

## **In between the Ideas of Empowerment and Capacity Building: Focused on a case of rainy season in urban slum, North Jakarta**

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**Abstract** In recent years, empowerment and capacity building have become one of the most ubiquitous phrases in sustainable development. The two notions, however, are not always in accord with each other. This paper analyzes the case of a *kampung* in North Jakarta which suffers from the shortage of clean water and the repetition of flood. By focusing on policy reactions during rainy season, I aim to show a ‘partial’ solution of the social problem result to a conflict between the two ideas, capacity building and empowerment.

**Keywords** Flooding.Gift.Free Aid.Empowerment.Capacity Building

### **“Partial” Solutions and Lab-village**

The expansion of Jakarta from the 1980s has witnessed a dramatic change of the built environment and extraordinary growth in population. And the number of recorded floods in Jakarta fluctuates but nowadays almost every heavy shower causes some flooding in Jakarta (Rita Padawangi and Mike Douglass 2015). Settlements in Jakarta that are prone to evictions

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are typically high-density *kampung*<sup>1</sup> (urban slum) with poor infrastructure services, which adds to the precarious living conditions.

This paper focuses on partial solutions of water problems especially flooding in the P village which is located in northern Jakarta. North Jakarta is well known to most of citizens of DKI Jakarta for its annual flood in the rainy seasons. In the village P, several experimental policies for solving water-related issues has been enacted for twenty years. This study is to show two modes of water-problem solutions: stake-holders empowerment and participation<sup>2</sup> /capacity building<sup>3</sup> (Cornwall & Brock 2005; Eade 1997; Li 1999). Although the ideas of empowerment and capacity building are closely related, the meanings of them are not the same each other. Without doubt, urban slum dwellers' participation is important to find out information on local government practices in helping them to survive the annual flood disaster. What I try to show, however, is that two distinctive way of dealing the problem of flood are overlapped and in conflict in rainy season. The two ideas which seem to be accord with during the dry season come into collision because each of them is based on 'partial solution' of the problem (cf. Strathern 2014).

Village P is the one of the *kampungs* with two serious water problems: the shortage of clean water and annually repeating flood. The community water management projects in the village P in North Jakarta have aimed to connect the poor to the urban water distribution network in the recent decades, but have invariably resulted in various kinds of failures (cf. Bakker & Kooy 2008; Bakker, Kooy, Shofiani & Martijn 2006; Kooy 2008). Ironically, the village P, has become a good example in terms of local participation and empowerment.

Under the contexts of water privatization (1997-2017)<sup>4</sup> and heavy floods that became more frequent since 2000, the water issue of Jakarta became more heavily concerned. One of the villages of northern Jakarta was designated as the place for new projects for solving related issues. The projects included: the expansion of water supply system, the Master meter project, the construction of "water kiosk", the application of low rate for water-usage to poor villages; the foundation of "waste-bank (*Bank sampah*)" for the purpose of removing wastes that clog

<sup>1</sup> In this study, *Kampung* means a urban slum area in Indonesia. But the term of *Kampung* has much longer history of its own. The word, *kampong*, existed before large scaled- migration started in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and the new phenomenon of urbanization was combined with the older word of *kampung*. First, when it is connected to the rapid speed of urbanization process in Jakarta compared to the city's infrastructures, *Kampung* means the poor physical condition of urban poor. Second, the older notion of *kampung* initially indicated its spatial and functional proximity to the Court as a source of power.

<sup>2</sup> The term of empowerment is a point of dispute Mayoux and Johnson (2007) ask following questions. "is it about increasing voice and capacities (invited participation or participation as a means or power within)' or 'is to confront and transform power relations which maintain the status quo and disadvantages some groups'; or is it a combination of the two? What form, therefore, should empowerment take and what is the aim of empowerment?" (cited in Morgan 2016:175)

<sup>3</sup> Capacity building or capacity development has been defined in a number of ways. One definition is the "process whereby individuals, groups, and organisations enhance their abilities to mobilize and use resources in order to achieve their objectives on a sustainable basis. Efforts to strengthen abilities of individuals, groups, and organisations can comprise a combination of (i) human skills development; (ii) changes in organisations and networks; and (iii) changes in governance/institutional context." ADB 2004 cited in DFID (2008).

<sup>4</sup> In 2017, An Indonesian Supreme Court ruling ordered Jakarta to end water privatization program. East Asia Pacific, "Massive Water Privatization Program to end in Jakarta After 18 year" <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/massive-water-privatization-program-end-jakarta-after-18-years>



the sewer; the supply of relief items during the flood-period; the distribution of disinfectant after floods, etc. What should be pointed out here is that all of these projects offer “partial” solutions in the sense that these are not related with the fundamental solutions such as the connection of water supply to respective households in village P or the construction of infrastructure that exterminate flood-related problems.<sup>5</sup>

Each project or policy is inevitably partial because no perfect solution can be carried out at once. Many reasons like the shortage of a budget, the prevention of preferential treatment for the poor, the principle of self-help make the solutions partial.<sup>6</sup> It is impossible to build new city sewage system at once, and the government of DKI Jakarta cannot move all urban slum dwellers to new site which is free from flooding. In other words, unless the project is partial, there cannot be any solution of water problem in the village P.

The existence of partial solutions in the village P leads us to ask questions of 1) why and how these are accepted as solutions and thereby enacted, and 2) until when the ‘partialness’ of these solutions are revealed and then forgotten. Within the P village, the suggested solutions collide with given problems. The partial expansion of water supply ‘intentionally’ leaves the tasks of connecting households and pipes as residents’ duty under the context in which most of them illegally reside. In the case of the Master Meter Project, the project became enacted without questioning the residents’ illegal residence. In the project of providing cleaning water and connecting residents to urbanized water network, the NGO that plays a major role regards its relief- distribution with no charge during the peak period of flood as not the best but a ‘second-best’ option because such relief make residents dependent on what they got free. By this principle of ‘suggesting self-help’, major NGOs in the village do not prepare free aid for annual flooding in advance. However, the disinfectant-distribution for the purpose of preventing water-borne diseases after flood is concerned as the NGO’s major activity. In other words, annual flooding in village P is not a water-problem unless certain aspects are conceived as problems of partial solutions.

The coupling of water problems and partial solution in the village continuously yielded new types of water (problems) although every year the village suffers from floods. Likewise the problem of the shortage of clean water are also based on partial solutions: water vendors make excessive profits within this situation. The poor are not be able to get sufficient water. After the partial expansion of water supply, water stores emerged and began to sell water for living at 8-10 times higher price than regular rate. The partial solutions of the first water problem which have not solve the problem of disconnected urbanized water network are accepted by the name of residents’ participation and empowerment. Nevertheless because residents could get water

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<sup>5</sup> Primary data in this paper is from my own fieldwork and in interviews of residents of village P and supporting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in North Jakarta. The identification of residents to be interviewed in the fieldwork started from the identification of community initiatives along the water

<sup>6</sup> The inevitable ‘partial-ness’ is also originated from complexity of the water problem. Kooy indicates that “to increase access to the city’s piped water supply network by the poor requires the recognition of the inter-relationships between infrastructure, identity, and urban space, and must acknowledge the ways in which access is made ‘more or less easy’ for differently situated residents (2008:204). The inter-relationships Kooy emphasizes is development programs led by the state, MDBs, and NGOs come to face the socio-economic and political barriers. Technical solutions such as subsidizing initial connection fees, or providing access to credit for low income households to finance initial connections fail to solve the problem.

with relatively cheaper price than before in a more convenient way, because the community-based organization with the purposes of the connection to the urban water-network (which is not available during the peak-season of floods) and of the removal of wastes (which is considered as the major cause of floods) became activated, and because the desirable residents: resident activists who take part in NGOs' activities, became '(resident)-lecturers' who propagates the successfulness of several policy-experiments outside the village, the village P became designated as a successful lab-village where the villagers are empowered and many projects are kept operating, even though there are always unexpected results(cf. Lee 2017, 2019).

## **Open Secret and Empowerment/capacity building**

Studies on policy has been revealed the facts that 1) a policy can be failed and/or lead to an unexpected result that seems collide with its original goal and that 2) a policy, despite of its failure, can be distributed to other realms as an example of success. Unexpected opposite effects and bias originated by policy are open secrets everyone knows(cf. Ferguson 1994). A number of residents in village P stated that they were already submissive to the existing conditions. Although there is a desire to move, it is not clear where they can go. Everytime the rainy season arrives, the village is always on alert for floods because continuous rain in the area will results in overflows of the river. In this situation, it is important that there must be solutions even though they are not enough or effective.

The village P, a place that had suffered from water issues for a long time, became a field for several projects led by outside forces (the state and NGOs). In this sense, the village P can be said "lab-village" or a room for policy-experiment. The term of experiment is not only figurative but also realistic. First, policy-experts like scientists enacts policies as experiments. Some might guess that the metaphor of experiment signifies that a policy which is starts from a desk of urban planner, go to the field (a village) and performs by activists and village residents. And it ends when the project is evaluated. In reality, however, various suggestions with different premises and methods coexist. Policies are attempted and failed. Failed policies sometimes are turned to successful ones. New solutions that are totally different from original ones are temporarily applied at times (Power 1999). The village is not the empty place to which policy-experiments are applied but the place in which policies (or political truths) newly emerge. Lab-village does not imply that specific policies are enacted within the stage of village but that new standards of recognizing problems as well as of designing and assessing solutions (cf Lee, Junseok 2010, 2013). Unlike the case of scientific lab, the lab-village for policy-experiment less pursue to find methods that can satisfy "well-organized" and controlled conditions. Rather, it more focuses on whether the given policy can be enacted, and whether the enactment of policy can produce outcomes. A field becomes a lab-village when new standards of measuring the effect of suggested solutions on given problems. Village P as lab-village is a good case not because water problems of clean water and annual flooding are removed but because there are residents activists who take park in so-called village works. The existence of the 'guarders' themselves becomes a token of participatory development and local empowerment, although their positions and roles are still based on the distinction between residents who participate and those who do not (Lee 2019).

## The Peak of Rainy Season and the period of clean water



**Photo 1** The annual ring of Flood

At the peak of flooding, the ideas of the participation and empowerment are challenged. The reason of the conflict is that the flooding in village P is ritualized disaster. As radical critics of typical hazard reduction approaches argue, disasters principally cannot be predicted. The flood in village P is annually repeating and ritualized. It is ritualized because everyone in the village already knows the village will be flooded. To residents in village P, 'real' disaster, not ritualized flood signifies unexpectedly serious floods. Villagers call the marks of water on the wall in the street, 'the annual ring of flood': "every year, a new line is added into the ring." It means that for residents in the village, the flood is a part of their daily life. When I ask them what their memory of flood is, they recall just a few of heavy flood. The ordinary floods are not mentioned.

Whereas the projects for clean water or for sewer-maintenance can be designed, conducted and assessed by NGOs, the one and only entity from which residents can ask for help during the flood-season is the state. The role of the state concerning water problems are not important and the state to manage the water problems is invisible in dry season. At the same time the difference in between NGO activists (community development coordinators who have worked in the village)<sup>7</sup> is not clearly conceived.

<sup>7</sup> Surjadi explain the role of Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) in Indonesia as follows. "They are expected to be able to carry out the program as local development agents, were sent to the field,

During the peak of flooding, however, another partial solution operates. First, the timing of free aid reveals the conflict between idea of participation and capacity building. At the peak of rainy season, coordinators and guarders – residents activists- are told by ordinary residents. The ordinary residents keep asking when the aid supplies will arrive. In fact, the guarders do not know either when those supplies will come. Before rainy season, the guarders work as if they are unofficial representative of ordinary residents and there was no distinctive conflict between two group. During rainy season, the distinctions of legal/illegal residents or of “model or good” residents/ordinary residents disappear. Second, people of any categories in the village P are equally offered aids (clean water, food, cloths and so on), including the right to use water-tanks and purifying machines of muddy water.

Residents talk and exchanges their experience of flood-season as an adventure story all through the year. The state, who was invisible during the period of clean water, distributes gifts for free to all residents of every category in rainy season. That is, the state as the only guardian that protects its people offers a ‘grace’ for them. Free aid supplies are different from ordinary gift which need to repay or return. They are one-directional gift from the giver (the State) to the receivers (*Kampung* dwellers).

However, from the perspective that the flood is man-made disaster, produced by the state and that the flood means the state’s failure, it can be seen that such free-aid is the state’s payment of debt to its people. The residents thank to the state for aid-supplies, but at the same time, think that they ask and get what they should receive. The moment in which the state as the guardian of people plays its role is the moment in which the state’s failure becomes clearly visible.

### **Response and Help: Flooded Water: The Suspension of Lab-village**

In rainy season, the village P is filled with the discourse of gift and the various meanings of the gift are scattered in everyday conversation. By gift, in everyday conversations, we mean something which seems to be ‘freely given.’ For example, a ‘perfect gift’ is one that is given for which the receiver bears no obligations to the giver. An anonymous donation, for example, is thought to be a better gift than a named donation because the anonymous giver does not have potentially self-interested motives. By contrast, Mauss’ *The Gift* focuses on a different model of gift giving. For Mauss, the central function of gift giving is to create social relationships. When a parent gives a child a gift, a spouse gifts a partner a gift, or a neighbor gives a neighbor a gift, it generates patterns of relationships – community, family, partnership. Gifts creates webs of obligations as receivers are obliged to accept the gift and recompense in the future (Mauss 1990).

The meaning of the aid in rainy season are a specific gift between the state/NGO and residents in the village P. Everyone in the P village knows that the flood will come because it repeats annually. However, the severity of overflow cannot be known in advance. And the

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to identify local motivators. The local motivators were organized as local NGOs, notarized, and approved by the head of the villages. These NGOs had routine meetings, by involving the community, and identifying the existing small business which could be developed and expected to absorb to be improved. (Surjadi 2000:87)

NGO named 'future-Prospect (pseudonym)' which is the village's official project-partner had no activity plan related with the peak period of flooding. *Gilum*, the chief of the NGO answered the question on whether the headquarter of NGO would offer any help related floods as follows:

"When the damage from floods become severer, aid-supplies will come. Such bad situation did not come yet. Honestly speaking, offering supplies is not the fundamental solution for problems. It also yields somewhat undesirable effects... Of course, we should help when the overflowing is too severe. However, even though one should not think that they should receive aids during floods, some people are just waiting for such help without doing anything at this period."

As *Gilum* indicates, in the peak of rainy season, residents in the village P keep asking questions to the head of NGO, coordinators, and guarders (resident activists) on when the aid will come. Ordinary villagers ask to the people on NGO, community development coordinators and guarders because they think the three of them is the same group of brokers which connect the village to the world outside. And the below is dismantlement of alliance between <NGO activists (coordinator) - Guarders (resident activists) - Ordinary residents>. From the perspective of guarders, it is the misunderstanding because resident activists do not belong to the NGO, officially.

- 1) Residents think that all of public officers-NGO activists- guarders(residents activists) are the subjects who offer relief supplies. Because activists and members of resident-organizations are seen as the people of the same category as public officers, the village residents repeatedly ask questions to these activists on the moment the relief (which always arrive lately) will come.
- 2) The workers of NGO think that the relief-givers are public officers. These activists do not think that such relief-giving behavior is desirable from a "long-term view." For them, residents' attitude towards help (i.e., their thinking that the help should be offered) should be corrected/overcome in regards of resident-autonomy and empowerment. NGO's support activity during the flood-season is limitedly activated only when the size of flooding becomes huge.
- 3) The guarders think that the aid-givers are "office-people" which include NGO workers and public officers. They are not different from "normal" residents in the sense that they have no decision-right of anything during the peak season of floods.

Likewise, the words *Respon* and *Bantuan*, all of which refers to relief-supply, shows such differences in perspective. In most situations of questioning when relief will come or why it doesn't come, the word *respon* (response) is used instead of *bantuan* (indonesian, help). When the latter is used is 1) right after the relief comes and 2) when they compare this year's relief and what is received in the past. Public officers of the resident-center, NGO activists and guarders used these two words with distinguishable implications. One example is: "It is a problem to think that *respon* is what one should receive. One would not want to do anything, expecting *bantuan*."

‘*Respon*’ refers to the aid that does not arrive or that is smaller than before. ‘*Bantuan*’ refers the relief that already came and that is offered to residents by the state (or NGOs) for free. From the village residents’ view, *respon* is what they can request for the “office-people” under the situation of repeated flooding, that is, what they should be recompensed by them. *Bantuan* means one-direction gift or grace offered by office-people (which the state represents) under the context of disaster.

(free) Gift	Aid from the state in the rainy season	
<i>Respon</i>	The state’s debt to the urban dwellers	the failure of the urban management
<i>Bantuan</i>	Only Help which is one-directional	Arrived

Within the village P where floods repeatedly visit, floods are not received as a faced problem that should be solved through experiment, and the season of over-flooding is regarded as a exceptional situation in which the lab-village is temporarily stopped. An unexpectedly-coming, huge over-flooding (which is not a regularly-coming one) brings aid-relief which is unknowable in terms of size and moment). This unpredictability produces a distinction between *response* and help(*bantuan*), and stops the function of lab-village that is regarded as one exemplar of resident-participation and empowerment. Free aid during the peak season of floods is the state’s duty. However, such aid should be offered only in exceptional situations because it is a temporary solution which does not help residents' self-saving practices and empowerment.



Photo 2 Aid: Water Tank





**Photo 3** Aid: Bottled water

Free aid in rainy season is an example of 'partial solutions' and there are three meanings of flood. First, water over-flooded in the village in general is not an object of projects in the Lab-village. Repetitive flood cannot be prevented by a village's effort or project. On this level there cannot be any solution of flood at the level of village P. Second, water after the peak of the flood is an important water problem which every villagers and activists had to deal with, because the flood which has already come is a direct cause of waterborne epidemic. Third, there is the final meaning of flood in the future. The flood in the future might be prevented by villagers participation and empowerment even though nobody knows how and when it will come true.

### **Distribution of Disinfectant: Disappeared Floods and Lab-village Resumed**

After the floods, the lab-village once stopped restarts through the distribution of disinfectant. This distribution can be said as another 'ritual', a threshold between the flood-season and the period of clean water because the principle of free giving is distinctively substituted by the principle of 'conditional giving.'

Free aid in the peak of flood is basically state's activity, but on the other hand, distribution of disinfectant is a NGO's activity. The community development coordinator of 'future-Prospect' explains that this "disinfectant-distribution is what we have been doing annually." Whereas overflowed water means the suspension of experiment, passed floods means the resume of the Lab-village. The event of distributing disinfectant exemplify clear difference between the



**Photo 4** Distribution of Disinfectant



free gift (grace) and conditional giving. It shows that idea of empowerment sometimes results to the differentiation of residents: active residents who work as if they are civil servants / ordinary residents who do not participate in the community activities. As the discord are visible when ordinary residents keep asking when *respon* will come, the ritual of distribution of disinfectant reveals that these two groups of residents are not the same.

The place on which the most visible conflict appeared in the process of disinfectant-distribution was *Rumah Susun* (hereafter *Rusun*), the city-managed apartment complex for the poor. *Rusun*, located beside the village P, is a residential area to which many households from the poorest living-circumstances moved one year ago from the period of research. A huge water-tank was constructed under each building of *Rusun*. Tap water pipe was connected to respective households as well. However, the problem was that this area was one of the severest flooded one and thus became isolated during the peak season of floods. When the day of disinfectant-distribution, the water was up to our shin at the entrance to *Rusun*, whereas over-flooding water in most parts of the village disappeared. The Indonesian navy forces were still staying there for dealing with flood-damages. The distribution was carried out in the parking area of the apartment-complex. The process of distribution was not easy. Compared with other parts of the village, three to four times of amount of disinfectant should have been distributed. Conflicts around the principle of “one (disinfectant)” for one household with child continuously arose. This process was clearly different from the process of relief - distribution in which every resident with no specific procedure received offered stuffs. In other words, the event of ‘distribution of disinfectant’ at the end of rainy season is clearly different from the event of distributing free aid supplies at the peak of flooding. In front of a long-queue of residents, activists examine their list of residents for distinguish “real” residents. The main principle of distribution is “to offer one disinfectant to one household that has a child.” In this context, it was easy to see conflicts in which conversations like the following example were exchanged:

“It seems this child already came once a while ago,”

“no, no, no, what are you saying? We were waiting in this long line.”

Guarders reviewed the list and then offered disinfectant to the residents while other guarders took photos of the receivers who held the bottle of disinfectant. The meaning of floods became changed for the residents of *rusun* although they lived in the village P. The conflict during the process of disinfectant-distribution is stronger in *rusun* is because the issue of clean water is no more a problem for the resident anymore. The residents of *Rusun* could be offered water through big water tanks. Thus, for them, water problem did not mean the shortage of water for living + floods but flooding (waterlogging). In addition, they rarely participated in events related with the P village where they had resided before moving. In Photo 4, a guarder (a man with a camera) takes a picture of a housewife with her kid and a community development coordinator is on the right side. And many guarders near the boxes of disinfectants are checking the list of ‘real residents’ and their kids.

The meaning of disinfectant-distribution in the streets of the village P (where the major issue was floods and the shortage of water for living) and in *rusun*. This should be considered in connection with the fact that the problem of water for living in *rusun* is not related with anti-poverty policies led by NGOs and guarder (resident activist) but with water company’s

service quality. In regards of water issues, *rusun* residents' position and view is closer to the middle-class people of the neighbored village who harshly criticize flooding as the failure of the city's function than to the residents of the village P. The meaning of lab-village disappears for the residents of *rusun* although they shared their experience of life with the P village.

## Conclusion: Capacity building and Empowerment

In order to solve the flood problem, proper engineering and technical contributions to clearing canals are undoubtedly needed. At the same time, considering democratization has come greater public awareness and open dissatisfaction with the dysfunctional ways that corruption and fragmentation of planning, some *kampung* (urban slums in Jakarta) are pushing back through protests and are organizing their own self-help actions to gain resilience to flooding. And some of state agencies and NGOs are also trying to support community efforts.

Without doubt, the ideas of empowerment and capacity building, in other words, grassroots efforts will change the politics of flooding. In the discussion above, however, several inquiries have been made to answer the question. Each of partial solutions in P village identify the water problem differently. During the peak rainy season, the principles of lab-village stops. It is impossible to initiate a project that can solve the village's water-related issues at one stroke. The village residents know that these solutions are failures in a strict sense. The reason why these partial solutions has been accepted as solutions can be said as follows: The projects in the village P (at least) emphasized the water problem which was neglected for thirty or more years as a problem, and connected the task of solving water issues to the desirable ideal of resident-participation and empowerment. The water issues related to the realm outside the village that is, the overall expansion of water and sewage system becomes what cannot be dealt with within a lab-village, i. e. an exceptional thing. The overflowed water as an answerable problem and the floods after the overflowing that requires interventions and solutions show that there are several couplings between water-related problems and solutions. The suspension and resume of the lab-village, yields unexpected effects that can be described as following: Urban dwellers in village P think that their water right is secured although they are kept suffered from water problems. In dry season, the existence of the guarders themselves becomes a token of participatory development and local empowerment, although their positions and roles are still based on the distinction between residents who participate and those who do not. And guarders' roles oscillate from 'outsider like experts or NGO activists' to insider who help themselves during rainy season and ideas of empowerment and capacity building are also mixed in the lab-village. Ordinary residents keep asking '*respon*' People caught in the growing risk of flooding are not only waiting for government to take action on their behalf but also, mobilizing their own resources to resist evictions to allow them to stay in their communities. Kampung residents, NGOs, and professionals are increasingly trying to work collaboratively towards common goals of building flood-disaster-resilient communities. Aid implementation in urban slum, however, should not be considered as a transmission belt—a conveyor transmitting resources and advices from one side to the other: the metaphor of transmission belt is misleading. In the cases aid during rainy season in village P appears a series of chemical reactions that begin with the donors' (the state and the NGO) policies, but are transformed by the previous

interactions of the villagers, guards and NGO activists at each stage of implementation and interface. Each side influences the other, and the result is often critically different from the plan envisioned. This chemical reactions view of aid processes differs from approaches suggesting that aid delivery is like transferring resources and knowledge from one to another. By tracing the process of the aid effect, I conclude that two modes (or regimes) of the politics of poverty is co-exist and mixed between the dry season and the rainy season.

This study asks question the efficacy of approaches to capacity building which emphasize 'technical' requirements over empowering residents to actively engage with their communities on matters of water problem. Considering the case of health care, Awofeso (2013) argues that while the technical aspects of capacity building such as training and equipment are easier to quantify and address, systems, roles and linking these to enhancing people's right to wellbeing remain a challenge. Boulding (2017:98) also argues that capacity building does not always serve to empower people to effect the social mobilization. Building people capacity not simply means supplying the necessary training, and implementing policies requiring them to expand their roles in prescribed ways. There are many ways of empowering people to expand their right to th city and floods, urban land-use changes, spatial marginalization, and community mobilization are all coming together to create new political dynamics that can assist neighborhoods to gain resilience not just at the time of flooding, but by building communities for their long-term social and economic vitality. We need to remember that the idea of empowerment is prone to the 'capacity building in a bad sense': pawning off the state's responsibilities to people and letting people stay in the position of 'empowered' by outsiders (the state or NGOs). If the notion of capacity building is understood largely in instrumental terms, with little consideration given to how the role of NGO activists, resident activists and ordinary residents are enacted in practice, we come to face the irony of empowerment the target group of empowerment is always delineated and defined as a group of people who lack something important, such as independent agency (Lee 2019).

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