



STATSVETENSKAPLIGA INSTITUTIONEN

# DECENTRALISED MARINE MANAGEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Does decentralisation create a framework for  
successful sustainable marine management?

Amanda Örtegren

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## Abstract

Decentralised management has become more popular during the last decades. Although, its effect in developing countries have been uneven and scientists argue that weak institutional capacity causes ineffective local authorities.

The United Nations' 14<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal states that careful ocean management is essential for a sustainable future and developing of marine protected areas (MPAs). Marine resources tend to move beyond municipal borders, which creates an issue for decentralised management within municipalities. Therefore, this study intends to investigate whether marine management is successful within the criteria of decentralisation.

This study was conducted as a case study on Cebu island in the Philippines, using a qualitative research method. The empirical result was gathered through interviews with different actors all related to the issue in question. The actors were chosen on the basis of them having different backgrounds, perspectives, and area of expertise in the hope of it reflecting the reality.

The result shows that the municipalities do not fulfil all the criteria for decentralisation, and that management of marine resources is a challenge for various reasons. The respondents have different approaches to the issue and the importance of sustainable marine management. Clearer guidelines and support from national government and a change in prioritisation would help the development of a sustainable marine management.

*Keywords: Decentralisation, Marine Management, MPA, Sustainability, Philippines*

## Word abbreviations

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

MPA – Marine Protected Area

ICM – Integrated Coastal Management

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

DENR – Department of Environment and Natural Resources

BFAR – Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

MCP – Marine Conservation Philippines

CCEF – Coastal Conservation & Education Foundation

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# 1. Introduction and General Aim

Adoption of decentralisation<sup>1</sup> has become more popular during the recent decades, although its effects on developing countries has been disproportionate. Some scientists do argue that decentralisation tends to increase welfare through effective financial transactions, a wider range of responsibility and local resource management. Others argue against this, claiming that weak institutional capacity and power on a local scale causes ineffective authorities (Bird & Rodriguez, 1999).

Prud'homme (1995) writes about the dangers in decentralising different sectors, and that not all should be. Questions like which sectors that should be decentralised and who should oversee management within the sectors, must be asked.

One of these sectors is marine management and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). MPAs are marine areas that are being managed and protected to preserve a certain habitat that is important for biodiversity (Edgar et al., 2007). Decentralisation intends for each municipality to take responsibility for managing their own marine resources. However, as fish or bigger mammals tend to move beyond municipal borders, and as waste and pollution in waters tend to affect larger areas, an issue arise when trying to manage these resources within municipal borders. Therefore, this thesis aims to investigate whether marine management is a sector that actually benefits from decentralisation or not.

Decentralisation in theory, has its advantages and disadvantages. Studies have been made on countries worldwide but there is a lack of research on how decentralisation affects the sector of marine management. One issue with marine management on a global scale is open access.

The United Nations' 14<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal states that careful ocean management is essential for a sustainable future. It also states that Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) need to be effectively managed to reduce overfishing, pollution, and destruction of coastal waters.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research question:

- How does decentralisation create a framework for successful sustainable marine management?

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<sup>1</sup> When national agencies submit their responsibilities to regional or local agencies to manage resources and general assets (Eaton, 2001).

This thesis will study the effects of decentralisation of marine management in a developing country. The chosen case is the Philippines because they decentralised the country in 1991 and it is considered a developing country according to the United Nations “Country Classification 2014” (UN, 2014). The country is relatively new to the framework of decentralisation but there have been reforms made and changes in political structure.

The Philippines is located in the world’s richest marine biodiversity ecosystem area (Lowly et al., 2009). They have excellent experience in integrated coastal management (ICM) because they started defying the coastal zones in the 1970s. ICM is a prerequisite for implementing and developing MPA. Since the decentralisation in the 1990s, the Philippines have carried out ventures to develop ICM and MPA (White et al., 2006).

As an attempt to get the research question answered, interviews were conducted in the Philippines. The interviewees were all related to marine management and MPA development and represented different parties of interest. The main result was that implementation has not been successful. There are municipalities that lack both the capacity and the sufficient financial funding to develop sustainable marine management and local governments struggle with other issues that are being prioritised. The long-term importance of sustainable marine management is not yet widely accepted nor understood.

The next section in this paper will present previous literature, reports, and research followed by the theoretical framework used to answer the question being researched. After that, the specific aim and research question will be presented followed by the research design and method. This section will present the case further, review previous literature and explain how the empirical research was conducted and analysed.

Furthermore, the empirical findings from the interviews will be presented, the findings of previous literature and the empirical result will be juxtaposed and lastly, a conclusion will be presented with a summary of the analysis and an answer to the research question.



## 2. Previous Literature

Decentralisation in theory may not be as confusing as in reality, but the practical cases of decentralisation processes differ between countries, as do the outcomes and results of its effects (Bird & Rodriguez, 1999). Eaton (2001) states that the implementation of decentralisation in developing countries demands systematic and authoritative pressure that includes democracy, liberal economy, and external donors.

A study was conducted by Jones et al. (2016) in Thailand where centralised and decentralised management was compared to see how they both affected marine management and resources. The result was that a combination of both centralised and decentralised governance was optimal for successful marine management. Although, this result may be confusing since a country rarely has both centralised and decentralised political structures.

### 2.1 Supporters of decentralisation

Bardhan (2002) writes about decentralisation and its concept where he claims that decentralisation can help solve ethnic conflicts through local cultural and political autonomy. Furthermore, he supports decentralisation and argues that a free market with reduced national power and privatisation growth are due to decentralisation reforms. Bardhan also states that the political accountability on a local level can cure corruption because people and politicians are closer to the information. Even Ivanyna and Shah (2010) states that local government reduces corruption when moving government closer to the people. Although, local governments are more vulnerable to local elites to control them. Bardhan points out in the end that decentralisation is not about weakening the national government. It is about making governance at a local level more responsive and effective.

According to Faguet (2008) studies from Colombia and Bolivia have shown that decentralisation and transferring power from national government to local government have increased local investment and increased local electoral engagement.

### 2.2 Opponents of decentralisation

Manor (2011) argues against decentralisation partly, and states that underprivileged groups will lose mandate in developing countries undertaking decentralisation. As mentioned above

one risk and negative consequence that can occur when decentralising is that local elites can take control over regions and minorities lose mandate. Therefore, Manor claims that requirements is needed for decentralisation reforms to have a positive effect, especially in developing countries. Accountability must work in two ways, both from the bureaucrats to the elected representatives in the local governments, and from the elected representatives to the people.

Kristensen and Santoso (2006) are also critical to the effects of decentralisation and have gathered empirical evidence of reduced health care due to decentralisation reforms in Indonesia. They claim that the reduced health care is due to lack of transparency and accountability from the local government and reduced financing to health systems.

Prud'homme (1995) is disbelieving to a successful implementation of decentralisation in developing countries. He highlights several factors that affect effectiveness in implementation. Firstly, he believes that municipalities in developing countries lack the financial foundation to implement new reforms and will be dependent on funding from the national government. He also writes about how geography determines a country's need to decentralize; the United States and Brazil are big countries that would benefit from it, while smaller countries would benefit less and have a harder time to implement it.

Prud'homme (1995) also writes that the ability to charge for a certain service determines how easy it is to decentralise. Financing through fees is preferred over taxes because it is easier to control. One example of a service that is funded with fees is usually access to fresh water. Although, Prud'homme also discusses the technological difficulties in decentralising services, where access to fresh water is technically more difficult than is waste management. Waste management is a service that a municipality can offer more easily. Overall, Prud'homme (1995) argues that the cost of decentralisation outweighs the potential benefits, considering the uncertainty of the outcome.

### 2.3 Development in the Philippines

During the 1980s new locally managed MPAs started to take form in the Philippines (White et al., 2006). This eventually led to the decentralisation in 1991. New ideas on local marine management and sustainable fisheries were introduced. They established new licenses and

restrictions for fishing, but implementation and control of these new restrictions failed (van Mulekom, 2008).

White et al. (2002) writes that there are mainly two factors to the development of MPAs in the Philippines during the recent decades. Firstly, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been a big factor in financing governmental projects. Secondly, decentralisation and transfer of responsibility from national to local levels have resulted in more but lower scale projects in marine management and developing of local MPAs.

The declining fish stock in the area is a big problem for the coastal population whom depend on fish for nutrition and livelihood. This has created a broader acceptance among the local population to increase the number of MPAs to protect and increase the fish stocks. The national agencies “The National Integrated Protected Areas System” (NIPAS) and the Fisheries Code of 1998 have since the decentralisation 1991 established and developed MPAs. This has been made possible from the financial support of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), EU and international NGOs (White et al., 2002).

Despite the change in the political structure where the local government gained the responsibility for local marine management, White et al. (2006) argue that the local government remain unstable in terms of economy. Leading to weak capacity, implementation, and control of law enforcement. They have managed to achieve long-term sustainable marine management by allowing tourism three months each year and helping the local population with income and revenue streams in other forms than relying fishing alone. They also patrol the area to prevent illegal fishing which aims to be a deterrent.

Dygico et al. (2013) reports about the effectiveness of MPA management in Tubbataha Reef, located in other parts of the Philippines. This National Park is being managed and controlled by the national government with the technical and financial support of international NGOs.

The Philippines’ marine goal is that 10 percent of municipal waters should be MPAs by 2020. It is each municipality’s responsibility to achieve this. Although the ambition is high there are today a lot of MPAs on paper that is not controlled or implemented (Atlas of Marine Protection, 2016). Weeks et al. (2009) estimates that the current growth of MPAs today will allow the Philippines to reach their goal by 2074.

Previous literature states that the numbers of MPAs have grown since the decentralisation and because of the change in political structure in 1991. Still, it also states that the Philippines will not reach their goal of 10 percent of municipal waters being protected by 2020 due to ineffective and weak implementation. This creates a gap in the literature, where it is unclear whether decentralization has beneficial effects on marine management or not.

### 3. Specific Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study is to increase the knowledge of how decentralisation affects management of marine resources by further investigating different criteria for implementation of decentralisation in a developing country and looking at difficulties with marine management from a local perspective. Marine resources move beyond local borders and as decentralisation entail, management within local borders, this creates a problem in management. The study is not to be generalised for all types of developing countries nor all types of marine management; it is applicable to countries with proximity the same kind of marine environment and economic development.

Based on the presented introduction, previous literature, and aim of this study, the following research question has been formulated:

- How does decentralisation create a framework for successful sustainable marine management?
  - How can marine management be successful and sustainable on a national scale when each municipality is responsible for their own coastal waters?

## 4. Theoretical Framework

According to the United Nations' "Food and Agriculture Organisation" (FAO), there are both advantages and disadvantages to decentralisation and management on a local scale. A paper from 2002 reports qualifications of the advantages and disadvantages where the advantages are as follows;

Local institutions tend to have a better understanding of the actual problems within a certain area and are therefore better capable to handle it than national institutions. Local institutions also have a tendency to feel more responsible to handle a problem that directly affects them. They have capacity to include more people in the decision-making and therefore minority groups have a greater impact in local decisions. Furthermore, this generates higher participation and transparency in decision-making, which build local services that correlate with the local demands (FAO, 2002).

### 4.1 Types of decentralisation

Schneider (2003) writes about transfer of power and resources away from national government in three core dimensions. These are fiscal, administrative, and political. Researchers may have various associations to the concept of decentralisation due to different reasons. One reason can even be language difference. To include concepts such as democracy and market reforms can be problematic. Therefore, this thesis will only discuss decentralisation as a concept on its own, and not in relation to other policies or concepts.

#### 4.1.1 Fiscal Decentralisation

Fiscal decentralisation is about maximizing social welfare according to Schneider (2003). This comes from establishing economic stability, allocative efficiency, and distributive equity. To measure fiscal development subnational expenditure and revenue percentage is being measured and compared to the national total expenditure and revenue.

### 4.1.2 Administrative Decentralisation

Administrative decentralisation is described by Schneider (2003) as how modern bureaucracies are achieved. It is defined as being efficient, effective, and rational.

Administrative decentralisation is granting subnational jurisdictions autonomy from the national government in three different levels. The first one with least autonomy is referred to as deconcentration. This means the national government transfers responsibility to local field officers without changing the autonomy from central government. The second one with little more autonomy is referred to as delegation. This entails the central government transfers responsibility to subnational agencies, but the central government remain accountable. The last one with most autonomy is referred to as devolution. This entails that the national government grant the local governments with power and control.

### 4.1.3 Political Decentralisation

Political decentralisation according to Schneider (2003) focuses on mobilisation, organisation, participation, contestation, and aggregation. Issues are significant at local level and partly independent from national level leading to the subnational importance of governing for effective results. In order to impact the policies, interests must be prioritized by local governments. Interests then also must be mobilised and organised through local institutions.

Local elections are a crucial part of political decentralisation, all systems of representation are bound to institutions and state agencies. They are supposed to set rules and decide what issues get prioritised. Local political elections lead to authority and access to legislative and executive power.

Cohen and Petersson (1999) refers to political decentralisation as transfer of power to elected representatives. Although, they also state that the different forms of decentralisation affect each other. In reality it is often difficult to completely separate the different forms of decentralisation, as in the academic terms.

## 4.2 Dangers of decentralisation

The report conducted by the UN also presents disadvantages and difficulties with decentralisation in certain areas. These include a weak capacity in local administrations' actions which generates weak policy and efficiency. The shift in responsibility, from a national level to local level, may occur without the appropriate financial support and resources which hinders implementation even further. This means that the local authorities need the support and funding of local elites to implement new policies, which affects transparency in political decisions. This may colour the political climate and generate mistrust among local citizens. The enforcement of policies on a local scale can be more expensive than on national scale and this can generate conflicts between actors. These requirements are what a local government needs to successfully implement decentralised management according to the UN (FAO, 2002).

This paper will use these criteria of implementation of decentralisation and the requirements to succeed. As mentioned above there are both advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation and this paper will focus on six criteria presented below.

These criteria are:

1. **Financial foundation:** This entails to investigate the economic situation within decentralisation and marine management. If there are different perceptions of the financial effect among different agencies, and if the financial foundation has a positive or negative influence on the development.
2. **Influence and Power:** This entails to investigate who has the power and mandate to influence political decisions. If it is local government, national government or local elites.
3. **Marine responsibility:** This entails to investigate the perception of accountability of marine resources. If agencies have the same perception of who is accountable.
4. **Law enforcement:** This entails to investigate if laws are being enforced once formed or if they fall apart for different reasons.
5. **Capacity:** This entails to investigate if agencies have the right capacity to enforce reforms, and if not, why?
6. **Cooperation:** This entails to investigate how and if different agencies and companies are working together to achieve similar goals.



## 5. Research Design and Method

### 5.1 Research design and case

How to manage marine resources sustainably is a worldwide issue and discussion. There are examples of different management methods in small-scale villages as in worldwide international organisations such as the UN. Since decentralisation has become a more popular way to manage within countries I wanted to further investigate decentralisations' effect in marine management.

In order to do so, I chose the case of the Philippines. The Philippines decentralised in 1991. Having been decentralized for 27 years the country is still fairly new to the management concept yet experienced enough for the effects of decentralization to have had a visible impact.

The Philippines is also an archipelago country with over 7000 islands and 36000 kilometres of coastline. Coastal marine management in an archipelago is in this case challenging. The Philippines' economy is developing which makes the country vulnerable to the dangers of decentralisation presented in previous literature.

Cebu is an island located within the Visaya area in the Philippine archipelago. The island has a long coastline with many different municipalities governing over the coastal zones. At least three of these municipalities have unique dive spots including whale sharks, thresher sharks, and sardines. To keep these animals to come back and maintain a steady stream of tourists, it is in these municipalities interest to keep the ocean environment healthy.

To further clarify the case and the study a literature review was made based on previous research, reports, and articles about decentralisation, marine management, and the Philippines. These were written mostly by established researchers within the field or by governmental agencies such as UN. The literature was mainly selected through Google Scholar to ensure scientific significance. The research question was formed to fill the gap between previous research on decentralization and research on marine management, to investigate how the two affect each other. To answer the research question, I conducted a theory testing qualitative empirical case study (Esaiaasson et al., 2017).

## 5.2 Choice of data

The primary data was collected through interviews to obtain greater knowledge about the subject. The interviews allowed flexibility for follow up questions and discussions rather than if data was collected using surveys. Surveys would have been a better option for a quantitative study, with strict questions and answers, but for a qualitative study I chose to interview key actors related to the research question. Also, to avoid misunderstanding in communication, interviews seemed essential.

To obtain a realistic picture of the current situation it was important to interview different actors in society with different perspectives on marine management. Therefore, a selection of relevant agencies, NGOs and companies were chosen. To ensure validity in answering the research question, the triangulation method was used through gathering knowledge first by previous reports and research and by developing the interview questions as knowledge got greater. Furthermore, by interviewing different actors with different association to the issue (Carter et al., 2014).

## 5.3 How the data was gathered

The interviews were conducted on Cebu Island in the Philippines over 10 days. To gather a wide selection of interviewees I contacted officials working for the government, organisations working alongside the government and companies affected by the marine environment. Some were contacted via email in advance but appointments for interviews were made on-site. For detailed information about the interview guide, the interviews and the interviewees see Appendix 1 and 2.

Restricted by time schedule a selection of 11 interviews were made, nine of them conducted “face-to-face” on the Cebu Island and two were replied to over email due to the different location. The “face-to-face” interviews were all recorded on my cell phone while I was writing down short notes. This allowed me to focus and listen to the answers and come up with follow up questions.

The interviewees were informed of the general purpose of the study for context of what the interview questions were about and the themes of the interview guide. The same interview guide was used across all the interviews. Although each question was not strictly asked nor in that specific order. The themes were used with a small variation of questions. This is

according to Bryman's (2016) description of semi-structured interviews, which gives a flexibility of the outlining of the interview.

#### 5.4 Presentation of interviewees

In order to gather a wide perspective on the empirical findings of this study, a wide selection of interviewees was made:

Alan T. White has a PhD in geography and a long history of working with development of governmental policies, and the effect on marine management and marine stocks in South East Asia and the Philippines.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) are both national departments with subnational departments in Cebu. They primarily work with sustainable use of resources and sustainable management.

The Vice Mayor in Moalboal is relevant to this study because she is working with a local government in a coastal community much exposed to tourism. She has expertise in implementing national government reforms and cooperating and working with companies and NGOs within the area.

Marine Conservation Philippines (MCP), Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation (CCEF), and "People and the Sea" are NGOs working to achieve healthy ocean environment and educating local residence in the importance of sustainable oceans and resource use. They have an international approach with foreign workers and funding from foreign donors. They are important to this study because they can set their own framework and have different capacity and mandate to work comparing to national government agencies. NGOs may have more intel from other similar cases and countries. Although, compared to a business, NGOs are known to set boundaries that local government find restricting rather than rewarding for the community.

Evolution is a private dive company working with tourism. They depend on healthy oceans to maintain a steady stream of tourism and revenue coming in from diving. They maintain the ocean to maintain their business. They are relevant to this study because they can set their own goals on sustainable oceans and while the business generates revenue for the community they will get support from the local government.

### 5.5 How the data were analysed

After all the interviews were conducted, the collected data was analysed. The collected data was juxtaposed to previous literature in terms of categories that had been highlighted in previous research (FAO, 2002). These were the financial foundation, influence and power, marine responsibility, law enforcement, capacity and cooperation (see Table 2 below). In comparison to these categories that had been discussed in previous research, my interview guide focused on empirical findings on these categories in my case study. Furthermore, as a final question, all interviewees were asked about their opinion on decentralisations’ advantages and disadvantages when managing marine resources to measure whether or not they were positive or negative to the current situation.

	<i>Theoretical findings</i>	<i>Empirical findings</i>
1. <i>Financial foundation</i>		
2. <i>Influence &amp; Power</i>		
3. <i>Marine responsibility</i>		
4. <i>Law enforcement</i>		
5. <i>Capacity</i>		
6. <i>Cooperation</i>		

Table 1: Theoretical findings juxtaposed to empirical findings. Source: Compiled by the author.

In comparison to validity and reliability, this qualitative study is being measured by its trustworthiness according to Bryman (2016). To ensure the credibility and transferability in the study the interviews were conducted close to the actual issue in question by primary actors related to the issue. To ensure dependability, most of the interviews were made “face-to-face” to ensure spontaneous reactions and answers to the interview questions. All interviewees are related to the issue in questions and have different motives to care about the management of marine resources which ensures confirmability in the study. All interviewees are being presented by title and company and this increases trustworthiness in the empirical findings.

## 5.6 Academic relevance and policy relevance

As discussed in the theoretical framework there is a conceptual confusion within the concept of decentralisation. To further increase the academic relevance to the subject, this thesis entails to increase the knowledge of practical decentralisation within state sectors to easier evaluate the difference in outcome. This increases the academic knowledge of the phenomenon in itself and can be a piece to a larger study of countries implementation of decentralisation.

The policy relevance in the subject is to promote development in the country and the chosen case. By interviewing and gathering empirical evidence of current situation we can try to understand the development and what parts of the development that are being mis communicated or failed.

## 5.7 Criticism

The extent of this study is limited to one region in the Philippines and does not include other countries with other prerequisites like political structure or environmental climate. Focus on this study is the implementation and criteria for decentralisation and its effect on marine management. It is therefore not applicable on other forms of management and resources.

Other factors that may contribute to the country's status today, like democracy, corruption or gross domestic product (GDP) have not been analysed.

The study is applicable on other countries with similar economic development and environmental climate and can contribute as a piece in a broader investigation. For a broader more general investigation a method of quantitative study including more countries and investigations over a longer amount of time would be preferable.

Possible disadvantages with the interviews are that the interviewees may not answer in a non-objective matter but rather answer for their own personal gain. This would potentially affect the answer to the research question. Two of the interviews were conducted over email which gave the interviewees time to reflect over the question before answering.

## 6. Empirical results and Analysis

The figure (Figure 1) below shows the interviewees on a national level. This is to gain a clearer overview of the interviewees’ connection to the issue in question. For a presentation of each interviewee see Appendix 1 – Detailed information of interviewees.

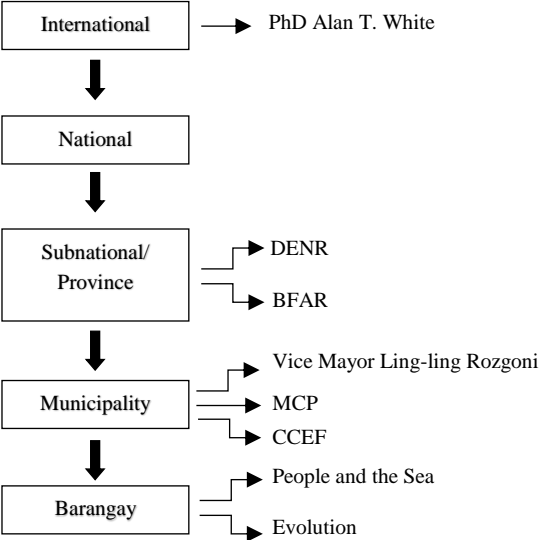


Figure 1: Interviewees on a national level. Source: Compiled by the author.

### 6.1 Financial Foundation

Vice Mayor Rozgoni explains that the national government wants municipalities to build and develop tourism to generate revenue, but she is concerned about their capacity to handle more tourism and its impact on the environment. She clarifies that they don’t yet have proper waste or water management to handle more tourists. Furthermore, diving tourism is damaging the coral reefs. Her solution to the problem is to increase the business rates to increase revenue, rather than increasing the number of tourists.

In order to lower the amount of fishing in the area, Rozgoni explains that within the municipality there is an established Fisherman association which creates revenue through a marine fee that divers pay. Of this collected money, 40 percent goes directly to the fisherman, 40 percent to the municipality, and 20 percent to the national government.

The local governments need NGOs like People and the Sea to do technical surveys and provide them with data, although, the local government do not fund the NGOs with any money and this is partly because the local governments have economic problems themselves.

One of the owners at the Evolution Dive Resort started a privately funded foundation collecting diver fees to effectively protect one popular area where divers can see Thresher Sharks. They used the collected fees to pay the Bantay Dagat<sup>2</sup> to patrol the area from illegal fishing day and night, and to install buoys to avoid anchoring damaging the reef. The local government heard of the fund and wanted to be in charge, but because of mistrust to the government and the political system, the dive resort decided to dissolve the fund.

As stated in previous literature the financial foundations seem to be crucial for adapting to decentralisation and to succeed. The empirical result agrees that the local government does not have the financial capacity needed for successful management of marine resources. This may be due to various reasons. The country is developing, and one theory is that money is disappearing into corruption, but this has not been clarified in this thesis. Another theory is that the local government is prioritising other issues and are spending budget on developing infrastructure and creating work for a long-term decline in poverty.

## 6.2 Influence and political power

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) work with food security and thereby protection of species, habitats, and ecosystems. They provide the municipalities with guidelines for conservation and protection of fish habitats, but they can only recommend the local government how to manage the resources, the political decisions lay with the municipality.

According to BFAR, it can be hard to implement policies or guidelines in some areas due to political colour. The Mayor in some municipalities might be voted in for other reasons than marine and environmental engagement. The priority for marine management could be low or non-existing. This can be a problem due to decentralisation, claims the interviewee.

*“It is hard to implement projects due to decentralisation, because of the political colour in municipalities” BFAR (Personal communication, 19 Nov 2018)*

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<sup>2</sup> Local coast guard that patrols municipal waters up to 15 km offshore (Philippine Navy, 2002)

According to Rozgoni, the Mayor who is in charge in a municipality at the time decides which political questions should be addressed and prioritised. The Mayor who was in charge in 2009 decided that no more dive shops were allowed along the coast due to heavy impact on the reefs with growing tourism. At that time there were 11 dive shops. Today that legislation has been repealed by another Mayor and there are currently 50 dive shops active along the municipality's coast.

Even though NGOs like People and the Sea provide the local government with technical data about the health of the ocean and resources and what needs to be protected, they can only consult and recommend the local government what to do. They don't have actual power to influence political decisions.

In terms of influencing the political situation, Evolution explains that the local Mayor listens to the dive resorts because they bring revenue to the municipality, often through foreign businesses and tourism. Still, it's the local population who votes in the elections. This creates a problem in marine management when the dive resorts want to protect the reefs and fish to maintain the diving industry, so does the Mayor because he/she knows the diving industry generates revenue. But this also means the local fisherman who have been fishing for generations lose their livelihood, so they will not vote for that candidate.

The political decisions lay with the Mayor in the local government and according to both regional agencies Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and BFAR and the local NGOs they can only recommend how to manage marine resources. The management depends on the political colour of the candidate and what issues that candidate decides to address. The candidate needs both votes from local population and money, often profits from tourism industry like diving. The diving industry wants to protect the ocean and establish MPAs to maintain healthy and biodiverse waters. The local voters however, depend on fishing and are against fishing regulations and MPA development. This is a challenge for the local government to handle.

### 6.3 Marine Responsibilities

The DENR are working together with NGOs and people organisations in different regions. Many NGOs are international and internationally funded and can contribute with science,



technical data and advice in management methods. But the main responsibility and management of coastal resources remain with the municipality.

The benefits, according to BFAR, of delegating responsibilities to local governments are that they have better access to certain areas and can control them better. But the main responsibility falls back on BFAR if management is unsuccessful. Though, the interviewee claims that management from the national government would be even harder due to the many islands and different languages and cultures.

People and the Sea explain that there are a lot of MPAs on paper within the municipalities, but they are not being actively protected or managed, and are therefore not successful nor contributing to sustainable marine management. According to People and the Sea, successful and sustainable marine management will only be prioritised if the local Mayor is passionate and cares about a healthy ocean.

Evolution gives one example they think is successful and sustainable marine management, this is the Tubbataha National Park. It is the Philippines largest MPA and it is controlled by the national government. According to Evolution it is more successful and sustainable managed than locally managed MPAs, due to the national military patrolling the area for illegal fishing. The National Park is only open for tourism during three months each year and the number of tourists is being controlled. The local population gets compensation to start other businesses than fishing.

*“No reason why other parts of the Philippines can’t mirror that success with decent protection” (Personal communication Evolution, 27 Nov 2018)*

Geographically, decentralisation is considered needed due to the many islands and long coastline in the Philippines. It would be challenging for the national government to manage marine resources. Therefore, the marine responsibility lays with the local governments but once again the political climate in each municipality determines how successful and sustainable marine management is. One interview mentions Tubbataha national park as an example of successful and sustainable marine management, but that park is managed by national government and protected by the national military as clarified in previous literature by Dygico et al. (2013).

## 6.4 Law enforcement

Coastal Conservation & Education Foundation (CCEF) explains that decentralisation takes time to implement both on a national scale and within the municipalities. It takes time to get permits approved for projects or MPA establishment. There is also a lack in monitoring the implementation of budgets regarding environmental management and conservation.

According to Rozgoni the DENR started a “Clean Water Act” in 2004 but it was never properly implemented, and the DENR never monitored the municipalities’ implementation of the Act.

One issue according to Evolution is that the country has too extensive legislation. They say they have legislation against everything but no capacity to follow up on this legislation and serve the right penalties to those who break them. Therefore, the people do not respect the legislation because it is too extensive, and they know nothing will happen if they break them. One example is the penalty for illegal fishing, it is either jail, or over 1 million pesos (approximately 19,000 USD) which is more than a local fisherman would make in a lifetime. These sentences are designed for illegal commercial fishing and are impossible to apply in reality to a local fisherman.

Furthermore, the communities are often small, so it could happen that the Bantay Dagat know the local fisherman either as relative, neighbour or friend, so the Bantay Dagat let them go with a warning. Evolution says that law enforcement lacks transparency and that the government should design legislation that are applicable to the local fishermen, to handle small-scale illegal fishing.

The legislation in the Philippines are considered to be too extensive so it loses respect. Because of the numbers of laws, it is impossible for police to sentence people that break them. The penalties for illegal fishing is designed for commercial fishing and is thereby too high for illegal fishing on a local scale. The implementation of legislation and the control by national authorities is badly monitored which also entails mistrust to the legal system.

## 6.5 Capacity

According to DENR, one of the management issues in the Philippines is the number of islands and the long coastline. This means many different municipalities are responsible for the waters along the coasts. For successful and sustainable marine management, the

municipalities need to have the knowledge and capacity to manage which, according to the interviewee, is lacking.

*“When you decentralise the power and the site (municipality) is not ready for it, it will not work. Many MPAs don’t have equipped managers so the program will fail” (Personal communication DENR, 19 Nov 2018)*

The DENR suggest that implementation of decentralisation should be “phase by phase” to ensure that the local governments have the right capacity to implement programs. Outside of municipal waters, there is a problem of commercial fishing using illegal fishing methods, which affects the coasts, but it is not the municipalities’ responsibility to handle.

According to the BFAR, the regions have different cultures that entails different laws and restrictions, and the different languages makes communication hard.

People and the Sea explain that through the Fisheries Code, that was conducted when the country decentralised, 10 percent of municipal waters should progress to protected areas or MPAs. This process has been very slow and there is still much work left to fulfil this goal. As stated in previous literature the estimation made by Weeks et al. (2009) the Philippines will reach their goal by 2074.

Evolution says that it is hard to implement reforms in the long-term because of the mind-set of the local people. The local population have short-term thinking because they get salary payed each day and does not have savings. When it comes to fishing Evolution explains that they fish and collect whatever they can find to feed their family or sell for money to buy other groceries.

*“The fisherfolks mindset is ‘I’m not going to take as much as I need. I’m going to take as much as I can. Because if I don’t take it, he’s going to take it’” (Personal communication Evolution, 27 Nov 2018)*

One interviewee states that decentralisation is successful for long-term marine resource management, while others state that the Philippines still have short-term thinking. This creates impediments for capacity to further implement reforms of decentralisation. The empirical result shows that the interviewees all agree on implementation being poor and the DENR mentions that decentralisation should have been “phased in” step by step to ensure the local governments capacity to achieve successful and sustainable marine management.

## 6.6 Cooperation

The DENR forms programs for marine resource management that they delegate to municipalities. Mainly these programs contain guidelines on how to protect certain species and/or habitats. The Barangays<sup>3</sup> within the municipalities in the Philippines each have control over municipal waters and have MPAs within the Barangay. The DENR are focusing on connecting different MPAs creating networks between Barangays and municipalities. There are mainly two reasons for this, firstly:

*“The resource (fish) doesn’t respect political boundaries, that’s why you need to have networks”. (Personal communication DENR, 19 Nov 2018)*

According to the DENR, a network of MPAs creates a larger protected area in which the resource (fish) is better protected than if there are many small MPAs along the coast. The second reason is economic. To control that, the MPAs are being protected and respected by the local population, the Philippines have the Bantay Dagat that is community-based. They patrol the areas to protect the MPAs from illegal activity. According to the interviewee, the cost to pay the Bantay Dagat would decrease by 16 percent if the barangays cooperated in transboundary networks of MPAs. The DENR is working towards enlarging the MPAs and making the existing ones better managed. To do so, networks is the best way.

CCEF explains that it is hard to get local support for MPA building because generating a protected area often means losing revenue and livelihood for local fishermen. The cooperation between local government and NGOs is hard.

*“What the local government think of the NGO is that they’re finding problems, so they can earn money from it” (Personal communication CCEF, 28 Nov 2018)*

One issue the CCEF is struggling with is working with long-term projects with municipalities, since the mandate period for a Mayor is only three years. Elections and new administrations can disrupt projects implemented within the area; if the new Mayor is not interested in the project it will not be approved and the project will fall apart with the new administration.

*“There will be a tendency that the project won’t continue due to change in administration. That is one of the greatest challenges in terms of politics” (Personal communication CCEF, 28 Nov 2018)*

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<sup>3</sup> The smallest district, a village or a neighbourhood within the municipality (Oxford Dictionary, 2019)

CCEF explains that both national and local governments need to have better communication and cooperation. Both bottom up and top down projects need to meet halfway in order to have an impact and become effective.

Every municipality has their own jurisdiction so there is no cooperation between municipalities, Rozgoni explains. Each municipality has their own way of work and priorities. Another thing that may impede the possibility to cooperate, is the different levels of income and development within different municipalities. Due to tourism one municipality may have a much greater income than the municipality next to it. This is affecting the problems and priorities in each municipality and prevents them from cooperating.

*“The income is different. There are municipalities with better income and tourism” (Personal communication Rozgoni, 25 Nov 2018)*

Marine Conservation Philippines (MCP) works alongside national and provincial government. They provide technical knowledge to the legislators, so that they have the capacity and knowledge to make appropriate political decisions. MCP directly engages in the creation of management teams and plans. The interviewee says working with MPAs is different in every municipality. MPAs are mostly being managed by only one stakeholder instead of being distributed between governments and communities. In one area that MCP is active, MPAs are managed by the local government and they are ineffective due to land rights and conflicts. In another area, the MPAs are managed by organisations with little support from local government. In both cases, they lack funding, capacity, and resources to maintain management in the long term.

*“When the purpose of the MPA is well communicated and the groups are engaged in management and the benefits are well distributed, community support for MPA's and effective management is achievable” (Personal communication MCP, 28 Nov 2018)*

People and the Sea explain that the NGO is providing the local government with technical support. Their work is to survey the water's health and address the data to the local government. It's then up to the local government to decide whether they want to establish an MPA or not. The local government lacks the technical capacity to collect this kind of data by themselves and are therefore dependent on NGOs to do this for them.

People and the Sea is cooperating with the local government, but the processing documents is time-consuming, the offices are far apart and neither has good internet connections, so the cooperation is inefficient.

*“Processing of documents, even if there are open collaborations between agencies, sometimes it just takes months to get something approved” (Personal communication People and the Sea, 27 Nov 2018)*

One definitive flaw in management is cooperation. Though all interviewees agreed on lack in the economy, capacity, law enforcement, and implementation, they do not agree on the terms for cooperation. While the regional agencies DENR and BFAR and NGOs working for cooperation within and between municipalities, the Vice Mayor in one municipality clarifies that municipalities do not work together due to different levels of economic development, different political climate and issues prioritised and because of difference in legal jurisdiction. This is an issue that needs to be further investigated.

## 6.7 Advantages and disadvantages of decentralised marine management

The Philippines only has two seasons, explains BFAR, one warm and one rainy. Neither of these are low season nor a time when fishing declines. This means that fish and other marine resources are being exploited all year round and tourist activity such as diving, is being active all year round.

*“When it’s wet we can still fish, so our resources are exploited all year round” (Personal communication BFAR, 19 Nov 2018)*

Furthermore, the BFAR problematises the fact that the Philippines is included in a region with the world’s richest marine biodiversity. This means there is a high pressure on fisheries and a global interest in both exploiting and conserving. This contributes to the challenge of marine management.

*“Access to these resources are very easy. Question is if it’s a blessing or a burden?” (Personal communication BFAR, 19 Nov 2018)*

White claims that decentralisation is successful for long-term marine resource management, conservation, and development. The national government provides legal context through DENR and BFAR, but the process forward remains with the local governments. The

opportunities are great with the municipalities mandate to manage resources 15 km offshore, although the capacity at local level varies and the implementation of marine management is uneven between local governments. White states that input from outside projects with capacity and knowledge is needed due to the national governments lack in capacity. The municipalities often have a budget for locally managed marine resources, but they sometimes need guidance how to allocate the budget.

In People and the Seas opinion, the local government is still more effective than the national government. The focus on economic value is bigger than healthy marine resources, so land-based resources with higher economic value tend to be prioritised.

*“We can do all these good things, but if we don’t have the support of local people it’s not going to matter” (Personal communication People and the Sea, 27 Nov 2018)*

Though the Philippines might be a developing country is not as slow moving as people think, according to People and the Sea. The Philippines are working to develop the country and they have good ideas but developing infrastructure and getting access to the money needed takes time.

People and the Sea think that decentralisation is good. The Philippine people should be in power since everything is theirs. The NGOs are only there to help and support, but the main initiative must come from the local population themselves.

*“The local government is doing its best to function but because of the economic situation sometimes environment get compromised and people prefer money over the environment” (Personal communication CCEF, 28 Nov 2018)*

Evolution thinks that the decentralisation reform was good in theory, but the implementation has been bad, and the local government is ineffective and unorganised. They also mean that the barangay or municipality has bigger problems they need to focus on than marine management. They are prioritising poverty and infrastructure which is necessary and important. They mean that the local government does not have the capacity nor the time to develop more sustainable marine management at the time being.

*“On paper it’s great, but implementation and getting it to function properly in reality would just take so long” (Personal communication Evolution, 27 Nov 2018)*

	<i>Theoretical findings</i>	<i>Empirical findings</i>
1. <i>Financial foundation</i>	Local government need financial support to implement reforms	The local government do not yet have financial capacity
2. <i>Influence &amp; Power</i>	Local government need mandate to manage	The decisions lay with the municipality, but it is coloured by the political climate
3. <i>Marine responsibility</i>	Shift in responsibility without support hampers implementation	Geographically and due to the many islands, the coast municipality is responsible but marine management tends to not be prioritised
4. <i>Law enforcement</i>	Enforcement on local scale can generate conflicts between local actors	There are too many laws and the penalties are too high to sentence anyone who is doing wrong
5. <i>Capacity</i>	Weak capacity generates ineffective policy change	The decentralisation needs to be “phased in” step by step to ensure that the local government have capacity to manage
6. <i>Cooperation</i>	Local government need support from national government and NGOs	The BFAR and DENR works for cooperation and networks of MPAs, but the local government do not cooperate due to different political priorities and jurisdictions

Table 2: Summary of theoretical findings juxtaposed to empirical findings. Source: Compiled by the author.



## 6.8 Summary

The empirical results show that managing marine resources is a challenge due to various reasons. As stated in previous literature and as the empirical result show, the financial foundations seem to be crucial for implementing decentralisation successfully. Without the financial foundation there is weak capacity in implementing reforms and new legislation.

The municipalities have political mandate to execute successful and sustainable marine management reforms, but because of political colour this issue is not guaranteed to get prioritised.

The regional agencies and the NGOs are working for cooperation between municipalities to create successful and sustainable networks of MPAs, although the municipalities do not cooperate because of difference in economic level, political colour, and legislation.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to increase the knowledge of how decentralisation affects marine management and investigate whether it could create a framework for successful and sustainable marine resource management.

In order for decentralisation to create a framework for successful and sustainable marine management some criteria need to be fulfilled. One main determinant of success is that each municipality need to have financial capacity to prioritise and execute marine management goals. The national government needs to set clear guidelines for the municipalities to follow and monitor the development in each one.

The empirical result shows that the local governments have political mandate to establish MPAs, but they lack the financial capacity to effectively execute new reforms.

Due to poor economic development in the Philippines, other sectors such as infrastructure are being prioritised over marine management by local governments. To create consistent and effective MPA development, as well as successful and sustainable marine management the national government's resources and capacity is needed at this state.

The impediments presented in the analysis may not all be related to ineffectiveness of decentralisation. There may be other factors contributing to the issue of marine management, such as weak state capacity. This is an issue that further research could investigate.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – Detailed information of interviewees

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Stakeholder</b>	The Nature Conservancy	Department of Environment and Natural Resources	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	Moalboal Municipality	Marine Conservation Philippines	Coastal Conservation & Education Foundation	People and the Sea	Evolution
<b>Informant title</b>	PhD Geography	1. Regional Focal Person Cebu 2. Coastal Extension Officer	Fisheries Resource Management	Vice Mayor	Project Officer & Fundraiser	Marketing & Resource Generation Officer	1. Site Manager 2. Project Manager 3. Field Scientist	General Manager
<b>Date</b>	22-11-18	19-11-18	19-11-18	25-11-18	28-11-18	28-11-18	26/27-11-18	27-11-18
<b>Course of action</b>	Mail	Face to Face	Face to Face	Face to Face	Mail	Face to Face	Face to Face	Face to Face
<b>Duration of interview</b>		30 min	40 min	50 min		40 min	1 hour	40 min
<b>Recorded</b>		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Pre-sent questions</b>	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Transcribed</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

**Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)** is a national department in the Philippines with subnational department in the regions such as Cebu province. They are primary responsible for conservation and sustainable use of the country’s natural resources. The two interviewees are the Regional Focal Person and Coastal Extension Officer.

**Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR)** is a national agency with subnational departments in different regions. They are primary responsible for sustainable management, development and conservation of the country’s fisheries and aquatic resources. The interviewee is the Fisheries Resource Manager.

**Alan T. White** has a PhD in geography and joined the Nature Conservancy in 2006 working within the global marine initiative with focus on marine protected areas (MPAs). White has worked in 30 years with coastal resource management and MPA research in the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia. He is one of the founding members of Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation based in Cebu City, Philippines

(<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/marine-fellows/fellows-directory/2001/alan-t--white>).

**Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation (CCEF)** works to create sustainable coasts and involved communities. For better marine management they promote MPAs and localised law enforcement and provide education for environmental management. The interviewee is the Marketing and Resource Generation Officer.

**Vice Mayor Ling-ling Rozgoni** in municipality Moalboal, Cebu island, works as head of the municipalities eight councils. The Mayor (chef executive) and vice Mayor work separate with different assignments.

**Marine Conservation Philippines (MCP)** works with collecting data on locally managed MPAs to understand the effectiveness of fisheries. They then analyse and report the data to MPA stakeholders such as community organisations, local government and/or provincial government, and apply the data to different management plans. The interviewee is the Project Officer and Fundraiser.

**People and the Sea** is a community-based organisation promoting marine resource management to increase local awareness and resilience of marine conservation. They engage the community in innovative ways to protect the marine environment while having a positive economic impact. The interviewees are the Site Manager, Project Manager and Field Scientist.

**Evolution** is a dive resort who focusing on good diving training to minimise damage on reefs and awareness for the environment. They are one of the world's most environmentally friendly dive resorts being a Top Ten member of Green Fins (Explain\*\*). They go by the principles of “reduce, recycle and reuse”. The interviewee is the General Manager.

## Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

- What does decentralisation in the Cebu island entail?

### *MPA*

- Are you aware of the marine protection goals for the Philippines and Cebu island?
- Are marine reserves in the form of MPAs or do marine reserves take other form?
- Are the marine reserves today functioning and protected?
- Is your agency/organisation involved in expanding marine reserves, both in numbers and in size?

### *Financial foundation*

- Do you get funding for your work on marine protection and if so, from where?
- How do you divide your budget within your work on marine protection? What are your priorities?

### *Power*

- Do you have a mandate to influence political decisions within the area of marine protection?

### *Responsibility*

- Do you have given responsibilities from the national government?
- What are they?
- How do you fulfil them?

### *Law enforcement*

- Can you tell me about the laws around marine protection?
- Are they being respected?
- Who controls them and what happens if someone fails to respect them?

### *Capacity*

- Do you feel like you have the capacity to fulfil your mission, both with financial resources available and competence? If not, what's missing?

### *Cooperation*

- Are you cooperating with other authorities, companies and/or organisations involved in marine management?
- How does it work? Do you have different roles and responsibilities?
- Have you experienced any conflicts during your cooperation?

### *In your experience...*

- Do you think the power is decentralised?
- Do you think decentralisation is helping marine management? Why?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of decentralisation?
- Would you like to add something?