urged to get involved in broader social and cultural activities that promote cohesion, integration, participation, mutual-help, solidarity, and cooperation. Such community-promoting customs are already found, to a great extent, in the context of a neighborhood.

As a people more inclined to neighborhood belongingness, the people of Boac Diocese, especially those outside the poblacion/town center (Immaculate Conception Parish), are also disposed toward community involvement.

The Filipino customary practices of *pakikipagkapwa*, *kapitbahayan* or *pakigsilinganay* (neighborliness), *malasakit* (compassion), *pagtutulungan* (mutual

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<sup>44</sup> Literally, “mountains, plains, and seas of hope”.

<sup>45</sup> See Jan Assman, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” in Peter Meusbürger, Michael Heffernan, and Edgar Wunder, eds., *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View* (London: Springer, 2011), 15-27.

support), and *pagsa-salo-salo* or *panag-ambitay* (sharing) and *pagpupunyagi* or *pakigbisog* (common struggle) are considered as appropriate or correct ways of living one's life or dealing with one's fellow. Such ways have informed a certain 'form of life' (which, in turn, reproduce those valued ways) within which individuals are brought up and learn to play as well as observe the rules of the 'social game'.

The communitarian and neighborly form of life inform the kind of neighborhood relationships among Marinduque farmers and fishers.<sup>46</sup> As culture-bearers, neighbors have embodied and expressed those age-old values through enduring neighborly practices—the same values that they are disposed to bring when they celebrate the Liturgy of the Word; when they gather together to commemorate an important feast; when they meet to discuss a problem like how to oppose the proposed operation of a mining company in their area; when they hold meetings for their credit and livelihood cooperatives; or when they discuss their role in the local elections. The BEC, therefore, does not cut them off from their lifeworld.

The enduring social dispositions or *habitus*<sup>47</sup> are imbibed by individuals and become part of themselves as second-nature ability, i.e., ability acquired through imitative and repetitive social practice and manifests as a habitual inclination. Lovibond's insight is helpful:

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<sup>46</sup> See, *Final Report*, sections on rural-agricultural sites of Boac, Marbel, Pagadian, and Babak.

<sup>47</sup> A reference to *habitus* as dispositions runs throughout Aristotle's works and Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. For the concept of habitus or shared predispositions, see, Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, Translated by Edmund Jephcott (London: Blackwell Publications, 1994); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).



...it is natural to human beings to live in a community, and hence to operate within a specific 'form of life', which they have to learn through upbringing. Our 'first' (biological) nature is such that we are not complete as humans until we have acquired a 'second' (largely social) nature, comprising a repertoire of rational capacities.<sup>48</sup>

Yet we have to recognize that there is a great amount of non-discursive or un-reflected, almost-automatic, character in the way individuals deploy those rational capacities. Their habit-formed consciousness and will serve as reliable storehouse of inclinations, until they are shaken by exposure to different forms of life.

Thus, this question: What happens if the poor are given material abundance, would they still keep their communitarian values? The BEC's role may have to play its "function" to really purify and perfect that spirit of community in the poor. A habitual disposition of sharing acquired because of poverty may have to be perfected to become a true Christian virtue of sharing despite poverty of resources. In this sense, the positive dispositions found among the poor may find a place in an ideal setting like the BEC as a real incubator and shaper of, say, Christian generosity. This is not to diminish the value of the poor's disposition to practice *pakikipagkapwa*; this is to recognize the fact that positive cultural values are conditions for the success of BECs. This is also to recognize that those values should find fulfilment in the BEC.

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<sup>48</sup> Sabina Lovibond, "Second Nature, Habitus, and the Ethical: Remarks on Wittgenstein and Bourdieu," *Ethical Perspectives* 22/1 (2015): 132.

### Sites not Congenial to BEC Formation

The emergence of capitalism highlights the flight and transformation of work and consumption, from rural communities to urbanized centers. This is the original and far-reaching industry-induced separation (an “original sin”) upon which other forms of separation will appear or re-appear (other forms of “sin” like forcing the young to become “independent” and allowing them to depend on their “premature maturities”).

In urbanized settings of Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral and Jaro Metropolitan Cathedral, the early morning domestic scurrying for work and school reflects the daily pull of jobsites to employees and prospective employees who must leave their abodes and be separated from their loved ones for 10 to 16 hrs. This pattern of leave-separation brings about a fundamental condition for disconnections in families because of regular engagements in places of work or learning.<sup>49</sup> Even younger children are exposed to this kind of life as they also rush to their day-care centers or schools; high school or college level children approximate the schedule of their parents who wake up at five in the morning, leave home at six, and return home at six or seven or nine in the evening or even at midnight—and they grow being impinged by such patterns.<sup>50</sup> The primary and warm relations at home will be interrupted (or breached) until household members gather again for the renewal of

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<sup>49</sup> This is true for families, in general, but should be qualified in cases of single individuals. See, D.S Hamermesh, “Life Satisfaction, Loneliness and Togetherness, with an Application to Covid-19 Lock-downs,” *Review of Economics of the Household* 18 (2020): 983–1000.

<sup>50</sup> I use the concept of ‘impingements’ to refer to broad/deep-impact and high-context imperfections in the management of human affairs, mainly *public* affairs. See, Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “Impingements in Capitalism: Decoding an Obscure Factor in Ethical Analysis,” *Journal of Dharma* 38/2 (April-June 2013): 195-210.

affective interaction through common rituals and activities. If this coming together and renewal of affective sharing are wanting, we will have cases of ruptured relations and intimacy deficits becoming more recurrent or even permanent. Today's nuclear and single-parent families, which are perceived as "common," are features that have come about because of the more fundamental breaching patterns caused by waged work that assumes the separation of the domestic from industry. Intimacy- or affection-deficit households will also become more "normal."

Grocery or market visits have drawn consumers away from the earth or wilderness for their supplies of food and other products (including health and beauty products). Employment and shopping do not only show people's integration into urban society's socio-economic processes, but also exposure to possibilities of being cut off from diverse life-giving or health-promoting bonds and activities (like unhurried common breakfast, shared meals, shared leisure, contact with the soil through games or gardening, regular interaction/consultation with elders, or enjoyment of other non-utilitarian activities).

Urban citizens become different persons when they leave their abodes for the workplace or the market. They usually assume identities that abide by the rules and prescriptions of systems. They become employees or buyers whose ways adapt to the templates of industry and commerce. The moment they return to their homes, they may shift back to household personalities, but may not regain that self that is untainted by the business world's laws or calculations. Once they have signed contracts with employers, sacrificed family presence with remote goals, exchanged their labor for wages, parted with hard-earned money for goods, and missed the presence of kin in mutual-help endeavors, people will

normalize the requisites of mega-city business. They will be drawn to the enticing extrinsic goods that may, as a consequence, subordinate intrinsic goods gained from the lifeworld.<sup>51</sup>

Urban culture makes people, in general, indisposed to the call of *local-traditional* cultural solidarity and indigenous mutual-help (*bayanihan*). This is not to say that cultural solidarity and mutual-help are absent in the cities. They exist, but they usually suffer from utilization, subordination, or exclusion in commerce, or privatized in homes, or professionalized in State agencies or NGOs.<sup>52</sup> Community healers (dispensers of non-commercial healing practices), for example, have been labeled as “quack doctors,” and subordinated or excluded by medical science. Doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, dentists, guidance counselors, and therapists—all professionals who must adhere to the State’s codes and Bill of Rights—are *not unable* to feel sympathy/solidarity, but will have to follow the more calculated and technologically circumscribed “professional” ways of caring. Automatic care and assistance have become primarily private or family matters.<sup>53</sup> The “we need each other” outlook seems to be overshadowed by the urban prescription’s “you can do it [with the subtext: autonomously]”. Often, the urban middle class/upper class neighbor could not automatically mediate whenever a family within the vicinity is in trouble (concrete walls and the right to privacy are in place). Instead, the troubled is expected to rely on the rescue numbers 911 or 171 or 161 or the hospital for ambulance.

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<sup>51</sup> See, Albino Barrera, *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Ferdinand D. Dagmang, “Christian Compassion and Solidarity within Capitalist Contexts,” *Asia Pacific Social Science Review* 6/2 (January 2007): 53-72.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

BECs may be able to deal with this urban “civility menace” when organized members have become available, once again, to their fellows. But, to be able to dispense care, BECs may have to go beyond or should not be hampered by the traditional Virgin Mary visits, Sacred Heart processions, block rosaries, Lenten prayers, liturgical calendar, or Blessed Sacrament vigils.

The Cavite Economic Processing Zone’s (CEPZ) setup<sup>54</sup> in Rosario, Cavite is another example of a site whose geographies, culture, and organization are rather “unfriendly” to BEC promotion. The Rosario area has one expanse devoted to CPEZ’s export industries (established in 1986 with just 13 factories). The CEPZ covers 278.51 hectares belonging to Rosario and Gen. Trias, Cavite—70% of CEPZ’s employees (in its 417 companies by January 31, 2014) come from Rosario and Gen. Trias.<sup>55</sup> The full-time workers of CEPZ and others who are into urban employment do not show interest in BEC activities. This does not mean that they are no longer attending mass and other traditional religious rituals. BEC formation, however, is not just about religious rituals. It involves participation in community activities, especially in BEC meetings, and this requires people’s availability. Most workers preoccupied with their contractual employment are not free for or are indisposed to community service or neighborhood activities. BEC

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<sup>54</sup> Not to mention the “ruthless corporatism” that characterizes CEPZ’s manipulative practices. See, Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> “Cavite Export Processing Zone provided employment for a total of 71,738 persons, including 63,654 factory workers and 8,184 workers in related sectors, as of the end of May 2003. Also, as evident by the high percentage of women workers (64.9%), it is playing a vital role in promoting women’s participation in social and economic activities.” *Cavite Export Processing Zone Development Project* (Field Survey, July 2003), 7; [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our\\_work/evaluation/oda\\_loan/post/2004/pdf/2-24\\_full.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/evaluation/oda_loan/post/2004/pdf/2-24_full.pdf)

development which depends on community involvement is hardly taking off from this area because of the “mismatch” between BEC work and CEPZ/urban work. The PCP II mandate may have to be concretized through alternative forms of enactments in Rosario, Cavite, like organizing a workers’ association (cf. Rosario, Cavite’s Workers’ Assistance Center<sup>56</sup>) which is not, strictly speaking, a neighborhood project.

Nevertheless, built urban environments do not always imply failure in BEC formation, but these pose more challenges to organizing work, like the one surrounding the Parish of Our Lady of the Abandoned, Mandaluyong City.<sup>57</sup> Committed lay leaders, not lacking in the cities, have to face greater hurdles than what their counterparts are facing in the more “friendly” geographies of San Isidro Labrador district (Pagadian)<sup>58</sup> or Gasan<sup>59</sup> (Marinduque). Parish work is harder for involved urban lay workers and entails more resolute dedication and greater creativity in dealing with urban dwellers’ employment or their lack of a nature-bound cultural memory. Still, vigorous involvement, even if not drawing numbers, is always inspiring and edifying. A cynical attitude is needless and demoralizing—like the one displayed by a [former] parish priest of Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral.<sup>60</sup> The parish priest refused to cooperate with the research project, admitting that PCP II programs in his parish were never successfully implemented. He said, “*Hangyoa lang ang DLSU, nga dili lang dire (Cathedral) kay wala gyud mi ana (Please request DLSU not [to do research] here because we don't have that),*” in reference to the letter sent to him. When

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<sup>56</sup> Dagmang, *Final Report*, 275-276.

<sup>57</sup> Dagmang, *Final Report*, 81ff.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 173ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 30ff.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-206.

asked if there were any attempts on his part to implement the PCP II programs during his term, he said there were some but without evident results, the reasons being the “transient” status of his “parishioners” plus the urban set-up of the cathedral.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown how geographies, social formations, and cultures affect, positively or negatively, the promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities. The agricultural and less-urbanized settings are BEC’s better ground as these provide the “hidden” or “implicit” contributors. Boac Diocese’s success in BECs is not only because of PCP II’s vision and mandate. Most of its people were already living in some forms of community—kinship-based, neighborhood-based, barangay-based (whose members may belong to a clan), or ethnic-based—which are enlivened by an island-provincial culture. The people’s pre-BEC lives revolving around the primary occupations of farming and fishing have been shaped by years of shared repetitive activities revolving around labor/production, reproduction, worship, and other forms of socialization. The material-geographical resources and opportunities found in and determined by the island-province setting have generated a culture. The handing down of such culture (with all its beliefs, customs, social dispositions, and traditions) has ensured the reproduction and continuity of a kind of life that still informs and enlivens the common people and those who work to organize BECs. Lay people who come from the ranks of Marinduqueños have brought themselves and their enduring habits or dispositions to their churches. Being anchored in the social dispositions and stabilized by Marinduque’s cultural scaffoldings, the personal

dispositions and behavior of BEC members will also mark BEC's character.

The natural geography, cultural memory, and rural society of Marinduque assist and, in general, do not impede the approaches and goals of the BEC programs and activities. Such factors complement the BEC thrust, contribute to Boac's BEC development, and positively add quality to Boac's achievement in BEC-building. In other words, Marinduque is a fertile ground for the sowing of PCP II seeds. The absence of those congenial and implicit realities (or the presence of unfriendly implicit realities) would bring about less encouraging results, despite the vision and mandate of PCP II.

Many parishes fail to notice and harness the BEC potential of rural communities whose shared memory is rooted in some solidarity traditions of the past; while parishes in the urban areas fail to recognize the submission of its citizens to urban preoccupations (the more individualized or privatized cares) that make urban dwellers unable to feel the need for BEC participation.

It is thus important to note that knowledge about BEC will have to expand and include the role of the contributory implicit factors of community development—thus, BEC initiatives could be more vigorous and optimistic in agricultural and less-urbanized settings and harness the people's power from the ground for the *ecclesia*/assembly. The urban area's BEC promoters should be more critical of the hidden factors that inhibit BEC formation—leaders and participants would thus need the more urban-appropriate skill set and an abundant supply of stamina and determination to do organizing work.

It is by way of the BECs that the quality of a parish nowadays is to be measured. In the absence of the people's participation and promotion of community inherent in every BEC, the parish merely reflects the



aggregation of individuals who pursue traditional rituals and practices at the Center without necessarily being propelled by a neighborly and communitarian spirit.

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