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Left-Behind Subjects: A Critical Interrogation of Philippine Development from the Margins



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FOREWORD

What does it mean to be *left behind*? The term *left behind* emerged and took on a sinister character when it was used to refer to families who lost loved ones from Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. Losing their loved ones, left behind families were left wanting for justice—a prospect that remains elusive to this day. Meanwhile, families were left to pick up the pieces and rebuild their shattered lives, if only to move on, albeit begrudgingly. The emergence of these families is not just marked by the murder of a loved one. It is also founded on lifetimes of being left behind by society that has relegated them as disposable, and its probable perpetuation in the future. Seen this way, being left behind is not only a result of the death of a loved one in the case of drug war victims. Being left behind is both a consummation of other forms of deaths (i.e. economic death, social death) and its continuation as they live their lives.

Being left behind, as in the case of victim families, is so profoundly grim, that experiencing different forms of deaths in a lifetime is, in many ways, unimaginable. And it provides no consolation that the families who suffered at the hands of Duterte were not the first, nor were they the last to endure these deaths. Elsewhere, beyond the victims of Duterte's war, we see urban poor communities, indigenous peoples, landless peasants, etcetera, either coerced, policed, confined and displaced; the consequences of which are tantamount to both literal and symbolic death. Yet, these deaths have been celebrated, justified, and legitimated or at the very least, ignored by society and state, all in the name of a vague sense of what is *good* for society—development.

It is in this vague sense of what is *good* for society, albeit at the expense of others, that we can begin to understand the cost of development. In the case of Duterte's war, development through peace, order, and discipline was paid for by the victims and their families. And it was the association with development that made the killings legible, if not

acceptable, to society. In many ways, killing a few for the benefit of many resembles a Manichean world where some lives are more valuable, while others are relegated to different forms of death, forgotten and left behind. Seeing development in these terms confronts us with reflection: On whose lives is *our* development built on top of?

The 17th volume of the Philippine Journal of Social Development takes on and explores this notion of being left behind in the context of the broader landscape of development. Specifically, the collection of five articles in this volume looks into peoples, communities, and sectors whose lives, experiences, histories, and political claims were *left behind* in favor of a normative and politically reinforced assertion of what is *good* for society—development. Inasmuch as the articles focus on the state of being left behind and experiencing various forms of deaths, this volume is also a celebration of life. The articles also focus on how peoples, communities and sectors exercise their agency to struggle against, deal with, navigate through and resist the prevailing development context which has cost them so much.

This volume aims to accomplish two things. First, by way of contributing to the already robust literature on social development in the Philippines, this volume offers a criticism of the development practices of both state and non-state actors by looking at how they are experienced by those who are on its receiving end. From this perspective, the collection of articles tries to peel off the enchanting veneer of development and shed light on the relations and subjectivities that development produces, the coercive practices and violent structures embedded within it, and the various ways that it was dealt with or addressed by those who are often left behind. Second, the volume aims to contribute to the ongoing political project of making visible what would otherwise be subjugated epistemes. This shows the “invisible” cost of development and, more importantly, those who paid the price.

In this way, the volume hopes to contribute to an important, albeit often neglected, conversation in development; that is, development for whom, how and their consequences.

This volume begins with an article by Cesar Allan C. Vera. In his article, Vera provides us with a survey and assessment of humanitarian work in the Philippines. Specifically, he looks at the different models of humanitarian work and their participatory claims. Vera argues that participation is an often invoked albeit neglected principle, leading to discombobulated responses that do not address the needs of people and communities in times of emergencies or worse, have disempowering effects. Vera ends his article by outlining how to bring people and communities in the entire process of humanitarian action through community organizing/community development (CO-CD).

Next is an article by Ma. Carla Michaela H. Batino, Kaye G. Cruz, Angelica Corazon P. Rayel & Mariane Joyce G. Robles (Batino et al. hereafter). In their article, Batino et al. describes the experiences of women in Magandang Lugar who have experienced different forms of violence. They describe how the inadequacies of formal mechanisms led the women of Magandang Lugar to create discrete albeit informal spaces within their community so that they could freely and safely share their experiences of violence and abuse through *chikahan*. Batino et al. render visible the discrete spaces created by women and argue that these may be used as a platform for feminist organizing or be harnessed to complement formal mechanisms designed to address violence against women (VAW).

The third article is by Benjamin B. Velasco. Velasco's subject is the controversial jeepney modernization program which has forced drivers and operators to, among other things, abandon their jeepneys and replace them with a modern and a much more environmentally friendly unit. Besides outlining the plight of jeepney drivers and operators against the state's unilateral imposition of regulations, Velasco highlights the injustice embedded within the policy framework and its securitized implementation. Velasco argues

that any form of jeepney modernization should abide by the principles of just transition; that is, modernization should not come at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of drivers and operators.

The fourth is by Danilo Valencia Elosendo Jr., Sarah Nelle F. Pasao, Perrie A. Rejuso, John Bryan R. Salamanca & Rafaella Justine Marie C. Villena (Elosendo Jr. et al. hereafter). In their article, Elosendo Jr. et al. describe how a community from the Ati tribe migrated from Panay to Rizal Province in the 1990s to escape poverty and discrimination, only to experience a similar situation in Rizal. Elosendo Jr. et al. situate the migration of the Ati tribe in the historical prevailing context of structural violence against indigenous peoples in the Philippines. And while the tribe's indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs) and social capital ensured their survival and kept them intact while in Rizal, these too are slowly eroding. In the end, Elosendo Jr. et al. explore how community organizing/community development (CO-CD) can facilitate the reinforcement of stronger community ties towards advocating for their rights.

This volume ends with an article by Rafael V. Dimalanta, Geo Kariz D. Cabaron & Bernard Joy G. Dones (Dimalanta et al. hereafter). Dimalanta et al. examines the case of Sitio San Roque—an embattled informal community at the center of what the local government aims to be Quezon City's business district. Specifically, Dimalanta et al. historicize the plight of the informal settlers and the various repertoires of resistance they employed to repel demolition attempts or resist repeated offers of relocation from the government and its partner corporation. They focus on KADAMAY's community development plan which serves as a basis for negotiating with the local government for humane and just housing arrangements. Despite community-led efforts, the KADAMAY's CDP is ultimately ignored due to the local government's neoliberal position.

Karl Arvin F. Hapal
Issue Editor

Critical Reflections on Approaches to Enhance People's Participation in Humanitarian Actions in the Philippines

Cesar Allan C. Vera

Abstract

Despite the significant contribution to save lives and reduce suffering after a disaster, there is global and historical discontent on how humanitarian actions or disaster response projects do not connect with community development. Often, participation is limited and is confined to project consultations. This has led to humanitarian actions being disconnected from existing community development efforts. Worse, it can undermine them. This article provides a synthesis of the different approaches applied by civil society organizations to enhance community participation in disaster response. Drawing from the author's own experience as a humanitarian worker and ongoing conversations with various CSOs, this article examines these approaches using the ladder of participation of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation and identifies the different ways people are enjoined in humanitarian action. The article ends by asserting how community organizing during a disaster response—an approach often disassociated with emergency action—can lead to more strategic, more sustainable, and more transformative outcomes in affected communities.

Keywords: *people's participation, humanitarian action, community development*

Introduction

The significance of disaster response or humanitarian action in saving lives and reducing the suffering of disaster-affected populations is undeniable. The role of communities as first responders when a disaster strike is also noteworthy. Community members provide timely and relevant disaster response to disaster-affected people primarily because of their

proximity, presence, and knowledge. The opportunity to mobilize collective action and advance solidarity in the community make disasters fertile grounds for self-organizing and community development. For example, many grassroots groups were organized during the pandemic to provide food through community pantries, to assist school children through learning hubs, or to serve as platforms to access relief goods.

But behind the benevolence, many accuse humanitarian actions of breeding a culture of dependency (Vera et al., 2022; Adeso, 2015). Tarpaulin bearing a politician's face during a relief distribution brings suspicion of patronage politics in the community. The sight of expats living in high-end hotels and brand-new logo-bearing vehicles creates speculation of self-indulgence using donated funds. One community organizer shares the impact of a heavily-funded disaster response on their community:

Sa laki ng response, nasagasaan yung aming mga ginagawang pag-oorganisa. Nagbago ang kultura ng komunidad sa pagtutulungan. Nawala ang sama-samang pagkilos. Naghahanap na ngayon sila ng kapalit sa bawat pagkilos o training. [With large disaster response projects, our organizing in the community has been undermined. The culture of solidarity in the community changed. Collective action is lost. Now they are looking for compensation for every action or attendance to trainings.]

The discontent is global and not new. The discussions on linking disaster relief to development started as early as the 1980s and continue today (Ramet, 2012). Originating from the funding disparity between humanitarian and development projects, the issue has been further deconstructed leading to the Grand Bargain in 2016. The Grand Bargain is an agreement amongst some donors and organizations “who have committed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action, in order to get more means into the

hands of people in need” (The Grand Bargain, n.d., para. 3). The debates exposed the inequalities in access between local and international actors to humanitarian funding, the gross inefficiencies of the humanitarian system, and the lack of accountability of the humanitarian industry. Sir Mark Lowcock (2021), the previous United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said:

The biggest failings of the humanitarian system is that agencies do not pay enough attention to what people caught up in crises say they want. ...the humanitarian system actually is set up to give people in need what international agencies and donors think is best, and what the agencies have to offer, rather than giving people what they themselves say they most need (p. 2).

The concern for downward accountability to disaster-affected people has led to the development of multiple humanitarian standards (e.g., Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Standard). There are several elements in operationalizing downward accountability (e.g., transparency, feedback and complaints mechanism, responsive duty bearers, participation), but a primary factor is the level of participation of the affected community in the humanitarian action (Cuaton, 2019).

Participation is a broad concept whose meaning depends on people’s ideological position or the nature of interventions in a community (Claridge, 2004). Participation as used in development has been critiqued as the new tyranny that does not necessarily lead to empowerment or societal transformation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Instead, Hickey and Mohan (2004) suggested that:

Participatory approaches are most likely to achieve transformations where (i) they are pursued as part of a wider (radical) political project; (ii) where they are aimed specifically at securing citizenship rights and participation for marginal and

subordinate groups; and (iii) when they seek to engage with development as an underlying process of social change rather than in the form of discrete technocratic interventions (p.159).

This dilemma worsens when applied to the emergency context of humanitarian projects. The Participatory Revolution workstream of the Grand Bargain (2017) provides a two-page working definition of participation. It recognizes that disaster-affected communities must be informed and included in decisions of humanitarian actors through ongoing processes of dialogue in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the disaster response. However, confining “participatory revolution” to the ambit of the disaster response project where responding agencies and donors are central decision-makers makes it functional to sustain the social order that complies with accountabilities to donors. This is hardly revolutionary to the humanitarian industry nor aligned to the central paradigm of participation for transformative empowerment.

While widely coveted in the sector, empowerment is loosely “operationalized” into humanitarian practices recognizing the long-term and process-oriented nature of empowerment. Cash programming is already considered empowering since it gives people the power to choose the aid they want. Power analysis is supposed to be conducted during damage and needs assessment (DANA) to ensure that marginalized households are included in the beneficiary list. But otherwise, the manifestation of empowerment in humanitarian actions is assumed to be embedded in the participation of affected communities in the disaster response.

This study investigates the quality of participation in humanitarian actions. It specifically asks, when and how can participation in disaster responses empower communities? While distinct from each other, participation for empowerment opens

platforms for substantial decision-making and opportunities for building critical awareness of agency, power dynamics, and control over resources. Investigating the quality of participation provides insights to the intention of responding agencies and the wider link of humanitarian response to community development.

Specifically, this paper will:

- Describe the various approaches applied by responding agencies in enhancing community participation of marginalized and disaster-affected communities;
- Illustrate how these approaches influence the intensity of participation in various stages of the disaster response project; and
- Explore how varying approaches and intensity of participation lead to different links between response projects to community development.

Methodology

This paper is borne out of a critical reflection of my review of research on the humanitarian sector and my experience as a humanitarian worker. Among my previous research, I rely heavily on data gathered from the following:

- Focused group discussions (FGD) of leaders and members from eight disaster-affected communities and key informant interviews with representatives of the three responding local non-government organizations (NGO): The communities are in the provinces of Maguindanao, Biliran, and Cagayan. Two communities experienced slow-onset hazards (i.e., conflict), while the other six communities faced rapid-onset hazards (i.e., flood, typhoon). Data gathering was done from May to June 2019.
- Interview of representatives of nine implementing partner NGOs of an International NGO: Online interviews were conducted in October 2020 (Vera et al., 2021).

Online interviews of eight people's organizations (PO), six faith-based organizations, 31 NGOs, and 13 international NGOs/donors. All the national and local organizations identified themselves as development-oriented but have conducted small to large scale disaster response projects. Online interviews were conducted from January to March 2021 (Vera et al., 2022). More importantly, the paper draws from my experience and conversations with disaster-affected communities, responding agencies, and humanitarian colleagues. While my work with disaster-affected communities dates as early as the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption, I draw much of my insights from 2009 onwards when I became more exposed to the politics of humanitarian industry and more critical of the dynamics between local and international agencies responding to disasters.

This paper is limited to the medium to large scale projects of civil society that were funded by international donors or their partners. These medium to large scale projects have mostly been required by donors to have community participation to ensure relevant, effective, and timely interventions. Though participation is recognized to be more enhanced in self-funded and small-funded actions, these medium-funded to large scale projects have a stronger tendency to disrupt or undermine current community development. Moreover, the critical reflections are drawn from the general approaches used by civil society in implementing medium to large responses, based on firsthand accounts. While my previous work provided specific case studies, this article provides an overview of the terrain of the initiatives to facilitate community participation in humanitarian work in the Philippines.

The article first provides a framework of analyzing participation by reviewing the ladder of participation vis-à-vis the different stages of a humanitarian response project. This is followed by mapping the different actors in a disaster response to describe the different relationships and power dynamics amongst stakeholders. The next section categorizes the different approaches commonly used by humanitarian actors to facilitate and enhance

participation of affected communities. The effect of using these approaches on the intensity of participation at different stages of a disaster response is then discussed. The final section then describes the resulting outcome on the link between community disaster responses and development.

Examining Participation in Humanitarian Action: A Framework

Specific dimensions identified in participation schemas of Prieto-Martin (2014) were considered, namely: affected and involved actors, intensity of collaboration, and stages of participation. To reduce confusion, intensity of collaboration and stages of participation are referred to in this paper as intensity of participation and stages of the response project, respectively. The other factors (i.e., institutionalization level, and transparency and deliberative intensity) are noted but not elaborated to provide a more concise paper. Commonly affected and involved actors are identified. The seminal work of Arnstein (1969) on the ladder of participation is used to describe the different intensity of participation. Specifically, the steps of the ladder used in this article are described as follows:

1. Informing: Affected communities are made aware of their rights, responsibilities, or options but with minimal opportunity to provide feedback or influence the intervention.
2. Consultative: Affected communities or their representatives (e.g., local government units [LGU], leaders of sectoral grassroots organizations) are asked for inputs through interviews, surveys, or group discussions without assurance that these inputs are taken into account in the final decisions.
3. Placation: Representatives are made part of advisory or decision-making committees. This remains tokenism if representatives exercise minimal accountability to their constituency; representatives lack ability to negotiate with LGUs and responding

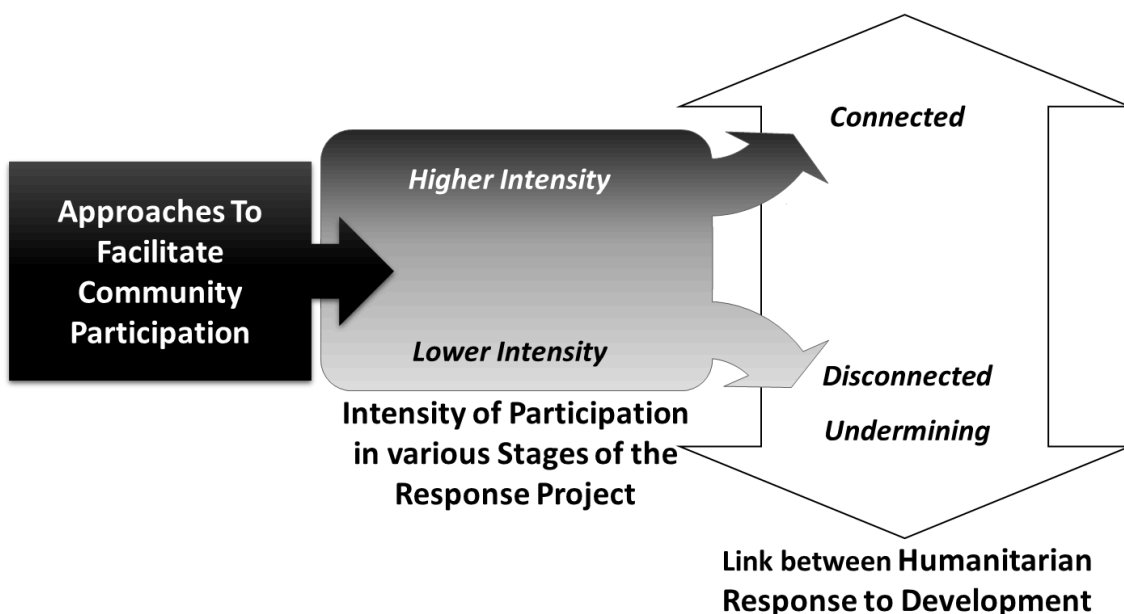
agencies; and the responding agency retains the power to judge legitimacy and feasibility of representatives’ advice.

4. Partnership: Affected communities, responding agencies, and other stakeholders agree to planning and decision-making responsibilities through formal structures.
5. Task Delegation: Accountability to specific parts and activities is assured to the affected community after they have negotiated for dominant decision-making authority over the program.
6. Community Driven: Affected communities govern, manage, and negotiate conditionalities of the program.

These are not assessed based on the method described in participation schemas since it was originally intended to assess specific cases and not a range of cases as done in this paper. Instead, relationships amongst the identified actors are described with vulnerable and marginalized community members as the central player. These elements are consolidated in intensity of participation in various stages of the response project.

Figure 1

Framework of Analysis



The project cycle of a typical disaster response will be used to define the Various Stages of the Response Project, namely: (a) Assessment, (b) Planning, (c) Beneficiary Selection, (d) Implementation, and (e) M&E. These stages are for illustrative purposes only since a typical response project can have multiple iterations.

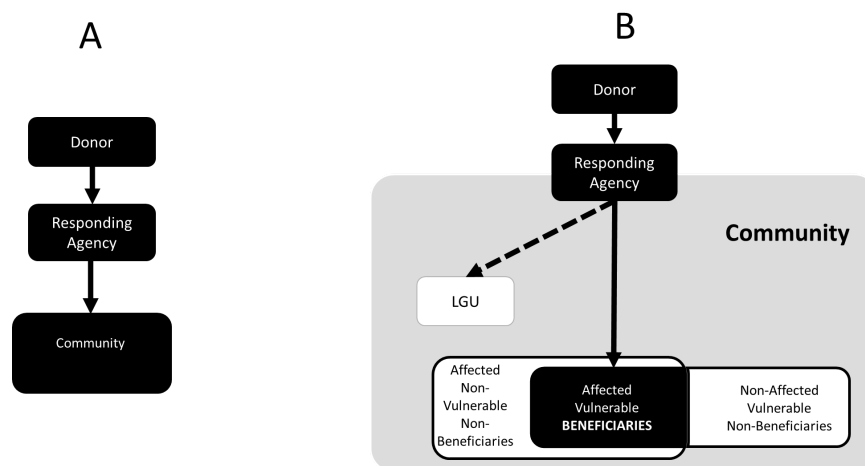
In addition, the previous research recognized that responding agencies sometimes applied different approaches to enhance community participation. These approaches and their impact on the intensity of participation in various stages of the response project are elaborated. Different scenarios on the resulting link between disaster response projects to community development processes are then discussed. By investigating these, different relationships between the supposed duality of humanitarian actions and community development are inferred.

Different Actors in a Disaster Response and their Relationships

Figure 2A shows the three main actors in a disaster response project, namely: (a) the Responding Agency, (b) the Community as beneficiaries, and (c) the Donor.

Figure 2A

Actors in a Disaster Response



Several factors can already be drawn from the relationship of the three main actors that impact participation of the community. The responding agency has upward accountability to the donor. This includes mostly formal conditionalities and requirements (e.g., time-sensitive needs assessment and proposal, evidence-based reports and audits, organization due diligence, action through a consortium with other donor partners, etc.).

When preferences voiced by the community are difficult to implement, responding agencies sometimes blame conditionalities of donors. For example, community leaders often appeal to give aid to all affected households even if this means providing aid below prescribed humanitarian standards. Responding agencies reason out that donors require that they comply with standards and select only the most vulnerable. While interviewed donors admit their preference for compliance with standards, they deny that this is a requirement. Ironically, most humanitarian standards promote downward accountability to affected communities.

Downward accountability of the responding agency to the community makes good sense in terms of fulfilling the humanitarian mandate, manifesting humanitarian principles, and providing evidence of value for money to donors. However, the terms “downward accountability” to the community and “upward accountability” to donors manifest the centrality of perspectives of responding agencies. If humanitarian standards push for a more community-centric response, then there is a need to frame perspectives of accountability and other critical elements (e.g., participation, development, coordination) from the community's point of view.

Some responding agencies highlight “participation” in their organizational vision-mission statement. However, they acknowledge that participation differs in their development work from their humanitarian projects. While participation in their

vision-mission entails politically empowering the community, participation in their humanitarian projects is downplayed to consultations and securing community volunteers during implementation of the project. The inherent nature of the disaster response projects (i.e., rapid, short-term, temporary, dole-out) is not aligned to their overall development mandate that is process-oriented and strategic, and aims to build capacities.

The community recognizes surging responding agencies only have short-term projects and can easily divert resources to other affected communities. As such, a dominant factor that suppresses voice is the desperate need to sustain a good relationship with the responding agency. While minor complaints are tolerable (e.g., missing items, clarification on beneficiary criteria, etc.), complaints against major decisions and whistleblowing on staff offenses are rarely raised. Conflicts created by the response are often managed by the community internally. As such, maintaining the vertical relationship with the responding agency by accommodating their ways of working is the top priority of communities. The second priority is to sustain horizontal relationships with other community members by troubleshooting internal conflict.

Figure 2B is an expanded diagram showing other actors involved in the disaster response. This is already a simplified diagram since the chain of responding agency partners, the cascading government units, and the multiple sectors in the community can easily overwhelm the web of relationships.

A critical set of actors are those affected but are not selected to be beneficiaries because they are considered less vulnerable. Local officials and beneficiaries mostly make a case for inclusion of all affected by the disaster, even if they are aware that they would likely receive lesser aid. For local officials, providing for their constituents is the primary concern. For the selected beneficiaries, avoiding conflict in the community is a priority—especially if

these less vulnerable neighbors are those who provide support in their times of need. Several responding agencies admit turning a blind eye when beneficiaries organize their own redistribution to provide for those who were excluded.

The local government unit (LGU) is mandated to coordinate all humanitarian actions in the community to ensure that redundancy of limited aid is avoided. While Republic Act 10121 provides that humanitarian agencies remain autonomous and independent, local responding agencies complain about local patronage politics (e.g., bloated beneficiary list, diversion of aid to bailiwick, credit claiming, etc.). For rights-claiming community organizations who are used to local contestations, such issues are easily identified and thwarted. But where POs are formed by local politicians themselves, such schemes are not detected or not addressed. Moreover, when surging responders rely mostly on local officials to access affected communities, such officials become gatekeepers of both aid and participatory platforms.

Responding local organizations complain that the burden of accountability and facilitating participation is on their shoulders instead of the LGUs, which is the primary duty bearer. The LGUs are not obliged to comply with humanitarian standards and are able to avoid controversial roles. During the FGDs, LGU officials mention that they actively engage in making beneficiary selection criteria and validating the beneficiary list. However, the LGU officials cede to the responding agency the decision to select beneficiaries to avoid being accused of excluding their constituents. This transfer of accountability can be minimized if disaster response is meant only to fill the response gaps of the LGUs. Instead, some donors observe that LGUs and different responding agencies seem to compete amongst each other.

Approaches to Facilitate Community Participation

All responding agencies interviewed conducted consultations. General assemblies were sometimes conducted but these were meant primarily to disseminate information to the community (e.g., agency introduction and contact information, type of intervention, beneficiary list, donors, etc.). However, the different studies revealed various approaches applied by the responding agencies to facilitate participation or representation of the community. These include the following:

- Coordination Approach: Coordination with LGUs only;
- Multi-Sectoral Platform (MSP) Approach: Creation of MSP in addition to coordination with LGUs;
- Community Organizing (CO) Approach: Communities organized to eventually lead the disaster response in addition to coordination with LGUs; and
- PO-Led Approach: PO based in the community lead the response.

The simplest and most common approach is the Coordination Approach since it is the minimum requirement and allows the responding agencies to cover more ground. Some responding agencies create an ad hoc MSP when they want to deepen their response in a specific community. A few responding agencies undertake the CO Approach to enable the community to actively engage and eventually lead the disaster response. The last approach occurs when disaster-affected POs initiate and lead the disaster response themselves in their communities. The last approach is considered rare since the response projects referred to are medium and large-scale response projects.

The list is by no means comprehensive as combinations and variations of approaches are applied to adapt to the disaster context, the resources available, and the changing capacities of the community and the responding agency itself. The approaches are presented

to illustrate the potential for enhancing participation, and later to draw out key factors for participation to lead to empowerment.

Coordination Approach

All organizations interviewed coordinate with the LGU. When responding agencies surge (i.e., rapid response of organizations who are often not local to the community), such coordination with the LGU becomes the default point of entry. The responding agencies rely primarily on sectoral representatives or local community organizations recognized or close to the LGUs to serve as the primary voice of the affected populations. This approach becomes limiting as allies of the LGUs are favored and those who are not are sometimes excluded. Some responding agencies even claimed that most of the community organizations were organized by local politicians.

Because of the short-term nature of disaster responses and the aim to serve more communities, efforts to enhance the quality of participation do not go beyond the coordination or initial consultations. Consultations are mostly limited to the DANA. For agencies compliant with humanitarian standards, complaints response mechanisms are installed. If possible, engagement with existing organizations to coordinate with the community and facilitate the distribution of relief goods were mostly done.

Multi-Sectoral Platform (MSP) Approach

Where the responding agency places more weight in participation, they create an ad hoc MSP. This is composed of representatives from the LGUs, Barangay Health Workers or Barangay Nutrition Scholars, community organizations and sectors, etc. The LGU convenes the body for action coordination, needs assessments, beneficiary criteria development, logistical planning of distribution, complaints response mechanism development, and

monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In areas of conflict, the MSPs also provide security information for the responding agency.

Because patronage politics is common, the responding agencies usually exert strong influence on the MSPs to ensure impartiality and neutrality. By having relatively more presence in the community as compared to the coordination approach, frontline staff of the responding agency gain the needed trust from the communities. This becomes an advantage as formal consultation/feedback mechanisms are not fully effective, as discussed in succeeding sections.

Community Organizing (CO) Approach

An enhanced approach is to organize affected communities into groups or organizations. This challenges the assumption that process-oriented approaches cannot be conducted in cases of emergency. Local organizations claim that this has long been practiced in a country with a long history of community organizing (CO). However, this practice has become fewer as humanitarian project timeframes became shorter and the demand to cover more beneficiaries became stronger. Moreover, agencies used to limit response in their area of responsibility, unlike the recent trend where organizations surge into areas they do not operate in.

The Survivor and Community-Led Response (SCLR) immediately organizes and trains clusters of affected households to allow them to participate meaningfully right from the initial disaster assessment (Antiquesa & Corbett, 2018). Other organizations—many of which use CO as a primary approach in their development work—organize the affected population after the assessment and planning stage. This allows the community to participate in the implementation stage and eventually lead the undertaking.

Responding agencies argue that such collective experience, capacity, and engagement with other stakeholders have strategic impact that goes beyond the response timeline. For example, in a community affected by conflict, the usual relief distribution was conducted by a responding agency amongst internally displaced people (IDP). But since the responding agency was able to secure resources to operate beyond six months, CO was simultaneously done to enable the IDPs to create a community-based protection mechanism that can eventually lead to the establishment of peace zones in the resettlement area.

Peoples Organization (PO)-Led Approach

The fourth approach is an off-shoot of either community self-organizing or the CO approach, regardless if the context was a disaster or not. The approach recognizes the capacity of existing PO in the disaster affected locality to lead the disaster response. This challenges the dominant narrative that disaster-affected local organizations are not competent to conduct humanitarian projects or have lost their capacity to mobilize people or implement projects. Ironically, this narrative remains dominant even if the Philippines have four decades of practice of locally-led disaster response (Vera et al., 2021). Such capacity of affected-POs was highlighted during the global response to the COVID 19 pandemic. Pre-positioned POs were in the frontline as international humanitarian agencies and national NGOs were on the sidelines.

Being part of or integrated in the community, local organizations have the local knowledge and social capital that can lead to relevant, appropriate, timely, effective, efficient, and sensitive humanitarian interactions. But more importantly, locally-led response can:

- Enhance their own capacity (i.e., through offered trainings/workshops or the actual leading of disaster response project) that will be relevant for future disasters;
- Directly connect the disaster response project to their existing development work; and

- Transform existing power relationships with different community stakeholders by having more control over emergency resources. (Vera et al., 2022)

However, it is rare that POs directly access funds for disaster responses. Access oftentimes is channeled through partner NGOs or through networks or federations they belong to. Many POs consider their capacity to quickly conduct assessments and write proposals too weak such that they do not even submit disaster response proposals. Other POs are not confident of undertaking the rigorous M&E, reporting, and audit requirements that they would rather that projects go through NGOs that can handle these requirements while they lead the operational aspects of the response.

The Case Study: Bottom-Up Leadership in the research report “Local Humanitarian Leadership: The View from Local Actors” (Vera et al., 2021) illustrates the PO-led approach. While funding was accessed through various intermediary organizations, KABALIKAT re-designed the original COVID-19 response project of an international NGO to align with their initial response plans. The resulting response was based on issues and concerns of families with infected members (e.g., stigma felt by entire families, lack of essential amenities of isolation facilities, need for community connection of isolated families); capitalized on existing KABALIKAT members and initiatives (e.g., community mini-grocery served as an emergency stockpile); strengthened disaster response capacities and social capital of KABALIKAT; and mobilized KABALIKAT’s network to fulfill stringent reporting and financial management requirements (Vera et al., 2021).

Intensity of Participation in Various Stages of the Response Project

At each stage of the response project, the intensity of participation with respect to the different approaches used to enhance community participation is discussed below. Figure 3 summarizes the findings.

Assessment

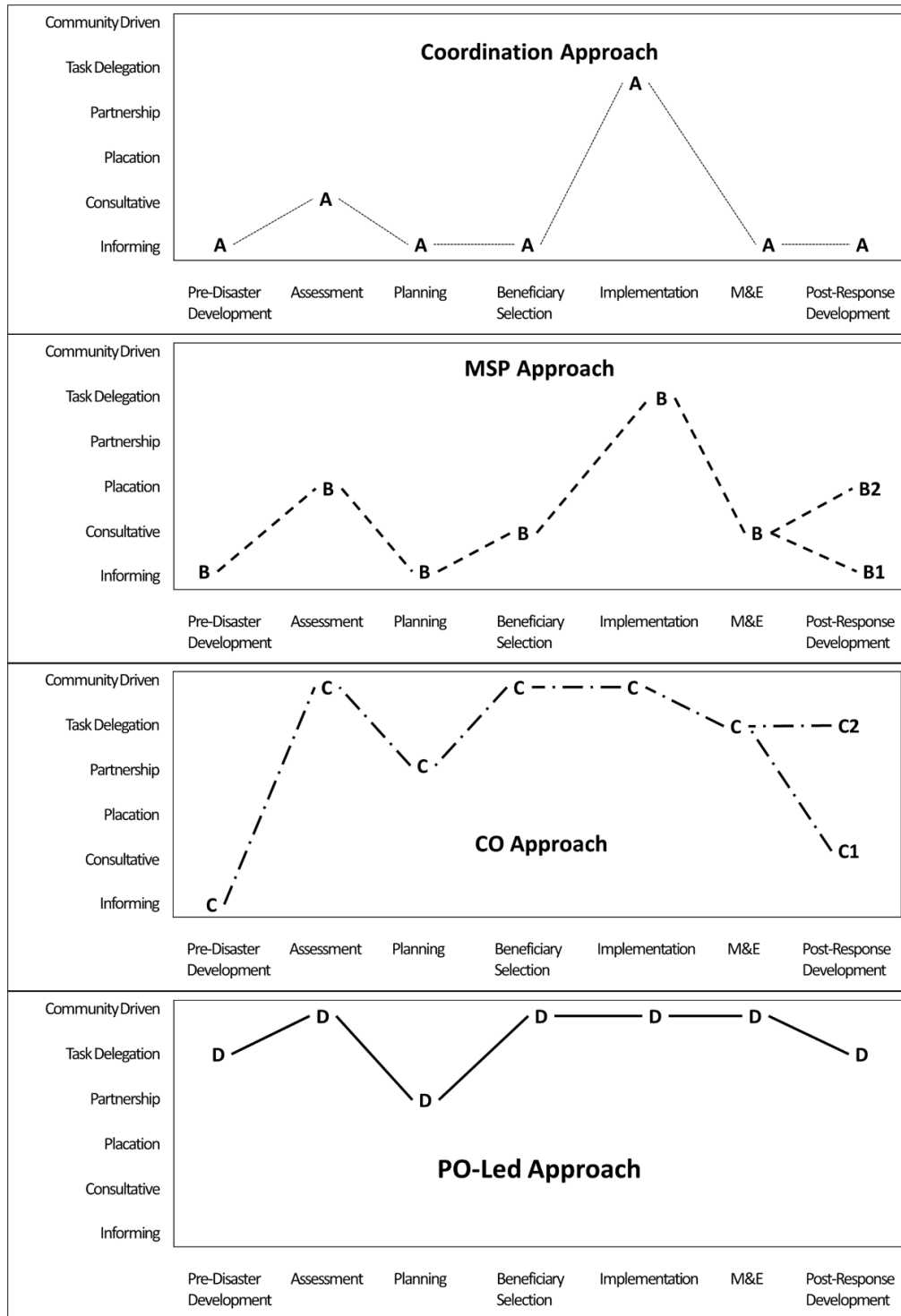
The DANA (simply referred here as the assessment) is a crucial stage of the disaster response since project participation is often associated with this stage. Reference to downward accountability is often based on the relevance of the aid to the identified needs and wants of the community during the assessment consultations.

However, the context of the assessment stage is far from ideal. Because of the urgency to provide relief, the turnover from the disaster to the submission of the proposal is less than one week. Responding agencies must reach the disaster-affected area, identify the most affected, and conduct consultations with people in dire need of immediate aid in the most difficult context within a couple of days.

As such, surging responders using the Coordination Approach rely on available official information, rapid consultations in evacuation centers, or quick interviews with accessible households. The limited information gathered is usually extrapolated to cover adjacent communities that were not assessed. Voices of the most vulnerable and those located in geographically isolated and depressed areas (GIDA) are mostly left out. Only agencies who are deliberate in serving these GIDAs reach the remote communities. In many cases, basic food and non-food items are already brought and distributed because responders are uncertain if they will return.

Figure 3

Intensity of Participation vis-a-vis Stages of the Response Project



Only a few local organizations mentioned that they were able to conduct separate consultations for men and women during needs assessment. Aggregated data makes it

difficult to provide for the special and differential needs of vulnerable sectors (e.g., persons with disabilities, women, children, indigenous people, LGBTQ, etc.). Practical needs are assumed by responding agencies who have prior intimate knowledge of the sector. Moreover, the information gathered is often based on template checklists for pre-determined lifelines and cluster-based sectors (e.g., shelter; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH); infrastructure). The status of community stakeholders, power relationships, status of protection of rights, etc. are hardly asked.

At most, the intensity of participation for Coordination Approach is at the consultation level only. However, these conditions do not make consultations useless. The “token” consultation becomes a starting point for participation. An IDP living in an evacuation center said, “If no one asked, no one would ever know what we want.” This respondent talked with different LGUs and agencies before asking for aid but was rejected since he did not meet the criteria or was not a constituent. Only when they were visited by the responding agency were they able to receive aid and capacitated to organize themselves.

Furthermore, most responders deliberately limit the level of engagement with communities to manage expectations. Since responders themselves are uncertain in accessing funds for a response or if they actually select that specific community, they will not commit to providing the voiced needs.

But those who use the MSP and CO approaches are more deliberate in serving specific communities and sectors. Such approaches are needed to gather intimate information in GIDAs and on vulnerable sectors to be able to provide for their special and differential needs. Some responding agencies even revise template checklists to include power relationships in the community. Those who create MSPs can reach placation level because

their extended stay and effort to create MSPs establishes a level of trust and openness with the LGU and the community.

For those who organize communities where there were previously none, the SCLR becomes a game changer in terms of providing affected populations the decision to assess and determine the aid they will receive (Antiquesa & Corbett, 2018). The community (or a set of households) are given the opportunity to organize themselves, capacitated in simple project development and management, and provided aid based on their collective proposal. Unlike cash programming, which is household based, SCLR allows the community to revive their social capital to exercise their freedom of choice. Intensity of participation can reach all the way to community driven.

For those using the CO Approach, the initial assessment may only reach the level of consultation since the community has not yet been organized at this stage. However, the daily interactions and groundworking increases the intensity of participation. This can eventually reach community-driven levels, as intended by the community organizers.

With PO-led Approach, the intensity level can also reach community-driven. The intimate knowledge of the PO of the community because of their presence even before the disaster allows them to anticipate damage and needs. The PO's familiarity on who and where the vulnerable are enables the PO to seek and engage them openly. Moreover, being known by the vulnerable sectors makes local organizations easily accessible for follow-up. Such follow-ups are not only for information sharing but also to make the local organizations accountable to the planned response.

Planning

Despite the value given to the rapid DANA, the link between the consultations and to the eventual response is not straightforward. First, the results of the DANA are used to

determine if the humanitarian organization will respond or not. Civil society organizations are not expected to substitute LGUs in responding to small to medium-scale and localized disasters. Second, the response is determined by the agency's experience, capacity, funds raised, and ability to access the affected community. Third, the assessments are shared with coordination hubs (e.g., LGU, network of humanitarian responders, etc.) with the intention that needs not covered by the agency can be covered by others. In summary, the assessment will influence but not necessarily determine the actual response in the community. Thus, the critique against the social accountability of responding agencies to the expressed needs of the community comes as no surprise. In many cases, affected communities seek support for food and recovering livelihoods, but often receive other services instead. Where community leaders and members are made aware of the specific services that the agencies can provide (e.g., WASH, medical services, legal services), consultations serve as mere validation of such services.

The planning stage is mostly a closed space of power between the responding agency and the donor for those who use the Coordination, MSP, and CO approaches. The responding agency serves as a mediator of the community at this stage. The effectiveness of the responding agency as the voice of the community depends on the intensity of participation during the assessment stage. As such, those who created an MSP can articulate more specific needs of the community and vulnerable sectors.

As mediators on behalf of the community, the participation agenda shifts to transforming the planning stage into a joint decision-making platform between the donor (or intermediary funding organization) and the responding agency partners. Many donors and international NGOs claim joint decision-making during the planning stage, but these are mostly bilateral agreements with responding agencies with pre-determined budgets. Joint decision-making requires deliberate agreements between the donor and all its responding

partners to convene to prioritize communities and response interventions, and to negotiate allocation of the limited budget for all responding agencies. The effort to manage the power dynamics amongst the donor and all its partners pays off as this leads to better quality of strategy (i.e., depth and variety of strategies, connectedness with development work), timeliness, and clarity of project parameters (Vera et al., 2021).

For the CO approach, the SCLR organizes the community for them to assess and determine the response they need. While budgets for each community (or cluster of households) are already predetermined, the essence of having community-driven intensity of participation for empowerment is established. Aside from self-determination of response, community capacity is enhanced from the experience and learnings in the collective analysis and planning, negotiation with responding agency, and collective action for the chosen humanitarian action.

With PO-led approach, participation reaches community-driven. The PO, being organic to the community, represents themselves in the planning stage. The case study “Bottom-Up Leadership” of KABALIKAT in BASECO during their COVID-19 response exemplifies this scenario (Vera et al., 2021).

Beneficiary Selection

A selection process is conducted to ensure that the most vulnerable benefit from humanitarian action. Aid is meant to provide equity to the most vulnerable who have less opportunities to recover immediately. Though repeatedly explained, such practice is difficult to understand, especially if LGUs are distributing aid to all their constituents albeit in lower quantity or quality. Such a selective process is easier to rationalize if the distribution of aid was not done when communities were desperate to survive.

Unlike the planning stage, the controversial beneficiary selection process is an invited space for participation. Participation is critical to gather input on what makes households vulnerable in their specific context. It is also meant to reduce confusion by providing space for consensus building. The beneficiary list is then drawn up and validated.

Many responding organizations claim that they ensured participation in formulating the selection criteria. However, most community leaders strongly deny this and claim that they only validate the beneficiary list and push for more constituents to be included. Apparently, community leaders and local officials distance themselves from the process to avoid getting the ire of excluded community members. This practice of limiting participation to informing and consultation has been observed in the Coordination and MSP approach.

On the other hand, PO-led Approach took full responsibility for the beneficiary list. Many complained that the beneficiary list initially forwarded by local officials were padded. These were easily corrected since the organizations are familiar with the community members.

Implementation

Community participation during the implementation stage is observed to be high for all approaches. Intensity of participation rose to task delegation level for the Coordination and MSP Approach. Such increased participation leads to practical results such as wide information dissemination, mobilization of volunteers for distribution and other support services, conflict resolution, and adaptation to changing contexts. Moreover, participation is remarkable when the humanitarian action benefits the entire community (e.g., community water system, community protection, community contingency planning and disaster preparedness, etc.).

Enhancing participation during implementation is deliberate as this serves as therapy for survivors of traumatic disasters. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, “As people become more involved, they are likely to become more hopeful, more able to cope and more active in rebuilding their own lives and communities” (IASC, 2007, p. 92).

For the CO and PO-led Approach, intensity of participation can reach up to community-driven levels. The implementation stage becomes an opportunity for POs to exercise collective action.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Only a few responding agencies conducted after-response evaluations. However, no community members interviewed participated in the development of such evaluations (i.e., providing input to what questions need to be asked and what needs to be evaluated).

Responding agencies compliant with humanitarian standards set up multiple formal channels to receive complaints and feedback. These include a complaints box, visibility of contact numbers for complaints, complaints committee, etc. These mechanisms allow opportunities for communities to voice out their gratitude, file complaints, or clarify processes and selection criteria. These did not necessarily influence decisions of the responding agency, but it allowed opportunity for them to troubleshoot project implementation.

A key component for complaints to be registered is transparency. Beneficiaries must be aware beforehand of what they will receive. Being unaware of or unable to negotiate for their entitled aid diminishes the ability of the community to hold the responding agency accountable. FGDs with beneficiaries reveal that they were only informed of the details of the aid just minutes before the release. Many were surprised, especially since

standards-compliant responses went well above their expectations. As such, complaints were few. Feedbacks were filled with expressions of gratitude from beneficiaries. Responding agencies rationalized that this lack of transparency was for the security of the beneficiaries since the standards-compliant aid were substantial in value. More importantly, the secrecy was meant to manage expectations. However, internal conflict in the community simmers as news of the content of the aid spread to disgruntled non-beneficiaries.

Community members usually refrain from filing substantial complaints through the formal channels. The fear of straining relationships with the responding organization, being shamed, or disrupting local political dynamics hinder community members from using formal channels. Instead, complaints are channeled informally through trusted community organizers or local leaders. As such, intensity of participation is low for Coordination (i.e., Informing) and MSP (i.e., Consultative) approaches and high for CO and PO-led approaches (i.e., Community Driven).

Pre-Disaster and Post-Response Development

Across different FGDs and interviews, only a few local disaster risk reduction and management councils (LDRRMC) were mentioned to be fully functional and non-partisan before disasters. Other participatory community governance platforms (e.g., local development councils [LDC]) were not probed but a similar case may be implied based on anecdotes of different respondents. As such, participation levels before the disaster were limited to informing for the Coordination, MSP, and CO approaches, except where active local organizations existed. Note that this does not discount the fact that there are several progressive local politicians who maximize inclusion and community participation through these mandated platforms.

For the MSP approach, the intensity of participation varies in the post-response development stage from informing to placation. Most mentioned level is informing level. This rose to placation level (i.e., where trust is built amongst stakeholders, but decision-making powers stay with LGUs) when these were present, namely:

- **Constituency consultations:** Spaces for decision making in local government can only invite a limited number of individuals. As such, representatives will need to have continuous opportunities to consult their constituents. Where leaders are merely appointed to serve as representatives without institutional backing, the changing issues and concerns of the community are not necessarily voiced out.
- **Level of rights awareness:** Beyond project requirements, responding local agencies have mentioned raising awareness of communities on rights that the community needs or the agency advocates. These include rights on basic human rights, indigenous people rights, land and housing tenurial security, environmental protection and natural resource management, gender, community health, participatory local governance, etc.
- **Operational platforms:** Community participation continues if mandated local participatory governance platforms are operational (e.g., LDC, LDRRMC, local housing boards, etc.). In many cases, the mandated platforms exist but there is limited political will to activate these.
- **Support network of like-minded actors:** Federations and alliances at the higher levels (i.e., from municipal to international level) and other sectoral formations in the community provide other services to the MSPs or community organizations (e.g., capacity development and learning support, access to information, campaigns). These networks become crucial not just for the tangible services, but also for the solidarity of local policy advocacies and influence when tensions arise with local politicians.

While not observed, levels can go higher than placation if the community organizations in the MSPs have the above and already pursue more collective action, advocacy, and rights-claiming with the LGU. This is like the CO approach where the level of participation can reach up to partnership level.

With the CO approach, intensity of participation can fall to consultation level if the PO lies low.

But it can reach up to task delegation level when it sustains its collective action, like the PO-approach. Several POs have been observed to set up their own DRR committees, engage with the LDRRMC, and implement contingency measures in later disasters. In a conflict area, community protection mechanisms are established by the IDPs and the military shares information with the PO.

Outcomes: Relationships Between Humanitarian Response and Community Development

In discussing the outcomes, several scenarios are presented that illustrate the connection between the response and rehabilitation projects to community development, namely: Response Disconnected with Development, Response Undermines Participatory Development, Response Leads to Participatory Development, and Community Development-Shaped Response.

Response Disconnected with Development

The usual scenario of disaster response projects disconnected to existing development in the community is illustrated in Figure 4. The disaster response provides a significant impact to the lives of the affected families. However, the effects are confined within the project itself such that effects do not transcend outside project timelines, are rarely felt

beyond the affected families, and do not impact wider community development. This scenario is observed with the Coordination and most MSP approaches.

Figure 4

Response Disconnected with Development



It is important to note that community beneficiaries in FGDs claimed that all the provided services were relevant and significant when they were provided—even if these were expressed or not during consultations. Such is attributed to the experience of the humanitarian agency in responding to a wide range of disasters and the focus on providing specific services only.

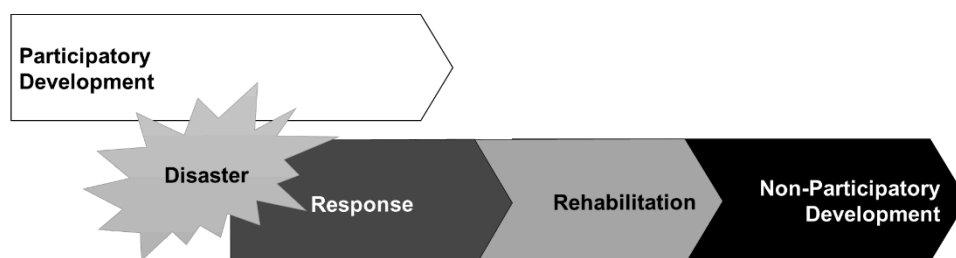
In this disconnected scenario, the existing participatory development or non-participatory development continues. It is assumed that existing vulnerabilities of the communities remain the same or have worsened due to the disaster.

Response Undermines Participatory Development

The worst-case scenario where the response undermines participatory development is shown in Figure 5. This occurs when heavily funded disaster response and rehabilitation projects disrupt existing participatory development processes of POs and local NGOs. This worst-case scenario mostly occurs with the Coordination approach, but some cases have been observed for the MSP approach.

Figure 5

Response Undermines Participatory Development



In one FGD, one of the affected non-beneficiaries exclaimed, “I helped my neighbors take shelter in my house even though my family was also affected. But because I can help, I was not given any aid. Next time, I will no longer help my neighbors.” Such community conflicts created by having selective beneficiary lists were repeatedly mentioned by various groups. The conflict appears to be a mere collateral damage for having impartial disaster response for the most vulnerable. However, the repercussion lingers in the community long after the disaster response.

The culture of dependency was a general complaint by interviewed local organizations. Being provided food or cash for work or attendance, some local organizations complained that community members suddenly refused to practice mobilizing their own resources as local counterparts (e.g., shouldering their own transportation and food expenses for training, meetings, and collective actions). Where there are several responding agencies, some beneficiaries delayed rebuilding their homes despite receiving repair kits to still be eligible to receive aid from other agencies. One local NGO ranted that external responding organizations “slowly kills locally-based and small service providers.” In an extreme case where international NGOs poached staff and leaders of local NGOs, the local civil society was decimated as only two out of the 13 previously existing organizations remained operational after the disaster response.

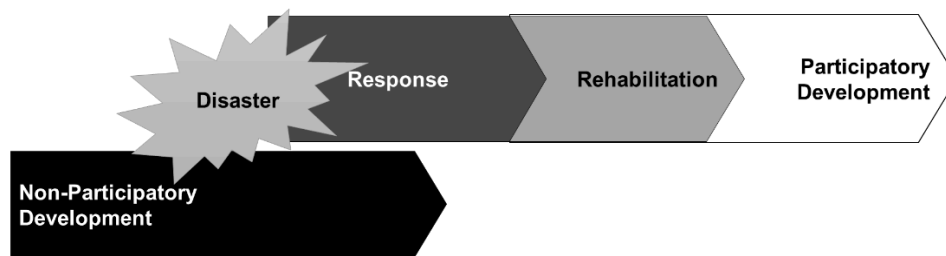
Being present after the disaster response project, NGOs and POs claim that they had to troubleshoot issues left by surging responding agencies.

Response Leads to Participatory Development

An ideal scenario is when the disaster response leads the affected community towards participatory development (See Figure 6). Most development organizations conducting disaster response yearn to use the disaster response to spark societal transformation and align with their vision-mission statements to empower communities. This was observed for the MSP and CO approaches.

Figure 6

Response Leads to Participatory Development



This scenario is attributed to the: (1) actual intervention, (2) the participatory practice in the response, and (3) the approach used to enhance community participation by the responding agency.

Specific humanitarian interventions link the response directly to participatory development. Many responding organizations include DRR capacity building and mainstreaming (e.g., participatory risk assessments, participatory contingency planning), resulting in active involvement of organizations and representatives in LDRRMC. Some provide rights awareness and capacity building on issues specific to affected sectors (e.g., gender-based violence, rights of children, informal settlers, etc.). Further, responding

alternative law groups conduct rights awareness and provide legal services to enable affected populations to claim state-mandated benefits. The conduct of family conversations during the Marawi siege affirms the dignity of IDPs and encourages women to take leadership roles.

For others, their practice in humanitarian action can potentially influence affected communities toward participatory development. Many showcase the practice of Core Humanitarian Standards to LGUs since they consider some practices as benchmarks for good governance (e.g., consultations, complaints response mechanisms, etc.). To counter the culture of dependence, some NGOs delay the release of aid to compel LGUs to release their allocated DRRM funds for their constituents or to revive the spirit of *bayanihan* (Filipino spirit of communal unit and cooperation). Some are consciously raising awareness on humanitarian malpractices to encourage affected sectors to be critical of other responders and the state. National networks of NGOs, POs and faith-based organizations manifest the principle of subsidiarity to enable local members to take leadership in the disaster response.

But the most critical factor considered by responding agencies is the approach used. The scenario is mostly observed where the CO approach is applied. The SCLR capacitated and encouraged clusters of affected households to determine, voice out and collectively act on their chosen intervention. Organized communities in conflict areas arranged security protocols with local authorities and military to ensure protection of their evacuation centers. Organized survivors of Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in Tacloban successfully campaigned against anti-poor policies (e.g., no-build zone that deprived survivors of humanitarian support), negotiated with LGUs and national agencies to provide aid and subsidize fees, and self-organized for estate management of their resettlement site.

On the other hand, the MSP approach provides a space for dialogue and relationship building amongst the vulnerable sectors and key community stakeholders. By going beyond

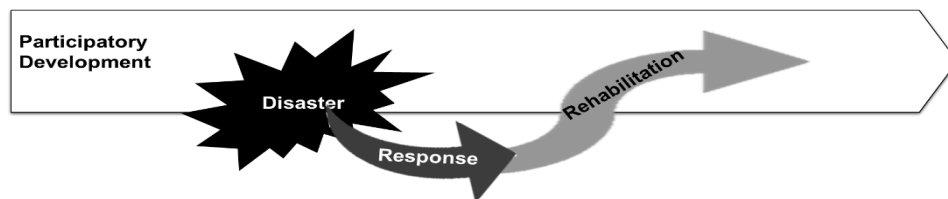
functional coordination, LGUs and affected communities are exposed to participatory processes that can be practically applied to community development. Disregarded communities caught in conflict suddenly were recognized by the LGUs and included in bottom-up budgeting processes.

Community Development-Shaped Response

Where POs—particularly rights-claiming POs—lead the humanitarian action, the result is a Community Development-Shaped response (CD-Shaped Response) (See Figure 7). Rights-claiming organizations, as opposed to those formed to just access resources, are more experienced and capacitated in negotiating with donors and other dominant stakeholders in the community. Though not observed, it is recognized that POs organized for accessing resources can reinvent themselves and be capacitated to be more politically vocal.

Figure 7

CD-Shaped Response



The PO-led approach is a paradigm shift from the inherent limitations of humanitarian projects that disconnect it from development. The disaster response ceases to be a stand-alone project but becomes part of the numerous collective actions undertaken to contribute to community development. While the project objectives, activities and resources are restricted, the humanitarian interactions with the community and other stakeholders are boundless.

Some POs mentioned that they accessed disaster-affected communities infested with insurgents by using their own backchannels. Unmet needs by specific response projects were

not easily dismissed but were pursued to be addressed through social capital, collective action, or advocacy.

Participation transcended its transactional function for the project and became part of the wider political agenda for the community. Consultations were not limited to formal gatherings as PO members used house-to-house visits and other informal channels to gather changing needs and concerns of neighbors. Raising expectations was a non-issue, as community members were aware of limitations of the PO or were part of the initiatives in resource mobilization. Issues of patronage politics were better handled since the community leaders were already used to local power dynamics.

Most importantly, a PO-led approach allowed the continued transformation of power relationships between the grassroots organization and other community stakeholders despite disasters. PO leaders were able to mobilize even disaster-affected members for DANA, to plan and implement relevant responses for both PO members and non-members, and influence LGUs to direct resources where it was lacking. Where aid cannot be channeled directly, POs were able to effectively coordinate with LGUs and partner NGOs. The goodwill provided by conducting a disaster response was used by POs as leverage in participatory governance platforms to push for projects, policies, and budgets long after the disaster. These instances allowed different stakeholders to appreciate and recognize the capacity and influence of the PO.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper explored community participation to look at approaches and opportunities on when and how disaster response projects empower (or disempower). Participation in disaster response projects was examined by identifying the common actors and their power relationships, the various approaches employed to enhance community participation, the

resulting intensity of participation in different stages of the response project, and the impact of these approaches in linking the disaster response to development.

Several key findings were noted. First, in disaster response projects, power relationships go beyond “upward accountability” to donors and “downward accountability” to the community. Such a limited lens confines participation and empowerment into merely being a product of the responding agency’s political will. From the perspective of the community, different vertical and horizontal power relationships emerge. These not only hinder participation in the project but also compel them to offset damage done by the project.

Second, while not the norm, responding agencies apply different approaches to enhance community participation, specifically the MSP and CO approach. These can potentially lead to better levels of collaboration at different stages of the disaster response project and enhance the link between disaster response and development.

Third, various factors that hinder participation, linking response to development, and empowerment can be overcome by the PO-led approach. This requires reviewing the narrative that disaster-affected community organizations do not have the capacity to lead the response. This means that the reach of the disaster response would be limited to the sphere of influence of the PO. Such an approach has at times shown how a disaster response is shaped by existing CD practice and principles.

So how can disaster response projects empower marginalized and disaster-affected communities? The following are some recommendations to consider.

For responding agencies, it is necessary to be deliberate in conducting a power analysis in the affected community and enhancing the quality of participation of the marginalized community. Though power is behind the concept of participation in decision-making, empowerment is far from being a straightforward outcome when viewed

from the limited lens of a project. This is further worsened when communities are desperate for aid and responding agencies/donors have the power of the purse. While formal and auditable mechanisms (e.g., standardized DANA, community consultations, complaints response mechanisms, visibility) can be installed to enhance downward accountability, the effectiveness of these are dependent on the rights awareness, trust on the responding agency, and the negotiating capacity of the community. As such, enhancing the capacity of the community and integrating in the community will make empowerment a purposive agenda and not a mere incidental outcome.

For donors, focus on partnerships—instead of projects—with community organizations. While it is an impossible task to establish partnerships in every corner of the country, recognize that many of these rights-claiming POs are already affiliated horizontally with alliances, networks, and coalitions and vertically in federations and confederations. Partnerships can be established at these supra-organizations, with agreements on subsidiarity whenever a disaster response project needs to be conducted. Moreover, emphasize depth rather than reach by limiting the scope of disaster response projects to the sphere of influence of the PO. Compelling POs to cover more ground than they can manage will only force them to imitate surging external agencies. Having many small responses may incur more transactional costs, but this is outweighed by the strategic long-term impact on the participatory development.

Lastly, reframe humanitarian actions and interactions from a development perspective. Much of the discourse in linking response to development starts from a humanitarian perspective, such that it appears the community only started existing after the disaster struck. By reframing disasters as part of the lifecycle of any developing community, humanitarian interactions become mere ingredients to the ongoing struggle of marginalized communities. Community development does not disappear and should not be disregarded

when a disaster strikes. Instead, the continuation of community development that is participatory, self-reliant, empowering, equitable, and accountable should shape the programming of disaster responses.

This study does not disregard the significance and relevance of humanitarian actions. Most of the affected poor have been sincerely thankful for the aid they have received and its role for them to bounce back after a disaster. The study instead looks at how such humanitarian interactions can be even more strategic, sustainable, and hopefully transformative. While problems and issues persist in the context and project implementation, the learnings gained in meaningfully participating and leading the disaster response contribute towards the empowerment of the people to meet their needs and aspirations.

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Marimar (Mare, marami pang chika!): Chikahan as Space for Conscientization, Resistance, and Collective Action to Counter Violence against Women

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Angelica Corazon P. Rayel, Mariane Joyce G. Robles**

Abstract

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a human rights violation inflicted by individuals, from strangers to family members. In the Philippines, one in every four Filipino women aged 14 to 49 are victims of it, with 41% struggling to seek help (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012). Although conventional mechanisms such as laws exist as means for protection and prevention, hostile environments impede victim-survivors from reporting or even talking about it. Due to this, women, in their intimate circles, use *chikahan* to respond to VAW and to resist the dominant cultures of patriarchy and silence. Contrary to the perception that *chikahan* is unproductive, Women in Magandang Lugar utilize this as their response to VAW through its integration into their everyday mundane activities and duties as Barangay Public Safety Officers. This article provides insights on how women use *chikahan* as a feminist organizing strategy, arguing that women-led community-based initiatives countering VAW must be examined.

Keywords: *Violence Against Women, Chikahan, Spaces, Women-led Community-based Initiatives, Feminist Organizing, Female Resistance, The Everyday Life, Cultural Politics, Patriarchy*

Everyday Chikahan

Coffee, *pandesal*, and *chikahan* under the cooling shade of a tree constitute the mornings of women in Magandang Lugar¹, a close-knit community in Quezon City. Embedded in their morning routine is conversing about mundane things relating to the responsibilities of a mother, a wife, and a woman. In their conversations about the seemingly monotonous life, they would talk about meals for the day, budgeting, and personal challenges and feelings. They would also tell intimate stories about their sexual lives, primarily through teasing one another, if they had fun in their sexual intercourse with their partners. However, beneath these stories is another layer of deep and exclusive occurrences that shed light on the dark truths of being a daughter, a wife, a mother, and a woman.

Maris choked on her tears as she recalled her traumatic experience of being locked up behind bars for playing cards at the wake of a friend. She shared how the holding cell made her uncomfortable, confined, and dirty. This made her feel sorry for herself and her daughter, who saw her in that state. Another thought that kept her awake at night was her experience of being forced by a male prisoner to provide sexual pleasure. Maris also shared how she was sold to a police officer by a friend when she was 16-years-old to satisfy his sexual desires.

Margo also narrated her experience with her previous partner and described that their relationship was life-threatening. “*Para akong nasa hukay* [I feel like I had one foot in the grave],” Margo said. She shared that even during her pregnancy, she was beaten and sexually harassed. What broke her heart further was that her daughter witnessed these things. Moreover, during their abusive relationship, she could not fend for herself and her daughter. She was disoriented, full of wounds, and felt dirty. Often, she would think of hanging herself because it was like living in hell every day. Margo recalled, “*Para siyang nagiging demonyo* [It’s like he transforms into a demon],” when her previous partner becomes violent.

Maricel shared how her partner forced her to have sex in front of their daughter. If she refused her partner, their daughter would be the one to suffer. Often, Maricel was held at knifepoint by her spouse; scared and left with no choice, she was raped.

Marya also recalled how her former partner would beat her for sex, leaving her with no choice but to cry and endure. There were also instances when he would demand intercourse in front of their child. Scared of what might happen, Marya would give in every time. She also recalled how her former partner would bring over his friends to their house and persuade her to use her body for their pleasure.

Introduction

Maris, Margo, Maricel, and Marya's stories are among the many narratives of Filipino women who are victim-survivors of violence against women (VAW). In the country, these cases, manifested in different forms, are prevalent. Reports show that rape cases rose from 1,656 in 2018 to 2,168 in 2020 and by the end of 2020, rape cases reached 6,548 (Khullar, 2021; Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.). While in Quezon City, the Women's and Children's Desk recorded approximately five reports of domestic abuse weekly pre-pandemic, which increased to 12 complaints during the pandemic (Calleja, 2020). While reports suggest the struggle against VAW, they fail to capture the harrowing experiences of individuals like Maricel and Marya whose lives and dignity are violated.

Due to this, the state has established mechanisms responding to VAW, which can be primarily seen in the establishment and implementation of policies such as Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act), programs, and institutions. Along with these, civil society organizations (CSOs) also configured initiatives to contribute to countering VAW through offering services such as counseling, referral, and education. However, in the Philippines, VAW remains one of the most pressing issues that undermine the fundamental rights of women (Khullar, 2021).

Gleaning on the experiences of Women of Magandang Lugar, these mechanisms are insufficient. Women like Marya and Maricel experience barriers in acquiring protection and justice as the “one-size-fits-all” procedure makes it almost impossible for victim-survivors to push through with their cases. Many of them back out due to the fear of having no means to provide for their families should their partners be punished, among many reasons that suggest the insufficiency of existing mechanisms.

Hence, women—through their means—create mechanisms that are responsive and sensitive to the needs of victim-survivors. Many of these mechanisms are rooted in their everyday routine and spaces that are accessible to them. Therefore, it is critical to look at these mechanisms where they channel their agency as women and foster spaces where they can freely speak, empathize, make sense of their struggle, and even respond to cases of VAW. One empirical example of this is the *Samahan ng Kababaihan ng Magandang Lugar* (SKML) where Margo, Maricel, and Marya, among others, aim to foster an environment that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of women who are victims of violence through organizational activities. The Samahan ng Kababaihan ng Magandang Lugar² was established in January 2021. It was a response to the organizing efforts by students and the absence of a women’s organization in their community. At the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown, prior to the organization’s establishment, women in their community were already active in the community pantry efforts. Originally, the membership application of the organization was intended for those who wanted to be recipients of *ayuda* (aid) during the pandemic. It is also interesting to explore that while state-led mechanisms are insufficient, the Women of Magandang Lugar still recognize that protection and support for restoring their autonomy and dignity cannot be alienated from the state. Hence, aside from creating independent mechanisms, they have incorporated identities and spaces tied with the state such as operating

as volunteer Barangay Peace and Safety Officers (BPSO) and members of SKML in responding to the prevalence of VAW in their community, especially through chikahan.

This study argues that responses to issues of VAW are not necessarily bound to the establishment of legislation, programs, and institutions. It also relies on initiatives done by women themselves at the community level. This study aims to look at this through the following questions:

1. How do the Women of Magandang Lugar understand their issues regarding VAW?
2. How do they understand the accompanying threats to their safety and well-being?
3. How do they understand the role of their women-led community-based initiatives in responding to the issues they have identified?
4. How do they understand the opportunities and threats of these initiatives in promoting feminist organizing?

This article used Haraway's (1988) concept of *situated knowledges* to understand the realities lived by the Women of Magandang Lugar; it argues that women acquire knowledge from their experiences. According to Haraway, objectivity or the truth is shaped by its *situatedness*—a location definable by space and time. Therefore, based on this situatedness, all truths come from a position within a specific “historically, culturally, and personally anchored context” (Kolb, 2024 p. 37). These positional perspectives lead to a more accurate understanding of a community, given their reflexivity of all positions it consists of (Haraway, 1988).

In order to understand the situation of the Women of Magandang Lugar, the data collection and analysis methods will take into account the subjectivist approach relying on their narratives.

To deepen our understanding, we used a narrative approach to recognize the uniqueness of each experience through stories highlighting their involvement in women's

organizational activities, intimate relationships with each other, and engagement in chikahan.

First, we identified 10 participants who are members of the women's organization and are friends or familiar with each other through a series of visits. We then interviewed nine participants and discussed the study's objectives and ethical considerations. The participants then chose their preferred pseudonyms, which were used throughout this article to secure their identities. Furthermore, we gave them a copy of the consent form to help them decide on their participation.

Second, we interviewed six women in Magandang Lugar in spaces where they felt safe. We then gave them a list of support services they may need should they experience distress after the interview. We also gave them copies of their answers to ensure the validity and their willingness to share the information gathered.

Third, for the participatory workshop, while one interviewee was unable to attend, three additional women joined since it took place in the Barangay Outpost, totaling eight participants. It consisted of five parts: (a) *kumustahan*, (b) chikahan map, (c) contribution to VAW, (d) discussion on VAW, and (e) synthesis. Lastly, we interviewed Barangay VAW Desk representatives to corroborate the stories of women in Magandang Lugar.

To present the findings of the study, the article has five sections. First, it will discuss the responses configured by the state and civil society organizations to respond to VAW. This section includes gaps that continue to undermine the rights and well-being of women in Magandang Lugar. This is followed by the stories of the Women of Magandang Lugar, the narratives that surfaced, giving life and meaning to the everyday challenges and resistance they make, particularly, those relating to VAW. The next section is a discussion on the organizational activities of Women of Magandang Lugar and how these activities can be attributed to feminist organizing strategies. This includes their mechanisms as

members of the SKML, how they navigate their identified safe and unsafe spaces, and their forms of resistance as manifested in their everyday lives. The fourth section discusses women-led community-based initiatives that respond to the prevalence of VAW. The discussion of this section is guided by a conceptual framework and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the data collected. Finally, the last section discusses the conclusions based on the individual narratives and organizational activities of the Women of Magandang Lugar.

Gaps in the Conventional Responses to Issues of Violence Against Women

The preliminary findings of the National Demographic and Health Survey in 2017 reported that 26% of women experience physical, emotional, and sexual violence from their spouses. Therefore, one in every four women aged 15 to 49 has experienced physical, emotional, and sexual violence (Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.). This necessitates the state to implement mechanisms to address VAW.

State-Led Mechanisms

1. **Philippine Commission on Women (PCW):** The PCW was first established under a different name in January 1975. Strengthening the mechanisms to achieve their goals, “The Magna Carta of Women,” or Republic Act No. 9710 was signed in May 2009—one of its objectives is “to develop plans, policies, programs, measures, and mechanisms to address discrimination and inequality in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of women and men” (RA 9710, 2009, Section 2). They envision “to be the premier policy-making and oversight agency successfully influencing development efforts towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls” (Philippine Commission on Women Citizen’s Charter, 2020, p. 2).
2. **Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act:** To ensure empowerment among women and girls, on March 8, 2004, Republic Act No. 9262, or the

“Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act” was signed into law. It defines violence against women and their children (VAWC) as “any act ... against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship ... which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse (RA 9262, 2004, Section 3).” Physical violence includes hitting, stabbing with a knife, and the like. Psychological violence includes intimidation, repeated verbal abuse, and marital infidelity. Sexual violence includes rape, sexual harassment, and treating a woman or a child as a sex object. Economic violence includes the deprivation of the right to engage in economic activities, and to use and enjoy conjugal property.

3. **Barangay Violence Against Women Desk:** “To ensure that violence against women cases [are] fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner (RA 9710, 2009, Section 9),” the Magna Carta of Women requires Local Government Units (LGUs) to establish a VAW Desk, a “physical facility,” that victim-survivors can immediately access to seek help, “managed by a person assigned by the [barangay captain]” (Barangay VAW Desk Handbook, 2012, p. 8). It emphasizes the right to their clients’ privacy and security by ensuring their confidentiality and intake interviews are conducted in spaces where clients feel comfortable and safe (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012).

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Due to the issue of a weak or absentee state emerging from developing countries, CSOs are most likely encouraged to engage in “gap-filling” (Whaites, 1998). These organizations go against the conventional approach because they penetrate grassroots activities, ensuring that development processes are democratic and participative (Tonny & Ahmed, 2020). The following CSOs employ various mechanisms in countering VAW:

1. **GABRIELA Partylist:** GABRIELA is a national alliance of women's organizations in the Philippines that aims to increase the participation of marginalized and underrepresented Filipino women in political processes. Considering the pervasive issue of VAW as the foundation for their gender-based campaign, they have launched campaigns to educate schools and communities and encourage victim-survivors to break the culture of silence (The United Nations Organization, n.d.).
2. **Likhaan Center for Women's Health:** Likhaan is a non-government, non-profit organization that operates to "help women and poor communities harness their resources and engage government and other power-holders to transform unjust and inequitable situations" (Likhaan Center for Women's Health, n.d., Who We Are section, para. 3). They examine issues, including poor health services, domestic violence, alternatives, and collective action that women can take to address their concerns. It runs eight cost-effective primary care clinics for women in low-income communities and conducts outreach services like counseling and referral for gender-based violence (GBV) in hard-to-reach areas (Likhaan Center for Women's Health, n.d.).
3. **Lunas Collective:** Lunas Collective is an online, private safe space for individuals experiencing GBV and for those seeking assistance with their sexual and reproductive health (SRH). They believe that listening is the first step towards actively helping victim-survivors and people who are seeking assistance with their SRH through their feminist, inclusive chat service. They support their clients' choices and give them a sense of relief and power by giving them options for counseling, specialized services, and referrals (Gacad, 2020, as cited in Cepeda, 2020).

Gaps in the Conventional Responses

Despite the existence of formal mechanisms implemented by the state and spearheaded by CSOs, VAW remains pervasive. Issues relating to VAW are exacerbated by popular cultures in the Philippines. According to Afkhami (2019, p. 6), violence is a social phenomenon resulting from historically rooted gender inequalities that became “embedded in culture and law.” Given the culture of patriarchy in the country, maltreatment of women is normalized in communities such as Magandang Lugar. Moreover, the belief that men are “dominant” and women should be “devalued” is legitimated through different ideological state apparatuses (Guieb, 1991).

Due to the legitimization of patriarchy, victim-survivors have often backed out of reporting their perpetrators, heightening the culture of silence. The PCW (2012) states that the culture of silence stems from the embarrassment of experiencing such harassment and the lack of faith in the justice system. Aside from the internalization of such cultures among victim-survivors and women, cultures like these are further maintained by people entrusted with the power to respond to cases of VAW. This is primarily exhibited by facilitators from the Barangay VAW Desk (2023) when they advise victim-survivors to allow their husbands to sober up first before proceeding with their cases claiming that it is normal for drunk husbands to be violent.

Furthermore, the procedure and requirements of reporting are burdensome for the victim-survivors, further reinforcing cultures that objectify women. Victim-survivors have internalized that they cannot raise their children alone, leaving them with no choice but to stay with their perpetrators. Maribeth shared that there are many cases where victim-survivors choose not to report their partners because no one will be able to provide for their family. They cannot forego a day’s worth of income. This supports that there are harmful social norms and beliefs that significantly contribute to VAW, including the notion of

unequal power relations between men and women (Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2018).

Marites' Stories: Situation of Women of Magandang Lugar

Women of Magandang Lugar

Margo is a person you could always ask, “*Mare, anong bago?* [Girl, what’s the latest?]” as she was born and raised in Magandang Lugar. She is always in the loop of what is happening in the community and in the organization. While Maribeth is a person you could always confide in as she would always say, “*Mare, bet ko yan!* [Girl, I like that!]” She is the person that people would usually go to when they are in trouble or during emergencies. Maribeth is also intimately close with her fellow members of the women’s organization and the BPSO volunteer team.

Maris is your *kumare* (a woman you are close with) who is also always updated with news in the community. She keeps tabs on what is happening whilst juggling tasks in her community and productive work. She is your “*Mare, ano ang tsimis?* [Girl, what is the latest gossip?]” type of woman. With Marichu, they make a good team, as Marichu would be your “*mareng echos.*” They would work together to oversee the community at night, especially the children who play on the streets of Magandang Lugar past the curfew hours.

But this task is impossible to deliver without Marikit and Marinela, your “*Mare, kita mo,* [Girl, I told you]” and “*Mare, anong sabi nila?* [Girl, what did they say?]” type of women who have sharp ears and eyes for unusual events in the community.

Maricar is your *kumare* who just arrived (“*Mare, kararating lang?*”) in their *chikahan* because she is always busy with the religious activities arranged by their organization.

While Mariche, Maricel, and Marya are the women who would always say “*Mare, pa-check-out.* [Girl, check this.]”, “*Mare, pa-cancel.* [Girl, cancel this.]”, and “*Mare, pakopya.* [Girl, let me copy.]” to the group to stir laughter.

“*O, magma-Marites⁴ na naman ba kayo?* [Oh, are you going to gossip among each other again?]”—the Women of Magandang Lugar have heard these comments from members of their community whenever they gather around different spaces. Among the organization members, they would even point fingers as to who the real *Marites* are. These comments manifest the negative connotations that are intertwined with *chikahan* or *pagma-Marites*. Behind the negative outlook on such phenomena are personal stories that are shared and ideally kept secret between two people who trust each other. Included in the stories of the Women of Magandang Lugar are their experiences of violence from their partners. Through writing from, through, and about these spaces, women can reclaim the narrative that they are not mere objects of representation and not worthy of being pioneers of discourse (Salvaggio, 1988).

Everyday life has been considered a “distinctively female sphere” (Felski, 2000, p. 94). Women in society have been traditionally perceived as masters of reproductive work, which is reflected in the community of Magandang Lugar. Mothers have ingrained in their daily lives a fixed schedule to perform their everyday obligations, mostly focusing on their reproductive work. However, the everyday life of women, as made evident in this study, is predominantly dictated by popular cultures of patriarchy and silence that are detrimental to the lives of women. However, it is through their organizational activities, that the Women of Magandang Lugar can resist these dominant cultures and reclaim their agencies as members of the community worthy of it. Scott (1985) talks of *routine resistance* where the marginalized are often silent about the intent of their resistance. This routine of resistance, present in the everyday lives of the Women of Magandang Lugar, reflects the “taken-for-granted resistance” that often happens as a result of institutions of repression.

The Women of Magandang Lugar shared their everyday lives alongside their struggles and resistances. Each voice gave different meanings to what it is like living in Magandang

Lugar as a mother, a wife, and a woman.

Magandang Lugar

Amidst the rapid urbanization of Quezon City, there lies Magandang Lugar, a close-knit community that thrives on the simplicity of life. It houses up to 200 families that depend on various livelihoods such as scavenging, construction work, street sweeping, and selling of goods. Magandang Lugar also faces challenges that undermine their safety and well-being as the community sits on privately-owned land, where they face threats of demolition.

According to Marya, due to the threat of demolition, some women in Magandang Lugar are left with no choice but to become mistresses of “blue guards⁵” in the area so they do not lose their houses.

Marichu also shared that the presence of people with substance abuse poses a threat, which supports Margo’s experience from her previous partner who used drugs. “*Yung [kaligatsan] na dapat nararanasan ko, hindi ko mararanasan habambuhay iyun hanggang nasa kanya pa [ako]* [The feeling of safety I should have, I will not be able to experience that for as long as I stay with him],” said Margo. This is precisely true as Maribeth argues that being in the same household with your perpetrator is a clear threat to their safety and well-being. According to her, children dragged into marital arguments or those who serve as collateral damage also experience threats to their safety and well-being, where some result in having trauma.

Moreover, the Barangay VAW Desk suggests that the occurrence of VAW in Magandang Lugar is low. In 2022, six cases were reported, spread throughout January, April, August, September, October, and November; two cases were reported in May, totaling eight in 2022. In 2023, three cases of VAW were reported to the barangay from

January to June. However, Marinela, president of the women's organization, approximated that they assist in one case every week, indicating its pervasiveness in their community.

Victim-survivors are also required to have non-monetary resources, such as time, to find justice—evidently, this is not the case for all. “*Maproseso kasi* [It is tedious],” according to one of the Barangay VAW Desk Facilitators; victim-survivors are forced to undergo a lengthy process to file and win cases against their perpetrators. Moreso, facilitators of the Barangay VAW Desk simply perceive circumstances where victim-survivors back out as a source of amusement. They laugh about the stories of those who are *bugbog-sarado* (beaten-up) and *duguan* (bloodied and beaten) who chose to back out of reporting their partners. According to the facilitators, victim-survivors back out of seeking justice because of their emotions—“*mahal nila [at] naaawa sila [sa asawa nila]* [They love and pity their partners].”

These responses from the Barangay VAW Desk Facilitators do not manifest their goal of addressing VAW “cases in a manner that is gender-sensitive” (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012, p. 9). Moreso, the Barangay VAW Desk Facilitators stated that they did not choose to work as such; they simply applied for work in their barangay and were assigned by the incumbent Barangay Captain to the VAW Desk. According to their handbook, to be designated as a VAW Desk Officer, one only has to be a woman barangay *kagawad* or *tanod*. Gender-sensitivity training and orientation on Anti-VAW laws are not part of their qualifications. Instead, these may come after their appointment at the VAW Desk (Philippine Commission on Women, 2012).

The Barangay VAW Desk Handbook also states that they provide a referral system to victim-survivors. To properly implement this, the assigned VAW Desk Officers must “refer the victim-survivor to the appropriate institutions and agencies” (Philippine

Commission on Women, 2012, p. 34), including but not limited to government offices, educational institutions, and CSOs. Contrarily, the Barangay VAW Desk Facilitators claim no implementation of such a system, and they merely refer victim-survivors with medical needs to hospitals. Lastly, according to them, most cases of Magandang Lugar are first responded to by their BPSO. However, their handbook does not include their role in the protocols and procedures, making the roles of BPSOs as responders to cases of VAW ambiguous.

The lack of a survivor-centric approach in dealing with VAW forces victim-survivors to live in silence and with the imminent threat in their homes. These gaps are multi-layered; victim-survivors experience intersectional abuse when relating to different societal actors. Given the gaps that further exacerbate the powerlessness of the Women of Magandang Lugar, it is critical to look into the potential of their everyday organizational activities in countering VAW cases in their community.

Organizational Activities and Chikahan as Feminist Organizing Strategies

In more formal spaces, members of the women's organization who are also volunteers of BPSO do rounds in Magandang Lugar during nighttime to ensure the safety of the community. They ensure that no children are outside, and no men are drinking past curfew hours. They are also on standby during emergencies that might happen during the night. Marinela shared that they are often the first ones to respond to a domestic dispute at night. Maribeth added they encountered a child outside their house past curfew hours who said that they did not want to go home because their parents were arguing. The dominant idea that only the state and institutions have the power to promote social order, and the idea that only men can lead is debunked by their participation as BPSO volunteers. Through participating in such tasks, women become agents of the government to reinforce the safety

of their community. They integrate their identity as mothers by doing rounds throughout the community as they enforce the community curfew among children and other community members.

Performing their duties as BPSO volunteers also allow them to engage in chikahan enabled by the formal space of their Barangay Outpost. Contrary to the popular culture that women have no space outside their homes, the Women of Magandang Lugar exhibit ownership over their Barangay Outpost where no one can threaten their safety because they themselves raised funds to establish this, and since this is also where most of their organizational activities are being held.

Other organizational activities include managing and operating the Roman Catholic masses in their community twice a month. The Women of Magandang Lugar play an important role in religious activities since they make the Roman Catholic masses more accessible to their community by organizing this celebration in a space within their community, the nearby basketball half-court. They also have events, tasks, and interests that go beyond their usual religious activities. They participate in the celebrations of fiestas and even join barangay-level competitions with their children. Zumba, livelihood activities, community pantry, community kitchen, distribution of ayuda, clean-up drives, and participation in barangay raffles are also some activities that were identified by the Women of Magandang Lugar. Whenever they prepare for these activities, they also engage in chikahan.

They reinforce the idea that women, like men, have such power and agency, and their collective movement and participation that is anchored in their everyday lives is an act of resistance. Hendessi and Higelin (2019, p. 3) stated that:

[S]afe, inclusive women-only spaces where women can come together to develop

their leadership, agency, and collective capacity are a vital element in supporting women to define and drive their own protective needs. By doing so, the power to plan and implement community-based protection activities is shifted to the women affected by the crisis.

The Women of Magandang Lugar, through their activities, hinged on it being women-led and community-based, can protect and empower each other to fulfill their roles as mothers, wives, and organizational members despite experiences of marginalization and even violence. This is crucial in their struggle for agency, and peace from violence against women.

Created Space

During the ‘Chikahan Map’ in the participatory workshop, the Women of Magandang Lugar identified the safe and unsafe spaces in their community, especially for their chikahan. They said that this always happens in *eskinitas*⁶ and outside Margo’s house, wherein they could talk about finances, their partner’s attitudes, and other life advice. Margo stated that because they are always together during organizational activities and chikahan, they are already familiar with each others’ behavior. Maris added that if they have misunderstandings with someone in the group, they directly talk to that person for resolution.

Women of Magandang Lugar participate in spaces where they freely speak—resisting the dominant culture of silence. Particularly, the created chikahan spaces are organic spaces which emerge out of sets of common concerns or identifications [mentioned above] and may come into being as a result of popular mobilization, such as around identity or issue-based concerns, or may consist of spaces in which like-minded people join together in common pursuits (Cornwall, 2002 as cited in Gaventa, 2006, p. 27).

It “simply involv[es] natural places where people gather to debate, discuss, and resist, outside of the institutionalized policy arenas” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27). Gaventa (2006, p. 27) added, “those who create [the space] are more likely to have power within it,” as observed with the Women of Magandang Lugar.

Alternative Definitions of Everyday Life

Most of the time, the Women of Magandang Lugar talk about their reproductive work as mothers and wives with their friends as per the participatory workshop. Marya said chikahan is an enjoyable pastime activity for them. It is when they cook, eat, and talk about their household concerns together.

Felski (2000) considered the home as a highly gendered space. It is a place of female “subordination”, but it can be transformed into a site where women can exhibit their power within and show their strength and competence in their reproductive roles.

In the context of the Women of Magandang Lugar, their significant alternative homes are their chikahan spaces where they feel safe, and physically and emotionally comfortable. These spaces allow people to feel supported and respected. As mentioned, the chikahan spaces identified include alleyways that are hidden, allowing for more discreet conversations, and outside Margo’s house because it is comfortable and spacious. It is also a space where they are comfortable with their companions and where they are willing to open up. Margo identified that communication could be a great avenue to address issues. So aside from having their homes where they master reproductive roles, these alternative homes also serve as a foundation of their agency.

Feminist Organizing

Drawing from the popular cultures reflected in their community and the forms of resistance that are manifested by the Women of Magandang Lugar, it can be inferred that chikahan does not just provide them an avenue to talk about their troubles. Below are some examples

of how these are manifested.

According to Tannen (1990), mutual support stems from the similarity of matching experience. This means that women talking about their troubles become a form of bonding among themselves. There is also a sense of intimacy and femininity that can be attributed to mutual support. *Reciprocal self-disclosure* is also present among the women as a manifestation of this support. Specifically, matching troubles, and repetition of syntactic patterns, keywords, and phrases (e.g., use of the words *Marites*, *resbak*⁷, and *chikahan*) are present, as well as physical touches that symbolize oneness and sympathy to their friends. Additionally, one-on-one conversations where victim-survivors are able to confide in their friends are also present. Because of these, there is a shift from women pertained to being mere victims into victim-survivors who are capable of employing effective coping survival and resistance strategies (Proffitt, 1996). For the closing activity of the participatory workshop, the Women of Magandang Lugar wrote inspirational notes they can share with the women and victim-survivors in their community. This mutual support is a positive first step in reclaiming their agency on VAW and how they can challenge the system that perpetuates this.

While there are imminent everyday threats to the safety of the Women in Magandang Lugar, such as being in the same household as their perpetrator, the Women of Magandang Lugar continue to exhibit resistance against these. As a BPSO volunteer and a survivor herself, Margo shared that she can provide comfort and protection to women who are abused through her willingness to let them stay at her home while waiting for the barangay response team. Maribeth, as the barangay coordinator, said that she had been approached by women in the community multiple times to ask for help; she shared a specific case where she safely hid the victim-survivor before the barangay officers arrived to respond. These responses serve as an opportunity for the Women in Magandang Lugar to

find safety and protection in the presence of these volunteers.

Aside from providing mutual support and protection to others, the Women of Magandang Lugar have configured mechanisms to create their own safe spaces or what they call “*tambayan ng mga Marites*.” For their chikahans, they have chosen physically safe alternative homes within their community, such as comfortable spaces far from fast-passing vehicles and the main roads. From the ‘Contribution to VAW’ portion of the participatory workshop, the participants determined their responses if someone asked for help. In these spaces, they can share their personal stories with the individuals they trust the most, and in turn, their friends give them good moral advice—“sharing is caring.” They also mentioned the importance of not spreading entrusted stories to other people. They also believe that they are empowered to *resbak*, especially for the victim-survivors of Magandang Lugar. Despite the negative notion of this behavior, they concluded that *resbak* is not necessarily to fight someone right away or “*away[in] agad*.” Instead, it simply means being there for one another and making sure that no one is left alone. Just as importantly, they will refer and assist the victim-survivors to their barangay coordinator to help them report their case to the Barangay VAW Desk.

Furthermore, the chikahan of Women of Magandang Lugar also exhibits conscientization, which Freire (1970), describes as a process of having critical consciousness or awareness of the reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality. It is the ability of the oppressed to understand their reality and oppression in all its forms as they have become desensitized to it. In the context of the Women of Magandang Lugar, it is seen that they understand their experiences of violence inflicted by men as inhumane and therefore unacceptable. They also said that some victim-survivors became martyrs who would endure everything for their children and family. This is a dark period in the lives of Marya and Margo, and possibly of more women

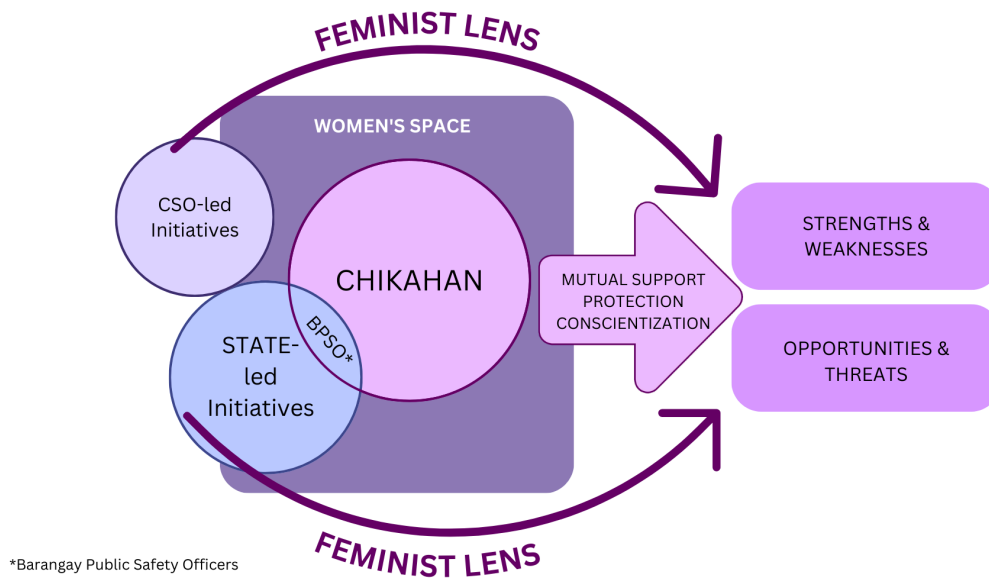
in the community and the country with untold stories.

Now stronger, *palaban* (defiant), and empowered due to their past experiences, Women of Magandang Lugar have identified that for women to be free, they should be equal to men, should not be seen as “*pangkama o pang-display lang* [for sexual pleasure or for display only],” and should not be abused or used as “punching bags” by their partners. Marya emphasized that men have no right to abuse or even hurt their partners. In this very nature, the Women of Magandang Lugar are now able to reject objectification and sexual abuse by fighting back and speaking of their power, showing that they are not weak. This is expressed by Marya who “*naramdama[n] [a]ng tunay na [pagka]babae noong pinaglaban [niya] ang kanyang karapatan* [felt the true meaning of being a woman when she fought for her right].” With the hopes for the women in the community to attain their freedom and safety, the empowered Women in Magandang Lugar are willing to share their past experiences to empower others. They also lead responses to similar situations in their community. The habit of *chikahan* contributes to women’s consciousness-raising. These “are seen as opportunities...where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, and relationships that affect their lives and interests” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). The women’s participation in these spaces can “strengthen [their] collective power to act” (Hendessi & Higelin, 2019) to generate women-led community-based protection mechanisms for themselves.

Organizing and Creating Safe Spaces for Women to Heal, Build Solidarity, and Take Action Against Violence

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



To respond to issues of VAW, we looked into state-led, CSO-led, and women-led community-based initiatives. Because of the gaps in the state-led initiatives and different CSOs, women-led community-based initiatives, we explored the chikahan of the Women of Magandang Lugar. The intersection between state-led and women-led community-based initiatives includes the BPSO with its volunteers who are the Women of Magandang Lugar. As mentioned, while doing their volunteer work, they also engage in chikahan. Their chikahan included the elements of provision of mutual support, protection, and conscientization. Through the feminist lens, we assessed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the chikahan space and its elements:

Table 1

SWOT Analysis of Chikahan Space and its Elements

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established organization with officers and consistent activities • Physical location of their <i>tambayan</i> and outpost is easily accessible to most if not all members • Relationships among members are strong enough to encourage the participation of others 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low participation of other organization members • Disappropriate number of organizational activities and active members • Lack of financial assets and as a result, weakness in the design and implementation of organization programs and projects
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological First Aid Training and/or Feminist Care Workshop • Establishment of a temporary shelter as a preventive measure for immediate cases of VAW • Educational Discussions on women’s rights • Couple Gender Sensitivity Training 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue guards that are red-tagging the women in Magandang Lugar • Community members who stigmatize the <i>chikahan</i> of the women in Magandang Lugar • Drug addicts that are suspected to do “usual crimes” at night during the shift of BPSO volunteers

Presented are the identified internal and external factors of chikahan space and its elements of mutual support, protection, and conscientization through the Feminist Lens. On the organization’s human resources, relationship-building was found as a strength, but relationship-deepening was a weakness. Opportunities for empowerment through learning activities were also determined. These are challenged by the threat to safety in Magandang Lugar. From this, we suggest the collaboration of all actors involved in successfully countering VAW not just in Magandang Lugar, but in the whole country.

Community-based organizations, therefore, must not be perceived merely as a means to easily access ayuda. Instead, they must move towards transformational changes rooted in the power within its members. The Women of Magandang Lugar has already established an active organization, however, there are still many opportunities to consider to counter VAW in the community.

Chikahan is already embedded within their culture as women in Magandang Lugar and as members of their organization. From this culture of chikahan, the Women of Magandang Lugar are already taking steps towards helping victim-survivors, as Lunas

Collective states that listening is the first step to doing so (Gacad, 2020, as cited in Cepeda, 2020). They may consider creating a more formalized support system to enable victim-survivors, even those who are not part of their organization, to externalize and express their survivorship. The Samahan ng Kababaihan ng Magandang Lugar has also shown their capacity to create spaces with the establishment of their Barangay Outpost. Similarly, they may organize initiatives to raise funds for a temporary shelter for victim-survivors who remain unsafe from their perpetrators, which Maribeth also envisions. Women of Magandang Lugar who engage in their created spaces may be empowered and in turn, empower others.

The power of the Women of Magandang Lugar may also be catalyzed by others to support the success and sustainability of safe spaces for women. Involvement is essential for other community members to understand the current threats that women experience and the benefits of their created spaces for them. Moreso, safe spaces created for women are evidently intertwined with the community dynamics, therefore, they must not be treated as a separate entity, but rather “an extension of broader community life” (UNFPA, 2015, p. 7).

Empowerment may also be achieved through women-led activities such as Educational Discussions that explain their rights as women, Psychological First-Aid Training and Feminist Care Workshops as guides for caring for themselves and others, and other similar learning activities. They may also organize Couples’ Gender Sensitivity Training that is made open for other community members of Magandang Lugar. These women-led and community-based initiatives may serve as measures in countering VAW cases in their community, showcasing their inherent power to influence people and society’s behavior.

These recommended mechanisms, spearheaded by the Women of Magandang Lugar for their community, exhibit that women-led community-based organizations may work

with the support of CSOs who already implement such projects. These partnerships may build and utilize machinery to advocate justice for victim-survivors. Because of the potential of their women's organization, the negative perception of chikahan is now transformed into an empowering means of sharing their matching struggles, reinforcing their collectivism and resistance to the oppressive dominant culture.

Conclusion

VAW is prevalent in the country. We conclude that responses to issues of VAW are not limited to legislation and programs that protect the interests of women. Through the struggles women continue to face, they stratify various mechanisms for empowerment, resistance, and reclaiming their agency.

Women of Magandang Lugar have already established an organization with innate strengths for resistance and protection against oppression. One mechanism they use is chikahan, which is integral in their everyday lives and is amplified by their 'power within.' Their organization's 'power within' each other is a basis for further empowerment of its members and other women, through the inspiration and influence of empowered women in the community.

We believe that women are capable of transforming more spaces into their alternative homes, just like their chikahan spaces. Women of Magandang Lugar are able to solidify and establish these spaces into genuine safe spaces for women. This is essential for those who are yet to find that space and those who continue to adhere to the culture of silence due to fears they may have. Pushing forward the everyday spaces led by women to be truly transformative for their communities exhibits the women's 'power to' "exercise agency and to realize [their] potential of rights, citizenship, or voice" (Gaventa, 2006, p. 24).

To conclude, women, girls, communities, and the country should sustain conversations about women's power and experiences, and promote dialogues recognizing the value and productivity of chikahan in countering VAW. With this, there must be a paradigm shift highlighting her-stories—not only to validate it, but to inspire and empower victim-survivors and other women to speak up about their experiences. As the title of this article states, "*Mga mare, marami pang chika*"—there is still a lot to talk about, stories are unending, which is why chikahan is here to stay.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Magandang Lugar is used as a pseudonym for the privacy of the community in Quezon City that was studied.

² A portion of the actual name of the organization containing its location was changed for privacy reasons.

³ From the Spanish word ‘chismis’ meaning gossip.

⁴ Short for “*Mare, ito ang latest*” (Girl, this is the latest news). It is associated with a person who is all ears and in the loop with all the latest gossip or new information (De Leon, 2022).

⁵ Hired security personnel that aims to protect privately owned properties from individuals who would want to occupy the area illegally.

⁶ Filipino term for alleyways.

⁷ Filipino slang that comes from the words ‘wrest back’ which means retaliate or to avenge something or someone. In this case, what is being taken back through retaliation is the dignity of a person who was maligned, offended, insulted, or physically harmed (Limos, 2019).

Constraints and Potentials for Just Transition in the Jeepney Modernization Program

Benjamin B. Velasco

Abstract

Jeepney drivers and operators, who are informal transport workers, have commonly perceived the modernization program called PUVMP as a phaseout of their livelihood. The paper reviews the rationale for the jeepney modernization program using the lens of just transition which posits that, through social dialogue and decent work, workers will not be left behind in the changes needed in response to climate change, traffic congestion and industry formalization. However, the design and implementation of the modernization program—frequently enforced in a securitized fashion—shows it to be discriminatory. Using document review, key informant interviews and participant observation undertaken during the pandemic, the paper interrogates the experience of groups which nonetheless have critically engaged with the government in order to reveal the possibilities and limits of fighting for just transition within a discriminatory modernization.

Keywords: Jeepney operators and drivers, informal transport workers, PUVMP, just transition, climate change

Introduction

Before, during, and after the pandemic, the jeepney sector has been threatened by the implementation of a Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP). Conceived as a means of climate change mitigation, the PUVMP was also described as a way to rationalize public transportation in response to traffic congestion and air pollution. However, from the very start, jeepney drivers and operators have perceived the PUVMP as anti-poor and a phaseout of their livelihood. Through determined resistance by jeepney organizations, mainly

in the form of strikes, the realization of the PUVMP has been pushed back and delayed since it was first proposed more than a decade ago.

The modernization plan envisaged in the middle of 2017 mandated a three-year transition for all public utility vehicles, not just public utility jeepneys (PUJs). But President Rodrigo Duterte attempted to ram through the phaseout of jeepneys by January 1, 2018 and infamously stated that he had no qualms seeing jeepney drivers and operators die of hunger (Ranada, 2017). Yet Duterte's administration was also forced to retreat in the face of opposition by jeepney groups. The pandemic interrupted the timeline for the PUVMP but also led to an abrupt ban on jeepneys on the roads. Under the new administration of Bong Bong Marcos, Jr. the government threatened to push through, after several extensions of the deadline as a result of resistance by jeepney groups, with canceling the franchises of individual jeepney operators who will not consolidate into corporations or cooperatives by the end of April 2024 as a final cut-off date (Yu, 2024b). Yet the deadline passed with government agencies wavering between enforcing the cancellation of franchises and opening up to suggestions to allow more time for consolidation (Taguines, 2024; Yu, 2024c). Recently, the Senate (2024) passed a resolution calling for the suspension of the PUVMP, now called the Public Transportation Modernization Program (PTMP). The executive promptly countered that the PTMP will continue despite the resolution (Cabrera, 2024). These events reveal the enduring contestation around the modernization program, and therefore the relevance of assessing the strategies that affected informal jeepney workers have undertaken in response.

This paper aims to critically assess the jeepney modernization program using the lens of just transition. According to the United Nations (UN) Climate Change News (2023, para. 3), "A just transition means transforming the economy and economic system in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities

and leaving no one behind.” The paper relied on key informant interviews and participant observation undertaken in 2021 to 2022 for its primary data. These highlight the experience of groups which have critically engaged with the government in its push to modernize the public transportation in the Philippines. By highlighting the experiences of these groups, this paper aims to address a gap in the broader discussion on jeepney modernization; a discussion which has been largely dominated by the government. The paper also employed document and policy reviews in its assessment.

This paper is divided into four main sections. The first section critically reviews the rationale for the jeepney modernization program as a response to climate change, traffic congestion and industry formalization. This is followed by a discussion on just transition as the theoretical framework of the study. Thirdly, the paper describes the experiences of various transport groups in dealing with the government’s push for modernization; their strategies, opportunities for further action and the limits of engaging with the government. The paper ends by returning to the concept of just transition and an argument that the design and implementation of the modernization program—frequently enforced in a securitized fashion—is discriminatory and unjust.

Informality in the Jeepney Sector

Long seen as a cultural symbol of the country, jeepneys are a local design and adaptation of leftover US military jeeps during the Second World War. About 40 million person-trips per day or 40% of commuter traffic is carried by jeepneys (Mariano, n.d.; Mettke et al., 2016).

There is no accurate accounting of the total number of PUJs. Estimates vary widely: 180,000 jeeps (Mariano et al., 2019), 240,000 (Pontawe & Napalang, 2018), 250,000 (Mettke et al., 2016) or 300,000 (Mendoza, 2021). In Metro Manila, there are more than 700 registered jeepney routes and 55,000 jeepneys operating (Mariano et al., 2019). Another

estimate puts it at 73,000 (Mendoza, 2021). In comparison, there are 250 routes, 5,776 franchises and 7,350 PUJ units in the province of Cebu (World Bank, n.d.). Metro Cebu is the second biggest metropolis after Metro Manila.

The PUJ sector in Metro Manila is highly fragmented: 80% of operators own just one jeepney while the average operator owns 1.3 vehicles (Mariano et al., 2019). The PUJs in Cebu are as fragmented as in Manila: a jeepney operator owns an average of 1.5 units. About 90% of all franchises only have one unit. There are two units for 8% of jeepney operators, and there are more than two units for only 2% of the total franchise owners (World Bank, n.d.). No doubt, this pattern is repeated nationwide.

The owners of jeepneys, called operators, are evidently among the self-employed poor. Many operators are also drivers themselves. Operators engage drivers on informal arrangements called the boundary system. In this setup, drivers pay a fixed daily amount—called the boundary—to the owner for operating the jeepney. Any income above the boundary is the driver's share. According to Pontawe and Napalang (2018), the boundary of an operator is anywhere from PHP 800 to PHP 1,100 while the driver's take is from PHP 500 to PHP 800. While the operator is assured of the daily boundary, the driver's income is dependent on the vagaries of congestion, weather and volume of commuters. However, even the operator's livelihood is vulnerable since the jeepney unit can be broken or otherwise not usable. Unmistakably, both jeepney operators and drivers are workers in the informal economy.

Rationale for Jeepney Modernization

Climate mitigation and industry formalization are both major reasons for modernization of the public transportation sector. Among the key aims are the control and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, rapid motorization, and shift to car usage. Other objectives are to have a formal and quality public transport system. This would be achieved

through higher capacity vehicles, fleet consolidation, improved service, and operational efficiency. Over the long-term, the vision is the electrification of public transportation (Mariano, n.d.).

To quantify the scale of the problems that the PUVMP is meant to solve, some key statistics are relevant. Transportation, both public and private, produces 28% to 35% of greenhouse gas emissions (Tiu, 2021; Fortaleza, 2019; ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014; Mariano, n.d.). According to some sources, transport is the second highest greenhouse gas emitter (Tiu, 2021; Fortaleza, 2019) while other sources claim it is the third (Climate Action Tracker, 2020).

As for air pollution, transport as a whole contributes 65% of the total (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014). This makes the sector the biggest source of air pollution (Tiu, 2021; Fortaleza, 2019; Mariano, n.d.). Since 1987, most of the National Capital Region has registered greater than normal air pollution (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014).

The cost of congestion in the National Capital Region is USD 24 billion per year or 10% of GDP as of 2017. Opportunity cost, health, and fuel are included in this estimate. This figure was 46% higher than just three years earlier (Mariano, n.d.). In 2023, Metro Manila had the world's worst traffic for a metropolitan area (Yu, 2024a).

Finally, fleet consolidation was envisaged as a solution to fragmentation in the jeepney sector. Consolidation was planned on three levels. First, through regulation to reduce the number of operators. Second, to decrease the number of franchises on the basis of a one route-one franchise principle. And third, to cut the number of public transport fleets by shifting to higher-capacity vehicles (Mariano, n.d.). In this way, it is projected that there will be 11,000 or 22% less jeepney units. Further, the decline would deepen to 42,000 units or 78% in 2026 (Mettke et al., 2016).

Government planners argue that fragmentation leads to extreme on-street competition whose negative outcomes are inefficiency, congestion, unsafe streets, and difficulty to regulate (Mariano, n.d.). While PUJs have a reputation for causing traffic and pollution, the facts paint a different picture. About 80% of all trips in Metro Manila are carried by PUVs but buses and jeepneys only occupy 17% of the road space. In terms of carrying capacity, jeepneys and buses are more efficient. Thus, PUVs are not the main culprit in traffic, greenhouse gas emissions, and air pollution (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2014).

Jeepneys emitted 15% of the total greenhouse gas emissions for transport in 2015 (Mariano, n.d.). In contrast, Mettke et al. (2016) asserted that jeepneys are the biggest contributor to emissions among transport. This allegation is hard to sustain. Private vehicles outnumber public utility vehicles by a huge margin. There are 2.5 million vehicles in the National Capital Region, of which only 73,000 are jeeps. Meanwhile there are 300,000 jeeps out of some 13 million vehicles nationwide (Mendoza, 2021). Thus, informal jeepney workers are victims of othering.

Contradictions of Jeepney Modernization

The first modern jeepneys started operating in 2018 while some 500 units were plying 30 routes in over six regions by November 2019. Out of this number, 208 modern jeepneys were in 10 routes in the National Capital Region. Nationwide, more than 80 routes and 2,500 units were allocated provisional franchises to operate (Mariano et al., 2019).

Mariano et al. (2019) concluded that modern jeepney operators and drivers would attain higher incomes as a result of the higher capacity and longer operation hours. The better incomes were also a consequence of the shift from a boundary system to wage employment. Nonetheless, the study also found that the costly modern jeepneys, including bigger overheads, was an onerous burden. The substantial overheads were a consequence of fleet

management, formal organization as cooperative or corporation, and workers' benefits. Still, economies of scale were expected to result in cheaper procurement of parts and servicing of maintenance. Further, rates of return over the longer term of 15 years and over were better (Mariano et al., 2019).

There is no question that modern jeepneys are very expensive. Different types of modern jeepneys have varying prices: PHP 950,000 for an e-jeepney, PHP 1.1 million for a Euro-4 diesel jeepney, PHP 1.8 million for a Euro-4 diesel minibus, and PHP 4.5 million for a Euro-4 bus (Mettke et al., 2016). As of late, the price of the modern jeepney had risen to PHP 1.4 to 3 million, according to the Department of Transportation (DOTr) (Bautista & Moya, 2023). A modern jeepney has add-ons that traditional units certainly do not have: GPS, WiFi, EPS, and cameras. Out of the total cost of a modern jeepney, the government will subsidize PHP 210,000 or PHP 280,000 depending on the type of vehicle (Dela Cruz, 2023). Thus, the expected monthly amortization is evidently exorbitant for lowly jeepney operators and drivers who are informal workers.

Securing the finances to replace 180,000 jeepneys is a major hurdle as current credit facilities are only enough for 1,400 units and there are only commitments from the government for 14,000 new units (Mariano et al., 2019). Another problem is that traditional jeepneys are bound to be displaced wholesale when modern jeepneys are deployed on existing routes not just on new lines.

Jeepney Woes During the Pandemic

The depth of the crisis suffered by jeepney drivers and operators during the pandemic was revealed in tragic scenes of them begging on the streets due to months of inability to earn a living. Inevitably this led to a silent pandemic—because it was unacknowledged by the jeepney drivers and operators—of mental health problems (Velasco, 2023).

On March 16, 2020, the first imposition of the so-called enhanced community quarantine in Metro Manila shut down all forms of public transportation. This affected an estimated 121,405 PUVs, of which 50,072 are PUJs. The more relaxed general community quarantine on June 1, 2020, allowed some PUVs such as city buses, point-to-point buses, taxis, ride hailing apps and shuttles to operate at half capacity. Traditional jeepneys were still banned (Just Transition to a Modernized PUV Sector bill, 2020).

On June 22, 2020, PUJs complying with the rules on PUVMP were allowed to operate. Around 6,000 traditional PUJs were allowed to ply some routes by July 3, 2020. But with a stricter modified enhanced community quarantine imposed by August 4, 2020, the operating PUJs were down to a little less than 1,000 units. A conservative estimate reveals that PUJ operators and drivers lost PHP 2 billion while public transportation workers as a whole lost PHP 5 billion in that period (Just Transition to a Modernized PUV Sector bill, 2020).

In response to the public transportation crisis affecting both commuters and workers amidst the pandemic, the group Move As One Coalition was formed. It is a broad alliance of 140 organizations and more than 77,000 individuals advocating for a safer, more humane, and more inclusive public transportation system in the Philippines (Bendaña et al., 2021). As public transport advocates, its main demand is reform of public transportation and promotion of people's mobility.

Discriminatory Modernization not Just Transition

Just transition was born as a concept by trade unions which were grappling with the seeming contradiction between protecting jobs and protecting nature. The proponents of just transition asserted that the choice was not employment or environment but protecting both at the same time (Fortaleza, 2019). The labor movement's framework of just transition serves precisely to bridge these concerns into a unified position that advances both workers' welfare

and environmental protection. In 2015, the International Labour Organization (ILO) mainstreamed the concept. Combining traditional advocacies with new imperatives, ILO (2015) argued that a process of social dialogue and an outcome of decent work should animate the just transition to a low-carbon future.

Decent work is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 of the UN and the normative agenda of the ILO. Both institutions understand that inclusive growth is premised on the achievement of decent work along with economic progress so that all workers benefit. Its four pillars are employment generation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue. Social protection refers to programs that seek to mitigate risks that people face in their work and life. Meanwhile, social dialogue denotes any form of discussion and negotiation between the actors in the employment relationship—principally the employer, employees and the government—to resolve workplace issues (ILO, 2017).

Thus, while just transition originated as a concept within industrial relations, it is aligned with the social development ideal of leaving no one behind. This study uses just transition as the theoretical framework in assessing the PUVMP modernization program.

The PUVMP has been cited for its manifest injustices or condemned as a breach of just transition (Fortaleza, 2019; Tiu, 2021; Mendoza, 2021; Bendaña et al., 2021). The PUVMP is in fact a litmus test of the climate change policies of the Philippines and its pronouncements for just transition as well as its avowed employment agenda of decent work and social dialogue.

In 2016, the Philippines was included among a few countries to take part in an ILO pilot project on just transition. The pilot project intended to jumpstart the application of the “Guidelines on Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies” that was released by the ILO in October 2015. According to the Guidelines:

Just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy, as described in this document, needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty... Economies must be productive to meet the needs of the world's growing population. Societies must be inclusive, providing opportunities for decent work for all, reducing inequalities and effectively eliminating poverty (ILO, 2015, p. 4).

The drafting of the implementing rules and regulations of the Green Jobs Act was one of the results of the pilot project (Just Transition and Equitable Climate Action Resource Center, n.d.). The rules aspired to:

Pursue a just transition for all, job security for workers affected by the transition process which drives economic prosperity, decent job creation, sustainable and resilient livelihoods and communities, poverty reduction and social justice, anchored on social dialogue and tripartism at all levels (Department of Labor and Employment, 2017, p. 1).

Therefore, the basic tenets of just transition—decent work and social dialogue—were codified through the Green Jobs Act's implementing rules. However, were actual deeds aligned with these lofty declarations?

The contradictions in the implementation of the PUVMP, its frequently securitized enforcement and the pandemic woes experienced by informal jeepney workers expose the PUVMP as misaligned with just transition and the aim of leaving no one behind. Instead, jeepney drivers and operators are left behind subjects in a discriminatory transition under the modernization program.

Fighting for Just Transition Within the Modernization Program

The demands and position of jeepney groups that call for an outright rejection of the PUVMP are sufficiently documented (Alternative Development Program, 2023; Dimalanta,

et al., 2023; IBON Foundation, 2018; Mendoza, 2021). It is argued that the modernization program is a neoliberal reform that privileges local and foreign capital to the detriment of informal transport workers and the commuting public. Thus, phasing out traditional jeepneys in favor of modern and electric vehicles are unnecessary and ultimately favors big capitalists while informal workers lose their livelihoods.

Jeepney organizations PISTON and MANIBELA demand the total junking of the PUVMP and the repudiation not extension of the consolidation requirement (Relativo, 2023; Tan 2023; Yu, 2023). On the opposite side of the fence are other big jeepney organizations supporting the modernization program (Laqui, 2024). Straddling the extreme positions of outright rejection and full support, the group National Confederation of Transportworkers' Union (NCTU) critically engages the government on the implementation of the PUVMP in pursuit of ensuring just transition within the modernization program. NCTU is a member of the Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO), an affiliate of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), and also a member of Move As One.

Critical engagement describes the actions of groups which accept the necessity for jeepney modernization as a measure to mitigate climate change and traffic congestion but seek reform of the program so that affected workers are transitioned to better working conditions. In other words, critical engagement demands the incorporation of just transition within the PUVMP modernization. The NCTU tactics provide a critical case study of the constraints and potentials of achieving just transition within the modernization program. There is a gap in the literature on the question of critical engagement with the modernization scheme. Thus, the rationale for this study. What can be achieved and not attained through critical engagement with the modernization program for the purpose of just transition for workers? This is a question that is relevant to probe.

Arguably, critical engagement is fraught with difficulties given the discriminatory design and enforcement of the PUVMP. NCTU's standpoint, however, considers the real need for a transition in the quest for climate mitigation. Aligned with NCTU's position is the Move As One. Using the lens of just transition to the contentious PUVMP, Move As One supported the concept of modernization but firmly demanded the revision of PUVMP (Bendaña et al., 2021).

For this study, key informants were two NCTU leaders: one based in Metro Manila and another in Metro Cebu, and a representative of Move As One whose father is a jeepney operator and driver. Zoom interviews were held since the research was conducted during the pandemic. Aside from informant interviews and content analysis of the NCTU social media, participant observation was utilized to gain insights for the study. From 2021 to 2022, the author carried out commissioned and non-commissioned research that inquired on the pandemic impact, just transition, social protection and mental health of informal jeepney workers with respondents from NCTU. This experience gave the author valuable discernment on the motivations, perceptions and beliefs that shaped the critical engagement tactic of NCTU.

Influenced by the advocacy for just transition of both ITF and SENTRO, NCTU conducted educational discussions before the pandemic among its leaders and members, mainly jeepney informal workers, on the necessity for just transition and its concrete application in the Philippines. This gave NCTU leaders and members solid preparation for understanding the nexus between climate change, decent work, just transition and the modernization program. It is on the basis of this understanding that NCTU forged its position of critical engagement with PUVMP. The group sought changes to the application and enforcement of the program to align with the tenets of just transition, that is, decent work,

social dialogue and social protection. NCTU explicitly framed its position as just transition for workers within the transport modernization scheme.

Meanwhile, Move As One agreed with replacing traditional jeepneys with modern jeeps and their consolidation into fleets through formation of jeepney cooperatives, not corporations. The group consistently fought for raising the government subsidy for modern jeepneys to half a million. While that may appear too big, Move As One asserted that it is actually cost effective compared to the alternative of rail development. The group pointed out that the PHP 400 billion cost of buying modern jeepneys to service 40 million commuters compares favorably with the PHP 360 billion cost of the Metro Manila subway that will service only 400,000 commuters per day (Bendaña et al., 2021).

Further, Move As One argued that informality in general, and the boundary system specifically, seriously deprives jeepney drivers and even operators of social protection. The boundary system enables competition among jeepney drivers for passengers and exacerbates traffic. Thus, shifting from informality to formality through implementing a just transition and service contracting is an imperative reform (Bendaña et al., 2021).

Possibilities of a Just Transition Within the Jeepney Modernization

Fighting together for just transition within the modernization program afforded synergy for Move As One and NCTU. Move As One was instrumental in fortifying the lobbying capacity and policy proposals of NCTU. NCTU, along with other grassroots organizations, gave Move As One a social movement handle.

Working together, they were able to get solidarity from certain legislators for the just transition demand during the pandemic. Critical engagement gave NCTU and Move As One concrete victories in their advocacy.

One positive outcome of critical engagement was the higher number of traditional jeepneys allowed to ply their routes as the lockdowns were eased in the latter half of 2020.

This was a result of dialogues with local government units at the city, municipal and provincial levels, and also at the national level through lobbying with the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and DOTr.

Move as One claimed that one of its wins was the doubling of the government subsidy for modern jeepneys to PHP 160,000 from the initial measly amount of PHP 80,000 (Bendaña et al., 2021). In the post-pandemic period, lobbying would further raise the subsidy to PHP 210,000 and PHP 280,000. However, Move As One continues to advocate for a PHP 500,00 equity subsidy.

The successive extensions of the deadline for fleet consolidation was also attained through consistent and determined dialogue, and lobbying with the LTFRB and DOTr. The original deadline for consolidation into corporations or cooperatives was June 30, 2020. It was moved to December 31, 2020, then to March 31, 2021, and so on.

While the deadlines for consolidation were extended, NCTU aggressively moved to have its membership organized into jeepney cooperatives, as allowed by the PUVMP. NCTU's membership of some 4,000 in nine key cities and provinces were consolidated into 18 cooperatives.

A very innovative advocacy of NCTU and Move As One was the push for transitioning to service contracting as the new normal in public transportation. *Service contracting* is the engagement by the government of bus companies, modern jeepney corporations, jeepney cooperatives and traditional jeepney associations to transport commuters for free. Government paid the companies, corporations, cooperatives and associations a contract fee to provide the service on certain routes during periods within the pandemic.

NCTU and Move As One successfully lobbied for service contracting and government funds were allocated for two years. PHP 5.5 billion was earmarked in 2020 for

service contracting and inserted in the second pandemic assistance, the so-called Bayanihan 2 Law. But the rollout of service contracting confronted a lot of implementation issues such as long delays in payment of jeepney operators and drivers who were contracted. In the end, only PHP 2.5 billion was spent. Thus, Move as One and NCTU moved to have the balance of PHP 3 billion allotted for another round of service contracting in 2021. Service contracting continued in late 2021 until the amount was exhausted. Among the beneficiaries of service contracting were NCTU jeepney cooperatives in Cebu. Service contracting gave jeepney cooperatives a secure income for a certain period and this helped moderate their members' anxieties amid the vagaries of the pandemic.

On the basis of this experience, Move As One and NCTU advocated that service contracting be transitioned from COVID support to the better normal of public transport. Service contracting can have positive outcomes for all stakeholders—commuting public, jeepney operators and jeepney drivers—in the transport ecosystem. Struggling jeepney operators collectivized in cooperatives gain from a stable income source as a result of government service contracts lasting several years. Informal jeepney drivers shift to formal work as employees of cooperatives and enjoy the protection afforded by formal employment relations such as labor rights and standards. Lastly, commuters benefit from a reliable and safe transport system.

Limits of Critical Engagement to Reform the PUVMP

Despite these wins on several aspects of reforming the PUVMP, NCTU and Move As One grappled with difficulties in achieving their other demands in the face of intransigence by the government, and also the challenges in navigating the transition into jeepney cooperatives.

The prohibition against traditional jeepneys from operating during the COVID lockdowns was censured by NCTU and Move As One as discriminatory. Among their initial

calls was for the operation of traditional jeepneys as the COVID lockdowns were loosened. They argued that the open-air design of traditional jeepneys allowed for greater safety while also providing livelihood to informal transport workers who were among the most economically affected by the pandemic quarantine. As with many other reasonable proposals from grassroots organizations and critical experts during pandemic, this demand fell on deaf ears (Pazzibugan, 2020).

While consolidating into jeepney cooperatives meant that jeepney operators can continue with their livelihood, it was just among the first of many hurdles that they had to overcome. According to NCTU (2024), more than half of jeepney operators who consolidated have not been approved for financing to purchase modern jeepneys. A key roadblock was the absence of Local Public Transport Route Plans (LPTRP) which was a requirement of banks for approval of loans for the modernization program. As of July 2024, only a quarter of LPTRPs have been completed (Yu, 2024c). Formulating the LPTRP is a responsibility of local government units and is a frequent bottleneck in the PUVMP. “Alternative certificates” were accepted by the banks in lieu of the LPTRP requirement—as a result of lobbying by jeepney cooperatives—but even that also faced gridlocks in the bureaucracy.

Aside from the demand to raise the subsidy for modern jeepneys to PHP 500,000 and for a permanent service contracting program which remain unmet, NCTU (2024) also called on the government to develop the infrastructure for the manufacturing and servicing of electric jeepneys and vehicles. The lack of facilities for charging stations persist and present a crucial barrier to the operation of modern electric jeepneys.

In a statement, NCTU (2024, para. 4) summed up these issues with the cry that “... those that complied with the program are struggling with so many issues in its implementation? We strongly believe that the LTFRB and DOTr must implement sound policies and responses to address these challenges.”

Finally, morphing from conventional associations to jeepney cooperatives presented a variety of problems to NCTU. In a cooperative, jeepney drivers would be hired as workers on formal contracts. For NCTU, the shift from informal to formal work was one key normative goal of just transition within the modernization program, aside from climate mitigation.

Traditional associations are composed of both jeepney operators and jeepney drivers. NCTU members who were operators transitioned into members of the cooperative. However, it was very challenging for cooperatives to recruit jeepney drivers as members. They preferred to remain hired employees only and not enlist as cooperative members, despite prodding by NCTU.

Another barrier that NCTU had to overcome was ensuring cooperatives are able to manage jeepney fleets. Thus, NCTU formulated capacity building and training programs for its leaders. Orientation and training on cooperative principles, financial management and organizational development were among the activities of NCTU. While the government kept on imposing deadlines, jeepney groups were largely left on their own to consolidate into cooperatives.

NCTU respondents—while proud of their successes in helping consolidate jeepney associations into cooperatives not corporations—expressed that some jeepney operators are unable or unwilling to consolidate due to the lack of viable leadership and resources. The Move As One respondent also alluded to interpersonal relations among jeepney drivers and operators as factors that may affect decisions to consolidate.

In the face of the jeepney protests by MANIBELA and PISTON against the impending consolidation deadline in late 2023, NCTU expressed solidarity for the fellow jeepney drivers and operators who have remained unconsolidated. The group raised the concern for the impending joblessness of jeepney colleagues who remained unconsolidated in their status, which according to Partido Manggagawa's (2023) estimate is around 148,000.

Critical engagement with PUVMP did not serve as a barrier for NCTU to express solidarity with those that chose to directly oppose the modernization. Nonetheless, NCTU's symbolic solidarity did not extend to concrete participation in the protests of PISTON and MANIBELA. This is probably rooted in the historical rivalries among jeepney organizations, on the one hand. On the other hand, this may also be due to NCTU's shift away from mass actions as dictated by pandemic conditions and also its focus on running jeepney cooperatives. Still, NCTU should reassess its repertoire of tactics since street actions, as shown by the protest campaign of PISTON and MANIBELA which garnered popular support, is once more possible in the currently relatively more open conditions in contrast with the heavily securitized COVID situation.

Conclusion

In one social media post, the LTFRB chairperson stated:

Walang maiiwan sa PUV Modernization Program ng ating pamahalaan. Walang driver o operator ang mawawalan ng pangkabuhayan dahil hindi po sapilitan ang pag modernize ng inyong jeep. Isa lang po ang ating prayoridad ang kaligtasan ng ating mga commuters, kaya kung ang jeepneys po ninyo ay "roadworthy" kasama po namin kayo sa PUV Modernization Program [No one will be left behind in the PUV Modernization Program of our government. No driver or operator will lose their livelihood because this is not a forced modernization of your jeep. Our only priority is the safety of our commuters, so if your jeepney is "roadworthy," you are included in the PUV Modernization Program] (LTFRB, 2023).

The group Move As One released its assessment of the modernization program:

The PUVMP in its current form is doomed to fail because it is trying to do everything, everywhere, all at once. There are serious gaps in how the PUVMP's current planning and implementation meet the policy objectives of the program as well as the overall

welfare of the public. The PUVMP needs to put commuter service quality as its ultimate policy objective while ensuring a just transition where no transport worker is left behind. In its current form, the program fails to do both (Move As One Coalition, 2024, para. 2).

As a concrete proposal, Move As One proposed that PUVMP be piloted first in a few cities where jeepney organizations already have a buy-in for the modernization scheme which can then serve as a model for the rest of the country and for the whole program.

This stark contrast between the declared goals of PUVMP and its actual implementation reveals the contradictions about the modernization program. The principle of just transition explicitly provides that workers should not be left behind in the process of change in response to the polycrisis—climate change, job automation and economic disruptions. In fact, the premise of just transition is that workers must reap the benefits of socio-economic changes in the form of improved working and living conditions. But the design and enforcement of PUVMP—formulated with hardly any social dialogue and enforced frequently in a securitized fashion—shows it to be a discriminatory transition, with jeepney drivers and operators sacrificed in its wake and bearing its costs.

Thousands of jeepney operators who did not consolidate stand to lose their individual franchises and traditional livelihoods, along with their drivers. The next phase after consolidation, transitioning the remaining traditional jeepneys into modern ones portends another wave of job loss if done without higher equity subsidies and full government assistance.

Even those who have chosen to consolidate into jeepney cooperatives face formidable implementation issues such as lack of support and bureaucratic inertia. Transitioning from jeepney associations into cooperatives was not smooth sailing as it entailed an allocation of material and human resources that organizations had to develop on their own without

government support. Slow processing by the various government branches of requirements for jeepney cooperatives who had bought into the program contrasted with authorities' insistence on strict deadlines for consolidation.

The dogged resistance of some jeepney organizations to the entire PUVMP is understandable. Nonetheless, the experience of groups such as NCTU and Move As One in critically engaging the government uncover the potentials and constraints of fighting for just transition within the modernization program.

In the context of the pandemic when the conventional jeepney strike was impossible to undertake or mass protests were difficult to conduct due to security and safety issues, critical engagement appeared to be a suitable tactic instead of direct opposition. NCTU and Move As One garnered concrete wins in their effort at lobbying and dialogue during and after the pandemic.

Still, while critical engagement by Move As One and NCTU led to palpable changes in several aspects of PUVMP, other demands were met with intransigence. It faced the government's bias against social dialogue and for market-driven solutions. Government's design and implementation of the modernization program went against the fundamental belief of NCTU (2024, para. 7) that "transport workers must be at the center of the formulation and implementation of the PUVMP."

The tension between the limits and possibilities of achieving just transition within a discriminatory modernization scheme can only be resolved in a real-life struggle of paradigms between the actors involved. With a worsening transportation crisis, any chance of reform lies in how this conflict plays out.

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Mula Panay Tungong Rizal: Gampanin ng Katutubong Kaalaman ng Ati Tribe sa Proseso ng Resettlement

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Abstrak

Bagaman marami nang internasyonal na pag-aaral kaugnay ng *displacement*, hindi nabibigyang-pansin ang nangyayari sa mga komunidad sa panahon ng *post-displacement*. Naisasantabi ang usapin sa pagsisikap at *agency* ng mga katutubo. Bunga ng namamayaning diskursong nakatuon sa usapin ng polisiyang nagmumula sa mga pandaigdigang institusyon, nananatili ang pagtingin sa mga katutubo bilang pasibo, kawawa, walang kapangyarihan, at simpleng biktima lamang ng penomenon. Sa pamamagitan ng *oral history*, patatampukin ng pag-aaral ang gampanin ng katutubong kaalaman ng mga Ati sa pagbubuo ng kanilang komunidad sa *resettlement* sa Rodriguez, Rizal. Sa *social capital formation*, mahalaga sa mga Ati ang *bonding social capital* upang mapagtibay ang *social cohesion* ng komunidad, at kapaki-pakinabang ang *bridging at linking social capital* upang magkaroon sila ng akses sa mga rekurso. Naipakita rin ang halaga ng mga katutubong kaalaman sa kanilang kabuhayan sa *resettlement*, tulad ng pangangaso at pagbebenta ng herbal na gamot. Tumitingkad ang dinamikong katangian ng mga katutubong kaalaman, kung saan may pagsasala ng mga makabagong kaalaman at pamamaraan bago ito angkinin ng komunidad. Gayunman, nililimitahan ng panlipunang sistema ang pagsisikap ng mga Ati dahil sa mga lumalalang suliranin tulad ng institusyunal na diskriminasyon, kapabayaan ng estado, kawalan ng seguridad sa lupa, at pagkasira ng kalikasan dulot ng mga pangkaunlarang proyekto. Sa gayon, lumilitaw na maaaring tuntungan ang mga katutubong kaalaman ng mga Ati sa pag-oorganisa upang maitaguyod ang kanilang mga tinatanaw para sa komunidad at

mabigyang-hugis ang transpormasyonal na kakayahan ng kanilang mga araw-araw na pagsisikap.

Abstract

Although there have been many international studies on displacement, what happens to communities during the post-displacement period is often overlooked. The agency and effort of indigenous peoples are sidelined, overshadowed by the prevailing discourse focused on policy issues stemming from global institutions. As a result, indigenous peoples are still viewed as passive, pitiful, powerless, and mere victims of the phenomenon. This study aims to highlight the role of the indigenous knowledge of the Ati in building their community in the resettlement area in Rodriguez, Rizal. In terms of social capital formation, bonding social capital is important to the Ati to strengthen the social cohesion of the community, while bridging and linking social capital are beneficial for them to gain access to resources. This study also seeks to demonstrate the value of indigenous knowledge in their livelihood in the resettlement, such as hunting and selling herbal medicine. Moreover, the dynamic nature of indigenous knowledge is highlighted, where modern knowledge and practices are filtered and selectively adopted by the community. However, the efforts of the Ati are limited by broader systemic issues such as institutional discrimination, state neglect, lack of land security, and environmental degradation caused by development projects. Despite these challenges, the indigenous knowledge of the Ati can be a foundation for organizing to promote their visions for the community and shape the transformational capacity of their daily efforts.

Keywords: Ati, indigenous people, resettlement, indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs), social capital, community organizing-community development (COCD)

Introduksyon

Ang mga katutubo ang bumubuo sa 10%-14% ng populasyon ng Pilipinas; sila ay mayroong sariling teritoryo, pampulitikang sistema, wika, pagkakakilanlan, mga kultura, at paniniwala (Berger, n.d.). Matatagpuan sa kanilang mga lupaing ninuno (*ancestral domain*) ang karamihan sa mga likas-yaman ng bansa (de Vera, 2007) na kinatatangian ng mayamang *biodiversity* (Cariño, 2012) at itinuturing na mga *key environmental areas* (Foundation for the Philippine Environment, n.d.). Nakahabi din sa kanilang lupaing ninuno ang kanilang kultura at paraan ng pamumuhay. Sa kabila ng kayamanang ito, humaharap ang mga katutubo sa iba't ibang isyu kagaya ng sapilitang pagpapaalis sa kanilang mga lupaing ninuno, pangangamkam ng kanilang lupa, *development aggression*, at militarisasyon. Bukod dito, kinakaharap din ng mga katutubo ang kawalan ng mga batayang serbisyo kagaya ng pagkain, pabahay, edukasyon, kalusugan, trabaho, at iba pa (Cariño, 2012). Ang ganitong kalagayan ang siyang nagtutulak sa mga katutubo na sapilitang lisanin—isaang porma ng displacement—ang kanilang mga lupaing ninuno at maghanap ng oportunidad sa ibang lugar. Dahil dito, unti-unting nawawala ang kanilang katutubong kultura (Baruah, 2000). Resulta nito ang pagkagambala ng kanilang pamumuhay at kabuhayan, tulad ng pagtatanim at pangangaso.

Bagaman marami nang pag-aaral tungkol sa penomenon ng *displacement*, tulad ng iba't ibang dahilan at epekto nito sa mga komunidad (Cernea, 1997; Terminski, 2013), madalas na hindi nabibigyang-pansin kung ano ang nangyayari sa mga komunidad matapos sapilitang lumisan. Karamihan sa mga literaturang may kaugnayan sa displacement ay kadalasang nasa konteksto ng maralita sa kalunsuran at mga *internally displaced peoples* (IDPs) sa Mindanao dulot ng digmaan (Watanabe, 2007). Sa konteksto ng mga katutubo, sumusulpot lamang ang usapin ng displacement sa panahon ng sakuna kung kailan sapilitang pinalilikas ang mga komunidad (Acaba, 2008; Labayo, 2020). Ngunit, ang mga katutubo ay hindi lamang nakakaranas ng displacement at *resettlement* sa konteksto ng sakuna; nariyan

din ang usapin ng kahirapan at kawalan ng akses sa mga serbisyong panlipunan, development aggression at militarisasyon. Gayunpaman, hindi ito nabibigyan ng kaukulang pansin. Dahil dito, nanatiling manipis pa ang literatura sa karanasan ng mga katutubo at kanilang pagsisikap sa proseso ng displacement at resettlement bunga ng iba't ibang isyung panlipunan bukod sa sakuna.

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay nakatuon sa mga pagsisikap ng katutubong Ati na nagmula sa isla ng Panay na lumipat at naninirahan sa Rodriguez, Rizal. Ang katutubong Ati ay matatagpuan sa Sitio Maislap, Barangay San Isidro, Rodriguez, Rizal. Isa sa pagkakakilanlan ng mga katutubong Ati ay ang Ati-Atihan at Dinagyang na nakabatay sa kasaysayan ng kanilang tribo (Gavino, 2020). Ang mga Ati ay kadalasang kilala rin na palipat-lipat at naninirahan sa tabi ng ilog at kagubatan. Ang kanilang pangunahing kabuhayan ay ang pagtatanim, pangangaso, *livestock farming*, at mga *handicrafts*. Ang kakulangan sa akses sa serbisyong panlipunan at kawalan ng pera ang nagtulak sa mga Ati na lumisan sa kanilang lupaing ninuno at maghanap ng oportunidad sa ibang lugar.

Noong 1990s tumulak ang ilang pamilya ng tribung Ati mula sa Panay patungo sa Rizal. Hindi naging madali ang kanilang paglipat; kinaharap nila ang kahirapan at iba't ibang uri ng diskriminasyon. Sa kabila nito, kolektibong nagdesisyon ang mga Ati na manatiling manirahan na sa Rodriguez, Rizal. Sa Sitio Maislap, naging salalayan ng mga Ati ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman. Sila ay nag-uuling, nagtatanim, nangangaso at nagtitinda ng mga herbal na gamot. Malaki rin ang ginampanan ng kanilang katutubong wika, ang Inati, sa proseso ng kanilang resettlement, ngunit iilan na lamang ang bihasa sa pagsasalita ng katutubong wika nilang ito. Layunin ng pagaaral na usisain paano ginamit ng mga Ati ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman o *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices* (IKSP) upang itaguyod ang kanilang pamumuhay sa Sitio Maislap. Batay rito, sisikapin ring mabigyang liwanag paano magsisilbing tuntungan ang mga nasimulan nang mga pagsisikap upang

isakatuparan ng mga katutubong Ati sa Rodriguez, Rizal ang kanilang mga pangarap sa gitna ng lumalala nilang kalagayan.

Isasagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng pagsasakasaysayan (*historicization*) ng karanasan ng Ati Tribe mula sa Panay, patungo sa Sitio Maislap. Kaakibat ng pagsasakasaysayan ay ang sama-samang pagninilay tungkol sa kanilang mga karanasan at sa kanilang tunguhin bilang isang pamayanan. Ang pagsasakasaysayan at pagninilay ay sumalalay sa metodo ng *oral history* at *Focus Group Discussion* (FGDs) kabilang ang *Chieftain* (punong tagapamahala), mga *elders* (*cultural bearers*), at mga kabataan. Dumaan ang pagaaral sa proseso ng paghingi ng *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent* (FPIC); kaakibat nito ang paglalahad ng layunin at sakop ng pagaaral, pati na rin ang imbitasyon na makilahok sa mga talakayan. Nagsagawa rin ng *semi-structured interviews* sa iba't ibang institusyon kagaya ng Indigenous People's Mandatory Representative (IPMR) at sa lokal na pamahalaan ng Rodriguez, Rizal upang matiyak ang mga datos na makakalap.

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay nahahati sa apat na bahagi. Ang unang bahagi ay maglalahad ng karanasan ng mga Ati sa paglipat mula Panay patungong Rizal. Bibigyang-diin nito ang mga salik na nagtulak sa mga katutubo upang lisanin ang kanilang lupaing ninuno noong 1990s at lumipat sa Rizal. Sa ikalawang bahagi, ilalahad ang mga konsepto ng *structural violence*, *IKSPs*, *social capital formation*, *livelihood reconstruction*, *selective assimilation*, at balangkas ng pagsasakapangyarihan ni Longwe (1991) bilang mga salalayang konsepto sa pagpapaliwanag ng mga pagsisikap ng mga Ati sa proseso ng kanilang resettlement. Pangatlo, ipapakita ang aktibong gampanin ng mga Ati sa proseso ng resettlement, partikular, kung paano nila ginamit at patuloy na ginagamit ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman upang umangkop sa lugar. Isasalaysay dito ang mga kasalukuyang kalagayang kinakaharap ng komunidad na nagiging balakid sa kanilang mga pagsisikap at ang kanilang naging pagtugon sa mga ito. Panghuli, ilalahad ang gampanin ng *Community Organizing-Community*

Development (CO-CD) upang maging tuntungan sa pagsasakatuparan ng mga tinatanaw ng komunidad at pagtatawid ng kanilang kasalukuyang pagsusumikap patungo sa transpormasyonal na pagbabago sa lipunan.

Konseptwal na Balangkas

Hindi laging litaw ang lahat ng sanhi ng displacement. Maaaring nakukubli sa panlipunang sistema ang mga salik na nagtutulak sa mga komunidad na sapilitang lumisan. Ayon kina Galtung at Høivik (1971), tinatawag itong structural violence na resulta ng pang-ekonomiya, pampulitika, at pangkulturang karahasan dulot ng istruktura sa lipunan. Isang manipestasyon nito ay ang pagkakait ng mga batayang pangangailangan o *survival needs, well-being needs, identity and meaning needs, at freedom needs* sa pamamagitan ng pananamantala, segmentasyon, at marhinalisasyon (Galtung, 1990).

Malaking bahagi ng mga internally displaced person (IDP) ay nagmumula sa populasyon ng mga katutubo (Hagen & Minter, 2019). Gayunman, hindi nabibigyang-diin na mas vulnerable sa grupong ito ang mga *hunter-gatherer* dahil sa kanilang pamumuhay na mahigpit na nakaugnay sa kalikasan. Sa Pilipinas, mayroon na lamang 25 grupo ng hunter-gatherer, tulad ng mga Ati (Reid, 2009).

Samakatuwid, malaking salik ang structural violence sa pagtulak sa mga katutubo sa displacement, at nananatili pa rin ang pagharap dito sa panahon ng resettlement. Lumilitaw sa karanasan ng mga Ati kung paano nila nagagamit ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman sa pagsisikap na harapin ang structural violence. Ayon kay Grenier (1998), ang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan ang konkretong manipestasyon ng katutubong kultura na ibinunga ng mahabang panahon ng pakikipag-ugnayan ng mga katutubo sa kanilang kapaligiran. Dinamiko ito kung saan tuloy-tuloy na nagdadagdag ng mga bagong kaalaman at umaangkop batay sa mga pagbabago sa lipunan, kabilang na ang structural violence.

Sa proseso ng resettlement ginampanan ng mga katutubong Ati ang muling pagbubuo ng kanilang kabuhayan at pagbubuo ng kanilang *social capital*—pagbubuo ng mahigpit na kaisahan sa loob ng tribo, ng ugnayan sa iba pang mga grupo sa nilipatang pamayanan at iba't ibang mga institusyon. Kaakibat ng mga ito ay nakapaglunsad ang mga katutubong Ati ng selective assimilation kung saan pinipili ng mga katutubo ang mga kaalaman at kasanayang iaangkop at isasama sa sarili nilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) na mahalaga sa pagpapanatili ng kanilang identidad sa nagbabagong kalagayan na kanilang iniiralan. Masasalamain ito sa kung paano nagawang ilapat ng mga katutubong Ati ang kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan sa pamumuhay ng nilipatang lugar. Sa kabilang banda, nagawa ring ilangkap ng mga katutubong Ati ang kultura at paraan ng pamumuhay na mayroon sa kanilang lugar.

Gayunpaman, kinakaharap pa rin nila ang structural violence sa nilipatang lugar. Sa katunayan, lumalala ang mga parehong suliraning kinaharap noon. Bunga nito, apektado rin ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman, partikular na sa pagpapalaganap at pagpapaunlad nito. Bahagi na rin ng kanilang assimilation ay ang internalisasyon ng mga kultura at paraan ng pamumuhay sa nilipatang lugar. Ang ganitong kalagayan ay may malaking implikasyon sa tunguhin nila bilang mga katutubo.

Karugtong nito, itatambal ang mga konseptong ito sa konseptwalisasyon ng pagsasakapangyarihan ni Longwe (1991) upang bigyang mukha ang kasalukuyang tunguhin ng kanilang mga pagsisikap gamit ang katutubong kaalaman. Sa konseptwalisasyon ni Longwe (2002) ng pagsasakapangyarihan, tinukoy niya ang limang antas nito—kagalingan (*welfare*), akses (*access*), *conscientization*, *mobilization* (pagmomobilisa), at kontrol (*control*). Gayundin, magsisilbing salalayang balangkas ang limang antas ng pagsasakapangyarihan sa paghahapag o pagtukoy ng mga hakbangin upang itaas ang antas ng

mga pagsisikap ng mga katutubong Ati sa harap ng papalalang kalagayan sa nilipatan nilang lugar.

Sa ganitong kalagayan sumusulpot ang higit na pangangailangang bigyang-diin ang dinamikong katangian ng kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan upang magsilbing salalayan ng mulat na pagpapaunlad nito. Ang mulat na pagpapaunlad na ito ng mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan ang magiging tuntungan ng pagpapataas ng antas ng kanilang mga pagsisikap sa harap ng lumalalang mga suliranin sa nilipatan nilang lugar. Mula rito maaaring hugutin, bigyang-mukha, at direksyunan ang mga pagsisikap na tutugon hindi na lamang sa kanilang mga kagyat na mga pangangailangan o survival, bagkus ay ang pagbabago ng mismong marahas na istrukturang kinaiiralan nila.

Paglisan sa Panay

Tampok ang displacement sa kasaysayan ng mga Ati ng Panay bunga ng nagsasalimbayan at magkakaugnay na mga salik na puwersahang nagpalisan sa kanila. Sa kabila ng pagsasabatas ng Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) noong 1997 na naglalayong protektahan at isulong ang karapatan ng mga katutubo sa Pilipinas, taong 2004 lamang naipatupad ang ligal na pagkilala sa mga ancestral domain batay sa National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Administrative Order No. 1. Kasabay rin daw nito ang *logging concessions* sa kanilang lupang tinitirhan. Dahil walang sariling lupa, marami rin sa mga Ati ang sapilitang namasukan sa mga *hacienda* noong 1990s. Ayon sa mga literatura, halos lahat ng hacienda at plantasyon sa Panay ay may mga Ati nang namasukan bilang manggagawang agrikultural (Stewart, 1992). Kaakibat ng paglawak ng mga hacienda at plantasyon ay malawakang pagkasira at pagkakalbo ng kagubatan dulot ng deporestasyon. Dahil dito, madalas silang makaranas ng pagbaha at pagguho ng lupa. Noong 1983 lamang ipinatupad ang *logging ban* sa Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, at Guimaras,

ngunit pinapahintulutan pa rin ang pagtotroso sa siyam na erya rito (Carandang et al., 2013). Bunga nito, karamihan sa kanila ay lumuluwas upang maghanapbuhay.

Malalayo rin ang mga batayang serbisyo at pasilidad, tulad ng mga paaralan at ospital. Dahil dito, higit na mapanganib ang pagkakasakit at panganganak. Dahil hindi aksesible ang edukasyon at itinutulak ng kahirapan na agad na magtrabaho, maraming mga Ati ang hindi nakapagtapos at napilitang pumasok sa mapagsamantalang relasyon sa produksyon.

Inilahad ng mga Ati na malubha ang kahirapan sa Panay at hindi sumasapat o halos sumasapat lamang ang kinikita sa araw-araw. Sa kabila ng payak na pamumuhay, ramdam pa rin ng mga katutubong Ati ang bigat ng kondisyong kinaiiralan nila. “Tabas, karga, tabas...Ayan ang trabaho doon, ganito kaiinit tapos patabasin ka ng mayaman,” saad ng isang elder. Bukod pa rito, mahirap daw ang kanilang mga trabaho at kinakailangan ng ubod ng lakas. Madalas ding hindi tiyak na may trabaho sila sa mga susunod na araw at buwan. Maraming mga Ati ang ipinapadala sa mga plantasyon sa Negros at Mindoro, ngunit napipilitan din silang bumalik sa lupaing ninuno dahil hindi na mapagtiisan ang mapang-abusong kondisyon ng pagtatrabaho (Rahmann & Maceda, 1962). Ang pagkakait sa mga Ati ng mga batayang pangangailangan, partikular na ang survival at well-being needs, dulot ng pananamantala at marhinalisasyon ang nagtulak sa kanilang lisanin ang Panay. Bagaman maaaring tingnan na boluntaryo ang kanilang paglisan, ipinahayag ng mga Ati na nanaisin pa rin nilang bumalik sa kanilang lupaing ninuno kung magiging maalwan ang kanilang pamumuhay doon. Samakatwid, maituturing na sapilitan ang kanilang paglisan dahil nakikita nila ang kondisyon sa Panay na higit na may panganib kaysa oportunidad.

Bunsod ng mga salik na nabanggit, nagsimulang lumipat ang mga Ati sa tabing-ilog ng Sitio Katwiran, Barangay San Rafael, Rodriguez, Rizal upang lisanin ang marahas na kondisyon sa Panay. Taong 1980 pa lamang, may ilang Ati na ring biktima ng displacement ang naninirahan sa Rizal. Sila ang nagsilbing tulay upang makarating ang iba pa nilang

kapwa katutubo sa Rizal. Sa mga kakilala rin nila napag-aalaman ang mga oportunidad sa Rizal. Madalas na nauunang dumayo ang kalalaking Ati upang magtrabaho sa *delivery* at *construction*. Ang mga kababaihan naman ay nagbebenta ng herbal na gamot sa Kamaynilaan. Gayunman, mas mababa pa rin sa *minimum wage* ang kanilang kinikita. Dagdag pang oportunidad sa lungsod ay ang akses sa mga serbisyong panlipunan, partikular na sa edukasyon at kalusugan, kumpara sa kani-kanilang mga probinsya. Naging mahalagang salik din ang lokasyon ng komunidad na malapit sa ilog at kabundukan na sagana sa likas na yaman.

Madalas na ikumpara ng mga elders ang ilog at kabundukan sa kanilang lupaing ninuno sa Panay at sa kasalukuyang tinitirhan sa Rizal. Pinipili nilang manirahan malapit sa ilog at bundok dahil maaari silang mag-angkat ng tubig mula sa ilog at mangaso naman sa bundok. Subalit, higit pa sa rekurso, mahigpit ang ugnayan ng kanilang kultura sa kalikasan. Nasasalamon ito sa kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman na karamihan ay may kaugnayan sa kalikasan, tulad ng pangangaso, pangingsda, pagtanim, at herbal na gamot.

Unti-unti silang dumami sa Sitio Katwiran hanggang sa naging isang komunidad. Subalit, mayroon din silang iba pang kasamang hindi Ati, tulad ng Bisaya, Bicolano, at Waray. Nang makita ng dating Chieftain at kanyang asawa na dumarami na silang mga Ati sa Sitio Katwiran, umugnay sila sa NCIP upang ihapag ang pagkakaroon ng sariling lupa ng mga Ati. Gayunman, hindi nila ito tinanggap dahil ang lupang iniaalok sa kanila ay nasa kabundukan na malayo sa mga panlipunang serbisyo.

Subalit sa ikalawang pagkakataon ay sapilitan din nilang nilisan ang Sitio Katwiran dahil sa matinding pag-apaw ng ilog dulot ng mga bagyo. Ayon sa mga elders, maraming mga Ati na ang nasawi dahil dito kung kaya inilipat umano sila ng mayor sa Sitio Maislap, Barangay San Isidro, Rodriguez, Rizal. Dahil bahagi na ng araw-araw na buhay ng mga

katutubo ang marhinalisasyon at pananamantala, nagiging karaniwan at nagmumukhang kusang-loob ang kanilang migrasyon.

Taong 2000 nang inilipat ng munisipyo ang mga Ati sa Sitio Maislap. Subalit, hindi raw naging madali ang kanilang resettlement. Una, mas mababa ang kanilang lupa kaysa sa kalsada, kaya binabaha pa rin ang kanilang mga kabahayan. Pangalawa, kinakailangan nilang magtayo muli ng mga barong-barong na gawa sa mga kahoy at tarapal. Pangatlo, wala pang kuryente at tubig sa relokasyon. Mas malayo ang ilog sa kasalukuyang tinitirhan kaya kinakailangan nilang lakarin ito at mag-igib.

Kalaunan, nakilala ng dating Chieftain at ng kanyang asawa ang isang pari mula sa Couples for Christ na lumapit sa Gawad Kalinga upang mapatayuan sila ng mga bahay. Taong 2004 nang patayuan ng Gawad Kalinga, sa pamamagitan ng Philippine Life Insurance Association (PLIA) bilang isponsor ng 35 na bahay ang mga Ati sa Sitio Maislap at pinangalanan itong PLIA Gawad Kalinga Village. Sa kasalukuyan, hindi malinaw ang kalagayan ng lupang kinatitirhan ng kanilang mga bahay kahit na ang lokal na pamahalaan ng Rizal ang naglipat sa kanila dito. Kung gayon, walang katiyakan ang kanilang karapatan sa lupang tinitirhan nila sa mahigit na 20 taon.

Madalas na nakatuon sa displacement ang mga internasyunal na pag-aaral, ngunit hindi nabibigyang-pansin kung ano ang nangyayari sa mga komunidad matapos ang sapilitang paglisan. Ang mga perspektibo sa mga literaturang may kaugnayan sa resettlement ay kadalasang nagmumula sa mga institusyon at may kaugnayan sa polisiya. Subalit bihirang naipapahayag ng mga aktwal na nakararanas ang kanilang boses, lalo na ang mga katutubong higit na nakararanas ng displacement. Makikita mula sa kasaysayan ng mga Ati na bulnerable ang mga katutubo sa paulit-ulit na displacement dahil sa kanilang marhinalisadong posisyon sa lipunan. Kaya mahalagang mapatampok ang kuwento ng kanilang resettlement mula sa

kanilang perspektibo na siyang magiging batayan hindi lamang ng mga polisiya kundi maging mga tunguhin ng kanilang komunidad.

Pagsibol ng Pamayanan

Madalas na nabibigyang-diin ang epekto ng displacement sa mga katutubo, ngunit sa karanasan ng mga Ati sa Rizal, lumitaw ang kanilang aktibong gampanin upang paunlarin ang kanilang sitwasyon sa panahon ng resettlement. Sa kanilang naratibo, may gampanin ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan sa pagsisikap sa pamamagitan ng social capital formation at livelihood reconstruction. Inilalangkap nila ito sa pagbuo ng mga relasyon at kabuhayan sa Rizal. Kasabay ng paggamit ng kanilang katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan, sumasabay din ang mga Ati sa umiiral na kultura sa nilipatang komunidad. Tinatawag nila itong ‘pagsabay sa uso.’ Maaari rin itong tawaging selective assimilation, kung saan intensyunal na pinipili ang kulturang pananatilihin at aangkupan mula sa labas.

Social Capital Formation

Isa sa naging bahagi ng pagsisikap ng mga Ati sa muling pagbubuo nila ng pamayanan ay ang social capital formation. May iba’t iba uri ng *social capital* (Agnitsch et al., 2006), at lumilitaw sa naratibo ng mga Ati kung paano naging susi dito ang relasyon sa loob at labas ng kanilang komunidad. Partikular na rito ang kanilang katutubong wika, paraan ng pamamahala, at aktitud na nakatulong sa pagpapabuti ng panloob na relasyon upang mapanatili ang pagtutulungan at panlabas na relasyon upang makapagbukas ng oportunidad.

Una, ang *bonding social capital* ay tumutukoy sa malapit na ugnayan sa pagitan ng mga magkakatulad na mga indibidwal o grupo na siyang nagpapalakas sa pagkakaisa at nagpapatibay ng *social cohesion* sa loob ng kanilang grupo o komunidad. Malaki ang ginampanan ng malakas na *sense of community* ng mga Ati sa proseso ng kanilang resettlement. Nagmumula ang sense of community na ito sa iisang pagkakakilanlan at kultura nila bilang mga katutubong Ati.

Tinukoy ng mga katutubong Ati ang kanilang wikang Inati bilang batayan ng kanilang pagkakakilanlan, kaya mahalaga ito sa pagpapanatili ng kanilang *sense of identity* sa nilipatang lugar. Dagdag pa ng isa nilang elder, ang paggamit ng kanilang wikang Inati ang nagbigay-daan upang magkaunawaan ang isa't isa. Bagaman magkakaiba sila ng pinagmulang probinsya, ang pagiging Ati ang naging batayan nila upang magsama-sama at magtulungan na buuin ang kanilang komunidad.

Bukod sa katutubong wika, pinanatili rin ng mga katutubong Ati ang kanilang katutubong istruktura sa pamamahala. Malakas pa rin ang pagkilala sa Chieftain at napanatili pa rin ang paghingi ng gabay sa mga elders. Naging daluyan ang mga katutubong istrukturang ito sa pagpapanatili ng kaayusan sa loob ng tribo—pagtiyak ng maayos na ugnayan at pag-aayos ng mga alitan sa pagitan ng mga kasapi ng tribo.

Pangalawa, kaakibat naman ng pagtitiyak sa panloob na ugnayan ng tribo ay ang pagtiyak rin sa ugnayan nito sa iba pang mga grupo at institusyon. Ayon kina Quetulio-Navarra et al. (2013), may dalawang dimensyon ang social capital—ang *bridging social capital* at *linking social capital*.

Sa isang banda, ang bridging social capital ay ang *horizontal dimension* na nakatuon sa paglikha ng mga koneksyon o ugnayan sa pagitan ng magkakaibang indibidwal, grupo, o komunidad, upang malampasan ang anumang pagkakahiwalay o pagkakawatak-watak dulot ng pagkakaiba ng relihiyon, etnisidad, sosyo-ekonomikong katayuan, at iba pa. Sa Sitio Maislap, hindi lamang komunidad ng mga Ati ang naninirahan. Sa mga kwentuhan, madalas nababanggit ng mga Ati ang iba't ibang mga relihiyong kinaaaniban ng mga tao sa lugar tulad ng Islam, Katoliko, at Iglesia ni Cristo. Kasama ring naninirahan ng mga Ati sa lugar ang iba pang mga etnikong grupo tulad ng mga Muslim, Dumagat, Bisaya, at Waray.

Ayon sa mga Ati, nagkakaroon sila ng marahas na alitan noon sa mga Muslim, ngunit naging maayos na ang relasyon nila dahil sa gampanin ng Chieftain bilang tagapamagitan.

Naibahagi rin nila na pinapatuloy sila ng mga Muslim sa kanilang moske bilang *evacuation center* tuwing may malakas na bagyo. Nagpahiram rin sila ng lupa para magamit ng mga miyembro ng komunidad sa pagtanim, pag-uuling, at pag-aalaga ng hayop. Ayon sa mga Ati, mayroon silang katangiang ayaw o laging lumalayo sa gulo at idinadaan sa pakikipag-usap ang mga sumusulpot na gulo. Ang ganitong katangian at pamamaraan ang pinanghahawakan ng mga katutubong Ati sa pagpapanatili ng kanilang panloob na kaayusan at maayos na ugnayan sa iba pang mga grupong kasama nila sa Sitio Maislap.

Bukod sa iba pang grupo sa komunidad, may ugnayan din ang mga Ati sa people's organization (PO), kung saan naging bahagi rin ang kanilang kasalukuyang Chieftain. Ito ang nag-organisa ng mga kabataan sa komunidad at nagsasagawa ng mga kultural na mga inisyatiba tulad ng pagtuturo ng pangkatutubong pagsayaw at pagsuot ng tradisyunal na mga kasuotan. Naging daan din ang PO para sa *cross-cultural exchange* sa pagitan ng mga Ati at iba pang mga katutubo tulad ng mga Lumad.

Sa kabilang banda, ang linking social capital naman ay ang *vertical dimension* na nagpapalawak sa ugnayan ng mga mahihirap sa mga mapagkukunan ng rekurso, ideya, at impormasyon mula sa mga institusyon sa labas ng kanilang sariling komunidad. Sa konteksto ng komunidad ng mga Ati, malaki ang papel ng Chieftain bilang kinatawan ng komunidad sa kanilang mga panlabas na ugnayan. Halimbawa nito ang ginawang paglapit ng Chieftain sa NCIP upang matulungan silang makakuha ng sariling lupa para sa kanilang komunidad at ang patuloy na pakikipag-ugnayan nito sa IPMR, na isang Dumagat, upang magkaroon ng pagkilala sa kanilang tribo sa pamamagitan ng pag-ampon sa kanila. Pangunahing layunin ng hakbang na ito ay ang magkaroon sila ng akses sa mga serbisyong panlipunan mula sa gobyerno.

Mahalaga ang gampanin ng kanilang katutubong pamamaraan sa pamamahala sa akses sa mga rekurso. Nakipag-ugnayan ang Chieftain sa kanilang barangay upang hilingin

na mapatambakan ang lupa ng mga kabahayan ng mga Ati na noon ay mas mababa pa sa kalsada. Sa mga panahon ng sakuna o kalamidad, nakakakuha rin sila ng *relief goods* mula rito. Pinananatili rin ng mga Ati ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga institusyong panrelihiyon dahil sa nakuha at nakukuha nilang suporta mula sa mga ito. Halimbawa nito ay ang nakilala ng asawa ng dating Chieftain na pari na mula sa Couples for Christ na umugnay sa Gawad Kalinga upang mapatayuan sila ng mga bahay kapalit ng 38 linggong seminar at pagmimisa. Bagaman inalok silang sumama sa Couples for Christ, tinanggihan nila ito dahil iba ito sa kanilang katutubong paraan ng pamumuhay. Ayon pa sa isang Nanay, mainam pa ring panatilihin ang ugnayan sa mga institusyong ito dahil sa natatanggap nilang mga ayuda mula sa mga ito.

Bukod sa rekurso, mahalaga rin ang kanilang pagkakakilanlan bilang Ati sa pagkilos para sa kanilang seguridad sa paninirahan. Aktibo ngayon ang homeowners association (HOA) ng mga Ati na may malaking gampanin sa pagtugon sa kanilang lupa. Mahalaga raw para sa kanila na Ati rin ang kinatawan ng kanilang HOA, dahil ayon sa kanila, mga Ati rin ang makakaunawa sa ugali ng kanilang tribo. Bahagi ng selective assimilation ng mga Ati ang pagbubuo ng HOA at pagtatakda ng kinatawan para rito. Masasabing isang modipikasyon ito ng kanilang pamamaraan ng pamamahala batay sa hinihingi ng kalagayan sa lugar bilang isang *relocation site*. Sa ganitong kaayusan nagkakaroon ng hatian ng gawain sa usapin ng pamamahala kung saan ang pangunahing tuon ng Chieftain at mga elders ay ang pagpapanatili ng internal na kaayusan at pagharap sa mga internal na usapin ng tribo. Ang HOA naman ang pangunahing umaasikaso sa pag-ugnay sa mga institusyong labas sa kanilang tribo ngunit nananatili pa rin sa gabay at instruksyon ng Chieftain ng mga elders.

May mahigpit ring ugnayan ang Chieftain ng mga Ati sa iba pang institusyon na nagbibigay ng rekurso at serbisyo. Bukod sa Gawad Kalinga, nalalapitan ng komunidad ang

iba pang mga non-governmental organizations (NGOs) hindi lamang para sa donasyon kundi pati na rin para sa mga *scholarship* at mga *sponsors* para sa edukasyon ng mga kabataan.

Sa kabuuan, sa pamamagitan ng pagkakaroon ng matatag na ugnayan panloob ng komunidad, nagkakaroon ang mga Ati ng kolektibong lakas na nagsisilbing pundasyon sa kanilang pagbuo ng panlabas na social capital. Ang pagpapahigpit ng social cohesion ng komunidad ay nagbibigay ng kakayahan sa kanila na kumilos bilang isang kolektibo na may iisang tunguhin at mga layunin. Sa pamamagitan nito, nakakapagbuo ang mga Ati ng relasyon sa iba't ibang mga aktor na nagsisilbing tulay sa pagtataguyod nila na makatanggap ng mga serbisyong panlipunan at iba pang rekurso na kinakailangan para sa kanilang pang-araw-araw na pamumuhay at pag-unlad ng kanilang pamayanan.

Ayon kay Woolcock (1998, sinipi ni Agnitsch et al., 2006) ang malalalim na ugnayan sa loob ng isang grupo (*embeddedness*) at ang mga ugnayan sa iba't ibang grupo (*autonomous*) ay parehong mahalaga sa pag-unlad ng komunidad. Kinikilala rin na ang panloob na ugnayan ng komunidad ay hindi sumasapat upang maghatid ng pangmatagalang pag-unlad. Sa bonding social capital nabubuo ang hangarin na kumilos para sa kolektibong kapakanan ng komunidad, ngunit ang kakayahan na kumilos ay nauugnay sa kanilang panlabas na social capital. Ang bonding social capital ay mahalaga para sa pang-araw-araw na pamumuhay o para "makaraos," samantalang ang bridging social capital naman ay kinakailangan para "makaahon" mula sa kanilang sitwasyon sa pamamagitan ng pagkakaroon ng akses sa mga rekurso na kailangan para makamit ito (Agnitsch et al., 2006). Sa ganitong paraan, nagiging tuntungan ang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan sa mga pagsisikap ng mga katutubong Ati sa pagpapaunlad ng kanilang komunidad. Pinapakita ng mga kuwento ng Ati sa pagbuo ng panloob at panlabas na social capital ang kanilang aktibong gampanin sa pagtaguyod ng kanilang komunidad sa pamamagitan ng wika, katutubong paraan ng pamamahala, at aktitud. Ang aktibong partisipasyon nila sa proseso ng resettlement ay

nagpapakita na hindi sila pasibo. Binabangga nito ang pagtingin sa kanila bilang mga biktima lamang ng kanilang kapalaran, at pinapakita ang kanilang kakayahan na maging aktibong kalahok sa pagbuo ng kanilang kinabukasan.

Livelihood Reconstruction

Nagamit din ng mga Ati ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman sa muling pagbubuo ng kanilang kabuhayan sa Rodriguez, Rizal na malaki ang naitutulong upang mairaos ang kanilang mga pangangailangan sa araw-araw. Isa sa kabuhayan ng mga katutubong Ati sa kasalukuyan ay ang pagbebenta sa bayan ng kanilang mga nakukuha sa kagubatan tulad ng mga herbal na gamot na kinukuha mula sa bundok tuwing Mahal na Araw sa paniniwalang mas mabisa ito kapag kinuha ng Biyernes Santo. Dagdag pa rito, inaabot sila ng isang buong araw sa paghahanap ng mga bato kagaya ng *santo ara (yellow calcite)* at *dyamanteng negra (pyrite)* upang gamitin sa ginagawang mga agimat. Bukod dito, gumagawa rin sila ng langis na pampahid sa masakit na bahagi ng katawan at *bracelet* na may mga pangontra sa usog. Nabahagi rin nila na naghuhukay na lamang sila sa mga balon at nangunguha ng mga bunga sa mga puno bilang pamatid uhaw at gutom. May mga pagkakataon din na ang ilan sa kanila ay bumabalik sa kanilang mga pinanggalingang probinsya sa Panay upang manguha ng mga herbal na gamot.

Nangagaso rin sila ng iba't ibang hayop kagaya ng bayawak, sawa, pagong, unggoy, musang, at baboy ramo na kanilang kinokonsumo at ibinebenta. Naninilo sila ng mga bitag at nagsasanay ng kanilang mga alagang aso upang makahuli ng mga hayop na ito sa kagubatan. Isa raw ito sa mga katutubong kaalaman nila na nakuha pa nila sa kanilang mga ninuno. Nabanggit din nila na silang mga katutubo ay hindi gaanong mahilig sa karne ng manok at baboy, bagkus, ang mga karne ng hayop na kanilang nahuhuli sa kagubatan ang nagsisilbi nilang karne.

Marami rin silang kaalaman sa agrikultura na nakatulong sa kanilang kabuhayan. Nagtatanim sila ng iba't ibang gulay kagaya ng pechay, palay, mustasa, talong, sitaw, at kamoteng kahoy na binebenta nila at kinakain. Nangunguha rin sila ng *wild orchids* at *bonsai* sa kagubatan na ipinagbibili sa iba't ibang lugar. Ang iba sa kanila ay nag-aalaga at nagpaparami ng mga manok, pato, at itik na kanilang ibinebenta rin. Noong kasagsagan ng pandemya, malaki raw ang naitulong ng pag-aalaga ng mga hayop dahil kahit papano ay nagkaroon sila ng pera panggastos sa gitna ng *lockdown*. Maalam din silang mangisda, at noong malinis pa ang ilog na malapit sa kanilang komunidad ay nakakapanghuli sila ng maliliit na hipon at biya na kinokonsumo at ibinebenta nila tuwing marami ang kanilang huli.

Panghuli, nakakapag-uling din sila sa mga kabundukan upang ibenta at gamitin sa kanilang mga kabahayan. Nabanggit nila na ang kadalasang bumibili ng kanilang mga sako-sakong uling ay ang karatig-komunidad ng mga Muslim. Sa proseso ng pag-uuling, ginagamit nila ang kanilang kaalaman upang tukuyin ang mga sanga ng puno na maaaring gawing uling. Ayon sa kanila, hindi nila inuuling ang mga puno kagaya ng *narra* dahil alam nilang labag ito sa batas.

Naging matinkad sa muling pagbubuo ng mga Ati ng kanilang kabuhayan ang integrasyon nila sa *cash economy*. Mapapansin na ang paggawa nila ng mga halamang gamot at mga gawaing agrikultural ay hindi na lamang para sa sariling pangangailangan kundi upang kumita ng salapi. Napapakita din ito sa pagpasok ng mga Ati sa mga trabahong tulad ng construction at pakikiarawan. Ganito rin ang mapapansin sa nakakaraming kababaihang Aeta matapos ang pagputok ng Bundok Pinatubo, kung saan tinignan nila ang pagiging katulong bilang pinakapraktikal na tunguhin para sa kanilang mga namumuhay sa resettlement dahil ito ang pinakamabilis na paraan upang makalikom ng salapi na maaaring ibigay sa pamilya lalo na sa mga anak na pinag-aaaral (Santos, 2001). Nagbubunsod ang

pamamayani ng *market-oriented* na agrikultura at *forestry practices* ng pagkawala ng mga katutubong kaalaman (Grenier, 1998).

Batay sa mga pag-aaral, maraming nakakabit na usapin sa resettlement na may kaugnayan sa kabuhayan, pamayanan, kultura at pagkakakilanlan. Inilahad ni Bawagan (2010) na may mga pagkakataong tuluyang itinatakwil ng mga katutubo ang kanilang pagkakakilanlan dulot ng diskriminasyon sa nilipatang lugar. Dagdag pa rito ang matinding kahirapan sa lilipatang lugar bunga na rin ng kawalan at/o kakulangan ng kabuhayan at suporta mula sa kinauukulan (Cernea, 1997). Sa halip na tignan ang mga sapolitang lumipat at ni-*resettle* bilang mga biktima na walang kontrol sa nangyayari at naghihintay lamang ng tulong mula sa iba, ipinakikita ng mga pag-aaral na gumagawa sila ng paraan upang angkupan at tugunan ang kanilang kalagayan. Sa bahagi rin ng mga katutubo, ipinakita kung paano naging mahalagang bahagi ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman sa kanilang mga pagsisikap na pakitunguhan ang kanilang kalagayan—kabuhayan, pamayanan, pagkakakilanlan at kultura sa panahon ng displacement at resettlement (Watanabe, 2007). Sa kaso ng mga Ati, malinaw na kanilang nagagamit sa muling pagtatatag ng kabuhayan ang mga katutubong kaalaman na kanilang nadala mula sa lupaing ninuno.

Selective Assimilation

Sa proseso ng selective assimilation ay nailalangkap ng mga Ati ang kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan sa dinatnang kultura, pulitika, at ekonomiya. May isang antas rin sila ng kalayaang pumili kung aling mga kaalaman at kasanayan ang ilalangkap nila sa kanilang dala-dala na mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan batay sa nakikita nilang gamit o halaga ng mga ito sa kanilang *survival* sa nilipatang lugar. Sa kabila nito, may pangangailangan na tuklasin at pag-aralan pa kung paano nila pinapaunlad ang kanilang katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan sa proseso ng assimilation.

Isang batayan ng mga Ati sa pagpapanatili ng kanilang katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan ay ang ikinakabit at nakikita nilang halaga nito para sa kanilang survival sa bago nilang panirahan. Halimbawa nito ay ang kabuhayan nilang pagbebenta ng herbal na gamot. Sa parehong batayan din sila namimili ng mga kaalaman at kasanayan mula sa lugar na nilipatan. Kabilang din dito ang pagpasok at pakikisalamuha sa iba't ibang institusyon at grupo. Halimbawa nito ay ang pagpapaloob sa HOA para sa kanilang seguridad sa paninirahan at pagsali sa iba't ibang mga relihiyon sa nilipatang lugar buhat ng tulong at suporta na kanilang ibinigay. Mula rito, masasabing may isang antas ng pamimili ang mga Ati sa tinutungo ng kanilang assimilation. Ipinapakita nito ang dinamikong katangian ng mga katutubong kaalaman kung saan may kakayahang piliin at gamitin ang mga makabagong kaalaman at pamamaraan upang angkinin o maging bahagi na.

Gayunman, hindi masasabing ang mga Ati ang pangunahing nagtatakda ng tunguhin ng pagsabay nila sa uso sa kasalukuyan. Ang kasalukuyang direksyong tinutungo ng kanilang assimilation ay bunga ng paglala ng mga suliraning kinakaharap nila. Patunay dito ang integrasyon nila sa cash economy. Naitatakda nila ang halaga ng mga kaalaman at kasanayan batay sa araw-araw na survival sa ilalim ng cash economy. Kaakibat nito, hindi maitatangi ang internalisasyon ng mga Ati ng kahirapan at pagmamaliit ng sarili o kaya naman ay pagsisisi sa pagiging katutubo. Sa halip na makita ang kanilang pagsisikap, mas napapatampok nila sa mga kwento ang mga personahe, tulad ng mga pulitiko at pastor. Maaari ring sabihin na ang tunguhing magkanya-kanya ay bunga at manipestasyon ng paglala ng kanilang kalagayan at limitasyong ipinapataw ng kasalukuyang istrukturang panlipunan.

Bukod dito, ipinapahayag din ng mga Ati na unti-unti nang hindi napapraktis ang kanilang kultura. Gaya ng nabanggit, ayon sa mga Ati, mahalaga ang gampanin ng pagpapatuloy ng paggamit ng kanilang wikang Inati sa pagpapanatili at pagpapalakas ng ugnayan nila sa isa't isa. Subalit, kininilala rin nila ang halaga ng pag-aaral ng Tagalog para

sa araw-araw na pakikisalamuha nila sa nilipatang lugar. Gayunman, unti-unti na raw nawawala ang wikang Inati, dahil karamihan sa mga batang henerasyon ay sa Rizal na ipinanganak at lumaki.

Sa ganitong kalagayan, isang malaking hamon daw para sa kanilang mga katutubong Ati kung paano pananatilihin ang kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan. Lalo itong litaw sa kasalukuyang paglala ng kahirapan dulot ng istrukturang panlipunan. Subalit, mahalagang kilalanin na nariyan na ang mga pagsisikap na maaaring paghalawan ng aral at tuntungan ng mga susunod pang mga pagsisikap. Gayundin, mahalagang kilalanin na nananatili pa rin ang kahalagahan ng kanilang katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan bilang sandigan sa pagpapaunlad pa ng kanilang mga pagsisikap.

Paghawan ng Masukal na Istruktura

Bagaman may aktibong gampanin ang komunidad upang umangkop sa resettlement, hindi na ito sumasapat dahil sa mga panlabas na puwersa mula sa istruktura ng lipunan. Sa pagdaan ng panahon, unti-unting lumala ang mga kondisyong humahadlang sa mga dating paraan ng pag-angkop sa resettlement na nagdudulot upang mas maging bulnerable ang mga Ati sa karahasan ng istruktura.

Una, nananatili ang diskriminasyon laban sa mga Ati. Nang malipat ang kanilang komunidad sa Sitio Maislap, ininsulto sila ng noong alkalde ng Rizal at sinabihan na “dumating na pala ang mga unggoy.” Higit pa rito, ipinahahayag ng mga Ati na itinuturing silang hayop na mababang uri at walang alam ng mga taga-labas. “Diskriminasyon ang tawag doon diba? Kasi yung katutubo, yan ang pinagmulan ng ano nila. Yung mga walang wala, ginagawang pera. Kumbaga sa ano, yung baboy na inalagaan mo, ibebenta mo,” saad ng isang elder. Binahagi rin ng isang elder na pinagtabas siya ng isang opisyaales sa isang lote upang ipahiram sa kanya at mapagtaniman, ngunit nang matapos niya ang pagtatabas, binawi ng opisyaales ang napagkasunduan. Hanggang ngayon, nakararanas ng *bullying* ang mga

kabataang Ati hindi lamang mula sa kanilang kaklase kundi sa mga guro na tinatawag silang “bobo” o walang alam. Dahil dito, mayroong mga pinipili na lamang na tumigil sa pag-aaral.

Sa kasalukuyan, may naninirahan pa ring mga Ati sa tabing-ilog ng Sitio Katwiran. Bagaman nais na nilang umalis doon, pinipigilan sila ng mga namamahala dahil lumilitaw na napakikinabangan ng mga ito ang pagkasira ng mga kabahayan tuwing may sakuna. Mas madali raw makakuha ng donasyon at tulong dahil higit na kaawa-awa ang mga “maiitim.”

Sa katunayan, may bahagi rin ang mga Civil Society Organizations (CSO) sa pagpapalaganap ng diskriminasyon. Madalas daw na kuhanan sila ng mga litrato upang ipakitang kaawa-awa ang kanilang sitwasyon at maudyok ang mga institusyon at indibidwal na magbigay ng mga donasyong kalimitang hindi naman napupunta sa komunidad. Samakatwid, nasususugan nito ang *stereotype* na kawawa, walang alam, at walang kakayahan ang mga Ati.

“Parang nagsisisi ako na katutubo pa ako, dapat hindi, kasi ang katutubo walang magandang buhay. Mahirap. Mahirap ang aming buhay, katutubo,” ayon sa isang elder. Dahil sa paulit-ulit na karanasan ng diskriminasyon, kapansin-pansin ang *internalized oppression* sa mga Ati at pinaniniwalaan na rin nila ang mga negatibong katangiang ipinapataw sa kanila. Pumipigil ito sa kanila na tumangan ng lideratong posisyon. Nabanggit ng isang elder na hindi niya tinanggap ang posisyon bilang presidente ng HOA noon dahil wala siyang alam at walang pinag-aralan hindi tulad ng taga-labas na naninirahan sa kanilang komunidad. Humahadlang din ito upang makita nila ang kanilang mahalagang gampanin sa pag-unlad ng kanilang komunidad. Sa halip, ang kanilang mga pagsisikap ay nakikita nilang utang na loob sa estado at kapalit ng kanilang pagsunod dito. Ayon sa isang elder,

“Ang gobyerno kasi parang panginoon natin yan na magbigay proteksyon satin.

Katulad sa baranggay, kung pasaway ka dito, sinong baranggay ang gagalang sayo

dito? Sisipain ka pero pag ikaw ay nakikita nilang sumusunod sa kanila at nirerespeto mo, talagang aanuhin ka.”

Bunsod nito, may hesitasyong igiit ang kanilang karapatan mula sa estado.

Pangalawa, dahil sa lumalalang pagkasira ng kalikasan dulot ng *landfill* at *quarry*, marami sa kanilang pagsisikap noon ay labis na naapektuhan lalo na ang kanilang kabuhayan. Ang mga ilog na pinagkukunan nila ng tubig at isda ay naging burak na. Ang kabundukang kanilang pinangangasuhan at pinagkukunan ng mga materyales para sa herbal na gamot ay nakakalbo na, kaya palayo nang palayo ang kailangan nilang akyatin. Mahigpit ang ugnayan ng kultura ng mga Ati sa kalikasan, kaya malubha rin ang implikasyon ng pagkasira ng kalikasan sa pagpapanatili ng kultura. Lumilitaw dito ang sistematikong di-pagkakapantay-pantay at institusyunal na diskriminasyon na nararanasan ng mga katutubo. Ayon sa mga Ati, pinahihintulutan ng Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) ang malawakang quarrying ng mga korporasyon, ngunit ang sustenableng praktis ng pag-uuling ng mga Ati ay higit na ipinagbabawal. Sa katunayan, isinisisi ng DENR sa kanila ang pagkabalbo ng kabundukan. Gayundin, pinagbabawalan silang na mangaso at hinuhuli ang kanilang mga alagang aso ng *dog pound* kung kaya tanging pangkonsumo na lamang nila ang kanilang mga nahuhuli.

Pangatlo, dahil sa mabilis na urbanisasyon sa Rizal, laganap ang pagpapalit-gamit ng maraming lupain. Dahil dito, ang dating napagtataniman ng mga palay at iba pang pananim ay napagtatayuan na ng mga gusali at kabahayan. Ayon sa mga Ati, hindi itinuturing ng estado na agrikultural na lupa ang Rodriguez, Rizal. Sa halip ay nakatuon ito bilang relocation site. Taliwas ito sa pananaw ng mga Ati kung saan nakikita nilang sagana ang lupain para mapagtaniman. Ayon sa kasalukuyang Chieftain, maaaring linangin ang Rodriguez bilang agrikultural na lupa para sa seguridad sa pagkain.

Pang-apat, malaking suliranin para sa mga Ati ang *land dispute* sa lupang tinitirhan nila ngayon. Hindi malinaw kung sino ang may ligal na pagmamay-ari sa lupa at kung ano ang kasalukuyang sitwasyon nito. Ayon sa balita ng Philstar (2006), donasyon umano ng dating Mayor Pedro Cuerpo ang lupa upang pagtayuan ng kabahayan. Subalit, ayon naman sa mga Ati, sinisingil sila noon buwan-buwan at hindi na naibalik ang kanilang pera nang *ma-bankrupt* umano ang kanilang pinaghuhulugan. Wala na rin silang maipakitang patunay na nagbayad sila noon dahil nawala ang kanilang mga resibo nang bahain sila ng bagyong Ondoy noong 2009. Sinanla rin umano nang ilang beses ang lupa at kasalukuyang nasa korte pa ang kaso. Kung gayon, nananatiling walang kasiguraduhan ang kanilang karapatan sa lupa at may bantang muling mapaalis sila sa Sitio Maislap.

Panghuli, ang mga nabanggit na suliranin ay maiuugnay sa kapabayaan ng estado na naglalagay sa mga Ati sa mardyinalisadong posisyon. Walang internasyunal na batas na susuporta sa mga IDP sa panahon ng resettlement, kaya higit pa silang nagiging vulnerable matapos ang displacement (Kingston & Datta, 2012). Dagdag pa, walang rekord o datos ang gobyerno patungkol sa mga Ati bukod sa *census*, kaya walang mapagbabatayan kung ano ang kasalukuyang kalagayan ng lupa. Hindi rin masagot ng lokal na pamahalaan kung ano ang estado ng lupang tinitirhan ng komunidad ngayon, at wala pang ibinibigay na suporta upang maging malinaw ito para sa komunidad. Sa kaso ng mga Ati, bukod pa sa kawalan ng batas, ang mismong mga batas ang humahadlang sa mga Ati na paunlarin ang kanilang komunidad. Samakatwid, lalo lamang silang nilulugmok ng batas sa marhinalisasyon. Bagaman may suportang ibinibigay ang pamahalaan, limitado lamang ito sa mga panandaliang serbisyo, tulad ng donasyon, *medical missions*, at ayuda.

Higit na nakaaapekto sa mga Ati bilang katutubo ang kawalan ng seguridad sa lupa. Wala silang espasyo upang linangin ang kanilang kultura na mahigpit ang ugnayan sa lupa. Halimbawa, walang espasyo ang mga Ati para maglunsad ng mga aktibidad para sa Buwan

ng mga Katutubo tulad ng mga Dumagat. Dagdag pa rito, walang representasyon ang mga Ati bilang mga katutubo sa baranggay dahil hindi sila kinikilalang katutubo sa probinsya ng Rizal ayon sa IPRA. Kaya wala ring maiaambag ang NCIP sa rehiyon patungkol sa kanilang land dispute dahil ang kinikilala lamang ng batas na lupaing ninuno ng mga Ati ay nasa Panay.

Lumilitaw mula sa kasalukuyang kondisyon ng mga Ati na nagpapatuloy pa rin ang istruktural na karahasan. Ang institusyunal na diskriminasyon, sistematikong di-pagkakapantay-pantay, at kapabayaang estado na nagtulak sa kanilang displacement ay nararanasan pa rin nila sa kasalukuyan na humahadlang sa kanilang pagsisikap na umangkop sa resettlement.

Paglinang Para sa Masaganang ani

Ang pagpapatuloy ng structural violence sa paglala ng mga kasalukuyang kondisyon at suliraning kinakaharap ng mga katutubong Ati sa Rodriguez, Rizal ay nagdudulot ng mga balakid na humahadlang sa kanilang mga pagsisikap na umangkop. Dahil dito, nagkakaroon ng kontradiksyon sa pagitan ng paggiit ng ahensya ng komunidad at tuluyang pagsasailalim sa lipunang nagtutulak sa kanila sa marhinalisadong posisyon. Samakatwid, kinakailangang ang kanilang pagsisikap ay tumungo sa pagiging transpormasyunal.

Katulad ng naunang nabanggit, may isang antas nang inabot ang mga pagsisikap ng mga katutubong Ati batay sa konseptwalisasyon ni Longwe (2002) kaugnay ng pagtitiyak ng kanilang kagalingan (welfare) at akses sa mga rekurso. Sa kabilang banda, ipinapakita rin ng mga karanasan ng katutubong Ati ang pangangailangan ng higit pang pag-unawa sa lumalalang mga suliraning kinakaharap nila. Sandigan ito ng pagtataas ng antas ng kanilang pagsisikap tungo sa pagpapalawak at pagpapalakas ng kanilang kontrol sa kalagayan at sa pagtatakda ng kanilang tunguhin. Sa pagsasakatuparan ng prosesong ito, makikita ang mahalagang gampanin ng Community Organizing-Community Development (CO-CD). Kinikilala na ang mga estratehiya sa CO-CD ay magdadala sa komunidad patungo sa

kanilang mga tinatanaw ay maaaring tumuntong sa mga adbokasiyang bitbit ng mga Ati: akses sa mga batayang serbisyo at oportunidad, seguridad sa lupa, pulitikal na representasyon, pangangalaga sa kalikasan, pagkakaroon ng sapat na kabuhayan, at pagpapayaman ng kultura.

Malaking salik ang ginagampanan ng wika sa pagpapayaman at pagpapalakas ng identidad ng komunidad bilang isang tribo. Kung gayon, malaki rin ang potensyal nito bilang tuntungan ng pagpapataas ng antas ng kamulatan ng tribo. Dito pumapasok ang kahalagahan ng ninanais ng mga katutubong Ati na maituro at muling maipalaganap sa kanilang tribo, lalo na sa mga bata, ang kanilang wikang Inati. Para sa kanila, ito ang kanilang pagkakakilanlan bilang mga katutubo. Bukod dito, kritikal din sa pagpapanatili ng social cohesion ng tribo ang pananatili ng katutubong organisasyon sa pamamahala sa pamamagitan ng kanilang tinatawag na Chieftain at elders. Ang Chieftain at elders ang nagsisilbing sentruhan ng mga internal na usapin ng tribo at nagtitiyak ng kaisahan at paglahok ng bawat kasapi sa anumang pagsisikap ng kanilang tribo. Kaakibat nito ay ang malinaw na inilalahad ng tribo sa pangangailangan ng Tribal Hall. Masasabing espasyo ito ng pagsasama-sama at sentro rin ang kolektibong pag-aaral at pagpapasa ng mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan ng mga Ati, na maiihalintulad sa natukoy ni Watanabe (2007) sa kahalagahan ng mga Mosque para sa mga Muslim na lumilipat sa Kalakhang Maynila mula sa Mindanao.

May nasisimulan na rin ang tribo sa usapin ng kanilang kolektibong pagkilos na makikita sa kanilang pakikipag-ugnayan sa labas ng komunidad. Maiuugnay ito sa konsepto ni Longwe (2002) ng mobilisasyon kung saan nagsasama-sama ang mga grupo dahil sa pag-unawa na ang kanilang kalagayan ay kinakailangan ng kolektibong pagkilos. Mahalagang bigyang pansin ang pagpapalakas ng ugnayan ng mga Ati sa iba pang grupo sa kanilang lugar o ang kanilang bridging social capital. Pinapakita ng nakaraang dayalogo ng mga HOA sa DENR ang kanilang iisang pagtingin kaugnay ng pagkasira ng kalikasan bunga

ng nagpapatuloy na quarry sa lugar at mga usaping kakabit ng kalapit nilang landfill. Malinaw na ang mga suliraning kinakaharap ng mga Ati ay sumasaklaw at nararanasan din ng iba pang grupo sa kanilang lugar. Batay rito, hindi sasapat ang social cohesion ng mga Ati upang harapin ang mga suliranin. Kung gayon, bahagi ang pagbubuo ng mas mahigpit pang kaisahan sa iba pang grupo sa kanilang lugar sa pagpapataas ng kanilang kakayahan at antas ng pagsisikap upang harapin at baguhin ang kasalukuyan nilang kalagayan. Pinalalawak ng pagbubuo ng bridging social capital ang saklaw na maaaring abutin ng social cohesion (Agnitsch, et al., 2006), upang tapatan ang saklaw ng suliraning kanilang kinakaharap. Isang pang mahalagang bigyang pansin ang paggagap ng mga Ati sa hanayan ng mga pwersang panlipunang umiiral at iniinugan ng mga suliraning kinakaharap nila. Malinaw na ipinahahayag ito ng mismong pagtukoy nila sa nararanasang diskriminasyon. Higit na tumampok ito sa parehong dayalogo na naganap sa pagitan nila kasama ang iba pang HOA sa kanilang lugar at ng DENR kung saan kanilang iginiit na hindi sila ang sumisira ng kalikasan dahil wala naman silang malalaking makinarya tulad ng mayroon ang landfill at mga kumpanya ng quarry sa lugar.

Nilalaman ng mga pagsisikap sa nakaraan ang pagigiit ng karapatan ng mga Ati para sa serbisyong panlipunan, mula sa mga kahilingan nila para sa patambak hanggang sa hinagap na magpa-ampon sa mga Agta ng Rizal para lamang magkaroon ng akses sa mga serbisyong panlipunan. Ganito rin ang pinapakita ng pakikipag-ugnayan nila sa iba't ibang institusyon, upang mapunan ang kakulangan sa kanilang pangangailangan sa pamamagitan ng mga natatanggap nilang mga relief at tulong. Kaalinsabay nito, itinaguyod ng mga Ati ang kanilang karapatan sa maayos na paninirahan at katiyakan sa lupang kinatitirikan nito. Mahalagang makita ang pangangailangang ilangkap sa mga pagsisikap na ito ang pagtataguyod ng paglaban sa tuloy-tuloy na pagkawasak ng kalikasan sa kanilang lugar na bahagi rin ng kanilang mga adbokasiya. Maliban sa epekto ng pagkawasak na ito sa kanilang

kabuhayan, malaki rin ang epekto nito para sa kultura ng mga Ati na nakahabi sa kalikasan at sumasalamin din sa mahigpit nilang ugnayan dito. Gayunpaman, isang mahalagang usapin ang mulat at tuloy-tuloy na pagtataguyod ng karapatan sa representasyon ng mga Ati sa kabuuang tunguhin ng kanilang mga pagsisikap sa hinaharap. Higit na tumatampok ang halaga nito sa pagtitiyak ng higit pang pagpapayaman ng kanilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan, bilang kongkretong manipestasyon ng pagpapanatili ng kanilang identidad bilang mga Ati.

Sa kabuuan, binibigyang mukha ng mga pagsisikap ng mga Ati ang kanilang mga tinatanaw na pangarap para sa kanilang tribo—isang buhay na payapa at may katiyakan sa araw-araw na pamumuhay sa isang maaliwalas na kapaligiran kung saan kanilang napapanatili ang kanilang kultura.

Konklusyon

Sa mga karanasan ng Ati sa proseso ng resettlement sa Rodriguez, Rizal sa harap ng lumalalang mga suliranin dulot ng panlipunang istruktura, malinaw na nagsilbing bukal para sa tribo ang dala-dala nilang mga katutubong kaalaman at kasanayan. Higit na nakatulong ang kanilang mga IKSPs sa kanilang **social capital formation** kung saan ang kanilang malalim na sense of identity at sense of community bilang mga katutubong Ati ang pundasyon ng kanilang kolektibong pagkilos para sa kapakanan ng komunidad. Naging mahalaga din ito sa kanilang **livelihood reconstruction** kung saan ang kanilang mga kaalaman naman sa herbal na paggagamot, pangangaso, pag-uuling, at agrikultura ay nakatulong sa pagtugon sa kanilang kagyat na pangangailangan. Sa mga prosesong ito naganap ang kanilang **selective assimilation**, tulad na lamang ng pakikisalamuha sa iba't ibang institusyon at grupo at pagpasok sa cash economy, na nagpapakita ng kakayahan ng mga katutubong Ati na pakitunguhan ang mga kondisyon at suliraning kinaharap at patuloy na kinakaharap nila sa konteksto ng post-displacement at proseso ng resettlement.

Maaari itong magsilbing tuntungan sa paglulunsad ng higit pang pagsisikap tungo sa pagbago ng mismong istrukturang panlipunang nagkakait sa kanilang mga batayang karapatan. Sa huli, ang pagtugon sa mga kagyat na usapin pa rin ng mga katutubo ang magtatakda ng halaga ng anumang abstraksyon kaugnay ng kanilang identidad, kultura, at tunguhin. Mabibigyang-linaw at kabuluhan lamang ang mga ito sa pagtataguyod at pagkakamit nila ng maaliwalas na buhay na ipinagkakait sa kanila ng kasalukuyang marahas na istrukturang panlipunan. Ang mga katutubong Ati ang magpapasya at mapagpasya rito.

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Slums Under Attack: Resisting Violent Housing Policies and the Repertoires of Housing Contention of the Sitio San Roque Community¹

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Abstract

This article examines the experiences of KADAMAY in Sitio San Roque, an urban poor community in Quezon City, as it navigates the challenges posed by the state's persistent and ongoing slum clearing efforts, driven by neoliberal urban development agendas. Utilizing data gathered over years of community engagement, including field notes and recorded interviews with selected community leaders and KADAMAY members, the authors document the detrimental impacts of state actions characterized by forced evictions and neoliberal housing policies on the community. In response to these challenges, the article traces the development of KADAMAY San Roque's resistance strategies. Utilizing the frameworks of repertoires of contention and arenas of interaction, it highlights several innovative practices such as Street Occupation, Tumbalik, Temporary Shelter, and the Community Development Plan as notable forms of resistance to unjust state practices and policies. These strategies emerged after the community's success in organizing barricades to prevent forced eviction. This article describes the context in which these resistance strategies surface as well as its implications for the state. Finally, it offers recommendations informed by the lessons distilled from KADAMAY San Roque's struggles, contributing to the discourse on urban housing social movements.

Keywords: *repertoires of contention, housing, urban poor, social movement, neoliberalism*

¹ This journal article builds on an earlier work titled "Asserting Inclusion in Housing and Urban Development From the Barikadang Bayan (Community Barricade), Street Occupation and Tumbalik (Collective Home Restoration) to the Community Development Plan" from the Re-Imagining Post-Pandemic Societies: Alternative Practices across Southeast Asia (Volume 2) Monograph Published by the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) published 18 May 2023 p. 253-296.

Umaasenso na kami, pero ano ba'ng ginagawa sa amin 'di ba? Dinudurog ang mga bahay namin kasama ang kabuhayan namin. Laging sinasabi [ng awtoridad] na uunlad ang lugar namin. Pero kaninong pagpapaunlad? [We are already thriving but our homes along with our livelihood are being destroyed. The authorities say that our land will develop. But who will benefit from this? Development for whom?]

Estrelieta “Ka Inday” Bagasbas
KADAMAY San Roque Chairperson

Introduction

For over a decade, the urban poor organization Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) in the Sitio San Roque urban poor community in Quezon City has staunchly resisted forced eviction and demolitions, fighting for the right to housing. Their primary method of resistance has been the erection of a community barricade or the ‘*barikadang bayan*’ as they call it. The most successful community barricade led by KADAMAY was on September 23, 2010, which saw thousands of Sitio San Roque residents preventing the clearing of their community. During this event, various urban poor organizations worked to "collectively map and execute a community barricade to control a street terrain—block state forces, disturb transport, minimize casualties and arrests—deter a forced eviction and demolition, and display demolition victims’ sufferings and resistance to arouse political condemnation" (Arcilla, 2022, p. 12). They used various materials available in the community, such as plastic bags filled with feces and urine, sewage water, stones, bottles, debris, and rocks as defensive weapons to stall the incoming demolition force without causing serious harm (Ortega, 2016a; Ortega 2016b; Arcilla, 2020; Arcilla, 2022).

During the 2010 community barricade, the solidarity among diverse urban poor organizations in Sitio San Roque was prominently displayed, despite their varying ideological perspectives and positions within the social movement in the Philippines. This unified resistance prompted then-President Benigno Aquino III to declare a three-month nationwide

moratorium on demolitions of urban poor communities, thus elevating the right to housing and in-city housing advocacies in policy discussions (Ortega, 2016b; Arcilla, 2020). Following this event, community barricades have emerged as a significant defense mechanism against forced evictions and demolitions in other urban poor communities, drawing inspiration from the success of the Sitio San Roque barricade (Arcilla, 2022). Urban poor leaders in San Roque continue to remember their collective unity and sacrifice during the 2010 barricade with a sense of heroism (Arcilla, 2020).

Since the success of the *barikadang bayan* in 2010, KADAMAY in Sitio San Roque has developed various forms of resistance in an attempt to prevent subsequent forced evictions and demolitions in Sitio San Roque, persistently advocating for the right to housing. In light of these developments of KADAMAY's strategies in contending unjust government and private sector practices, this paper tries to answer the question of how do residents of Sitio San Roque resist forced evictions and unfair housing policies from both state and private developers? With this question in mind, this study aims to examine the experience of KADAMAY by looking into the various strategies and tactics they employed, specifically through their deployment of street occupation, *tumbalik* (collective home restoration), temporary shelters and the Community Development Plan (CDP). The study will draw from Tilly's (1993) concept of repertoires of contention. Briefly, repertoires of contention is a concept deployed in congruence to the various routinary actions of social movements in their intention to oppose or assert against unfair government policies. In the concluding section, we also discuss some concrete recommendations to address the unfair housing policies pushed by the government.

Methodology

This paper, however, draws extensively from solidarity and community work with KADAMAY in Sitio San Roque spanning from 2018 to 2024. The first author of this paper,

Mr. Rafael Dimalanta began his engagement through a graduate class in 2018, subsequently co-convening the support group Save San Roque from 2019 to 2023, assisting KADAMAY as a community architect, and later serving as an advisory member of the same group starting in 2024². Another author, Mr. Geo Cabaron, volunteered with the research unit of the support group from 2018 to 2022, while Mr. Bernard Joy Dones served as head of the planning and design unit from 2020 to 2023. These grounded engagements enabled participation in and co-organization of activities with KADAMAY, providing firsthand experience in interactions with the local and national state authorities, security forces, and other urban poor organizations in Sitio San Roque. Data collection includes recorded interviews and field notes from these engagements over the years.

Additional data was derived from document review and a focus group discussion (FGD) organized by KADAMAY in 2021, exploring community experiences with the forced eviction and demolition conducted in the community, as well as their forms of resistance. Supplementary data includes informal semi-structured interviews conducted in 2024 with Estrelieta "Ka Inday" Bagasbas, KADAMAY San Roque Chairperson since 2010; Secretary General Mirafe "Ate Fe" Seduco, KADAMAY San Roque Secretary since 2017; and Jan Marvi Atienza, community architect and former co-convenor of Save San Roque from 2019 to 2022. Thus, this paper specifically aimed at examining the experience of KADAMAY San Roque covering the period of 2010 to 2024.

This paper responds to the lack of attention to the emergence of various repertoires of contention among the urban poor due to neoliberal urban development, and hopes to offer lessons for activists and urban poor communities threatened by forced evictions and demolitions. At the end of the paper, we also provide some concrete recommendations based on the insights we draw from the experience of KADAMAY San Roque.

² Save San Roque was later rebranded to Inklusibo: Philippine Resource Center for Inclusive Development.

The paper is organized as follows: The first section explains the repertoires of contention framework used to analyze the emergence of these resistance forms. The second section briefly discusses neoliberal urban development in the Philippines and how it is manifested into slum clearing and fragmentation of urban organizations in Sitio San Roque to foreground the succeeding section; and using the repertoires of contention framework, the third section tries to unpack and understand the emerging practices of resistance observed in the context of the Sitio San Roque, primarily employed by the urban poor organization KADAMAY.

Framing KADAMAY's Struggle: Repertoires of Contention and Arenas of Interaction

Repertoires of Contention

Tilly originally defines 'repertoires of contention' as routines that "emerge from struggle" and are culturally "learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice" (Tilly, 1993, p. 264), performed by social movements to make collective claims and oppose decisions considered unjust (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). In Tilly's later works, he emphasizes that these repertoires are not solely focused on public displays of disruptive collective action but also on the constant innovation embedded within them (Tilly, 2008; Tarrow, 2008). Alimi (2015) extends this framework by introducing the 'arenas of interaction' to examine social movements' repertoire development. According to Alimi (2015), there are three main contending parties involved in contention: state authorities, security forces (e.g. police and military), and social movement organizations. The interactions among these parties give rise to three main arenas of interaction: social movement and state authorities, social movement and security forces, and interactions between social movement organizations. These are explained and differentiated in Table 1.

Table 1

Arenas of Interaction

Social Movement and State Authorities Interaction	The interaction between social movement organizations and state authorities plays a crucial role in shaping and selecting repertoires of contention. This is primarily due to the state's possession of legislative, executive, and judicial powers, making state authorities the ultimate target for claim-making of social movement organizations.
Social Movement and Security Forces Interaction	The approach taken by security forces, whether characterized by brutality or leniency, repression or tolerance, selectivity or diffusion, and legal or illegal, significantly affects the development of repertoires of contention. This complexity is compounded by the considerable discretion that security forces hold in actual implementation.
Intra-(Social) Movement Interaction	Establishing and sustaining solidarity among diverse organizations within a social movement is a complex and arduous task. However, when achieved, the capacity for claim-making and resistance becomes stronger, more far-reaching, and significantly more impactful. Interactions between social movement organizations, as such, have profound influence in development of contention repertoires.

Note. Adapted from “Repertoires of Contention” by E. Alimi, 2015, *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, 410-422. Oxford. Copyright by Oxford University Press.

Furthermore, repertoires of contention are also shaped by interactions with a variety of other parties, including private sector entities (e.g. private corporations or developers), counter-movements, the general public, and other non-state or supra-national actors (e.g. World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations) (Alimi, 2015). The influence of these actors becomes particularly pronounced during periods of heightened conflict. Alimi (2015) elucidates that these arenas of interaction are not isolated from one another; instead, they are mutually influential and interdependent.

By employing Tilly's (1993) framework of repertoires of contention, this paper delves into the emergence of diverse repertoires of contention among the urban poor. The examination focuses on three distinct repertoires developed by KADAMAY in Sitio San

Roque. These include the Street Occupation, Tumbalik (collective home restoration), Temporary Shelter, and the CDP. The paper hopes to deepen the understanding of creation and emergence of such repertoires through the arenas of interaction introduced by Alimi (2015).

Adapting Alimi's (2015) arenas of interaction to the context of Sitio San Roque, this paper explores how the aforementioned repertoires of contention are influenced within the following arenas of interaction:

1. Interaction between the Social Movement Organization and State Authorities involves KADAMAY's interactions with both the national and local state authorities.

The national state authorities stated here is the national government agency National Housing Authority (NHA) with the private sector entities such as Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) and the Surestre Properties Inc (SPI). NHA and ALI through their Public-Private Partnership (PPP)³ have aligned their economic interests, and thus function in tandem. Through their Joint Venture Agreement (JVA)—a form of PPP—with NHA, ALI has also influenced state authorities' implementation in relation to the Vertis North project in Sitio San Roque. Aside from ALI, SPI later entered the picture by purchasing a portion from NHA's land share in the PPP.

On the other hand, the local state authorities stated here is the Quezon City Local Government Unit (QC LGU). The LGU, through its Local Housing Board (LHB), is a decisive entity whether or not to authorize a large-scale forced eviction and demolition of urban poor communities. The LHB is also responsible for identifying the number of informal settler families (ISFs) in urban poor communities, and for

³ A PPP is a contractual arrangement between the government and a private sector entity, aimed at financing, designing, implementing, and operating infrastructure facilities and services traditionally managed by the public sector (PPP Center, n.d.).

planning and developing socialized housing in Quezon City through its Local Shelter Plan (LSP) (Ballesteros & Ancheta, 2021; Dimalanta et al., 2024).

Conversely, according to Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Executive Order (EO) No. 69, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) is tasked to ensure that LGUs create LHBs, are conscious of their responsibilities in carrying out just and humane evictions and demolitions (clearing house), and of their duties in the fulfillment of the Right of Adequate Housing through the creation of the LSP.

2. Interaction between the Social Movement Organization and Security Forces involves KADAMAY's interactions with state security forces such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the private security guards employed under NHA-ALI. This interaction also encompasses the influence of the current Presidential Administration, whose directives directly impact the operations conducted by the state security forces.
3. Interaction between Social Movement Organizations involves KADAMAY's interactions with other urban poor organizations in Sitio San Roque.

While the literature on repertoires of contention has been rich, its nuanced application in the context of housing struggles has been scant. For instance, there have been similar studies that have explored the repertoires of contention in the context of right to housing struggles in the local context (Dizon, 2019). Studies exploring how social movements and grassroots organizations have resisted unjust housing policies through the lens of repertoires of contention have also been explored in other countries such as Cambodia (Joshi, 2022), South Africa (Daniel, 2024), Spain (Guzman, 2024), Sweden (Polanska & Richard, 2021), and Ireland (Lima, 2019).

Neoliberal Urban Development in the Philippines

The onset of neoliberalism in the Philippines was significantly marked by the restructuring of its economy through Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs) facilitated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). These loans provided an avenue for exerting control over the country's economic policies (Bello et al., 1982a; Bello et al., 1982b; Bello et al., 2004; Jimenez-Tan, 2009). Aimed at further integrating the Philippine economy into the global market economy (Broad & Bello, 1982; Jimenez-Tan, 2009), the IMF and WB imposed neoliberal urban development agendas through their loan conditionalities in the SALs, promoting the perception of global cities as key spaces for capital investment, and emphasized the role of private sector entities in shaping urban land (Shatkin, 2004; Mouton & Shatkin, 2019).

Subsequently enacted legislation related to urban development in the Philippines, such as the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 and the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992, institutionalized these neoliberal imperatives. The LGC shifted the decision-making to the LGUs in areas such as land use, taxation, and valuation, as well as transferred the national responsibilities of providing social services, including housing, to the LGUs (Rebullida et al., 1999; Porio, 2002). Ballesteros (2009) notes a key issue in this. She explains that most LGUs lack the financial resources to do these responsibilities. With LGUs' financial resources stemming mostly from their internal revenue allotments (IRAs) and from their collection of property taxes, LGUs, especially those with "less valuable" land, face significant challenges and limitations in resource mobilization to fulfill their roles in housing provision. Simultaneously, the UDHA provided the grounds of optimizing urban land for increased profitability, and explicitly aimed to enhance land use productivity and create urban areas conducive to commercial activities; however, without mechanisms of redistribution of land, regulation of land speculation (Hutchison, 2007), and

standards for land valuation (Ballesteros, 2005; Hutchison, 2007), this leads to urban land becoming increasingly commodified (Arcilla, 2020). Additionally, it emphasized that housing and urban development must be undertaken in cooperation with the private sector.

LGUs, as such, are conditioned to develop investment plans with private developers, through PPPs to raise the necessary financial resources for housing provision (Shatkin, 2004; Ballesteros, 2005; Ortega, 2018; Dimalanta & Bautista, 2024). As Ballesteros (2001, p. 2) observed, "most land developments in the country are undertaken by the private sector, leading to the transformation of the urban landscape primarily oriented toward corporate profit." These "profitable" development projects with private developers are pursued by LGUs not only for their revenue potential but also because they symbolize progress and modernization (Porio, 2002). Such PPPs usually result in the creation of Central Business Districts (CBDs) designed to attract investors and other businesses in urban lands deemed "unproductive". This makes urban poor communities, especially those situated on land owned by the government, a target for clearing to make way for CBDs and other "profitable" development projects (Ortega, 2016a; Ortega, 2016b; Ortega, 2020). As noted by Ortega (2016b), CBDs have been heralded as epitomes of urban development, particularly in Metro Manila.

Relocation also became a precondition for implementing forced evictions and demolitions. This occurs when a PPP agreement is finalized between state authorities (whether national government agencies or LGUs) and private developers, aimed at clearing the area and preparing it for more profitable utilization (Ballesteros, 2009; Mabilin, 2014; Ortega, 2016a; Dimalanta & Bautista, 2024).

In the context of land commodification, increasingly precarious conditions of ISFs, and the scarcity of state housing resources, fragmentation among urban poor organizations is fostered as they are compelled to adopt exclusionary practices to mitigate risks and increase

their chances of securing limited state housing resources. As Arcilla (2020, p. 61) posits, the urban poor themselves become "transmission mechanisms of neoliberal technologies." This phenomenon is clearly manifested when urban poor organizations internalize and carry out pseudo-hierarchies based on market rationalities and formal property rights—by adopting membership criteria based on ‘capacity to pay’ or ISFs’ ownership of structures (or higher forms of tenure security). Consequently, this often leads to the exclusion of the poorest members of the community, who lack sufficient financial capacities or possess lesser forms of security of tenure (Berner, 1997; Arcilla, 2020).

The operation of urban poor organizations in this manner—contradictory, as they simultaneously facilitate exclusion while advocating for inclusion—is inevitable in negotiations within neoliberal frameworks. Arcilla (2020a) further argues that this dynamic also leads to the deradicalization of housing politics.

This illustrates how neoliberal urban development not only reshapes the physical urban landscape, but also fundamentally alters social relations within urban poor communities. Neoliberal imperatives in housing policies drive a wedge between community members, inadvertently contributing to fragmentation in urban poor communities, and undermining their potential for claims-making.

Slum Clearing, Exclusion, and Fragmentation in Sitio San Roque

Sitio San Roque is a large urban poor community that once housed an estimated 16,000 ISFs at its peak; this number has dwindled down to more than 6,000 in 2018, and decreased further to less than 4,000, according to the Philippine Commission for the Urban Poor in 2024. It is a 37-hectare community situated on government-owned land managed by the NHA in North Triangle, Barangay Bagong Pag-asa, Quezon City. It is within walking distance of government offices, shopping and commercial malls, transportation hubs, public hospitals and health centers, schools and universities, and employment opportunities. The

community has developed organically and incrementally, with residents constructing their own semi-concrete or shanty houses, cementing roads, creating water and electric networks, and establishing institutional, recreational, and commercial spaces such as chapels, mosques, and neighborhood stores over the years. Multiple neighborhoods and ethnic clusters of migrants from various parts of the country are also present in the community. The majority of its residents are essential but precarious low-wage workers, without whom the city cannot operate: construction workers, laborers, vendors, transport workers, home-based workers, and other workers in precarious employment (Ortega, 2016b; Cunanan, 2020).

The community became a target for neoliberal urban development starting in 1987, when then-President Corazon Aquino issued Memorandum Order No. 127. This directive allocated a 53-hectare lot in North Triangle, Quezon City for commercial purposes and authorized the NHA to sell the area through public bidding. Subsequent administrations under Presidents Fidel Ramos and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA) further solidified this direction with Executive Orders No. 58 and No.106, respectively.

Aiming to transform the city into a center of gravity for business, the QC LGU, then headed by Mayor Feliciano “Sonny” Belmonte Jr., came up with the Quezon City Central Business District (QC CBD) proposal. The QC LGU sought assistance from the WB to assess the feasibility of the QC CBD. In this study, the WB identified the North and East Triangles as “the center of gravity of all commercial activities in the coming years” (World Bank Technical Study, as cited in Gonzalez & Calugay, 2018, p. 37). Together with Japanese urban development consultant ALMEC Corporation, the WB conducted another study that served as the foundation of the QC CBD’s overall framework. By 2007, PGMA authorized the QC CBD project through the issuance of EO No. 620 and 620-A, creating the overseeing body Urban Triangle Development (TriDev) Commission. This agency is headed by the Chairman of the Housing and Urban Development Council (HUDCC), co-headed by a representative

from the Office of the Mayor (OCM) of QC LGU, and has as its members the General Manager of NHA and a representative from the Office of the President.

The master plan of QC CBD aimed to convert the North and East Triangle districts into a “well-planned, integrated and environmentally balanced mixed-use development” (Crisologo, 2011, as cited in Yambot, 2011). Recio and Dovey (2021, p. 2) notes that “this is a typical example of neoliberal urban planning, based on an economic agenda to enhance the city’s competitiveness and attract investment”. In anticipation of the huge economic potential of the North Triangle district being part of QC CBD, the NHA, which owned urban land inside the QC CBD, entered into a PPP with ALI in 2009. Their PPP materialized into the 29-hectare Vertis North project that aims to refashion Sitio San Roque into a central business and lifestyle district. In its plan, 60.6% of the project area will be developed for commercial and office space; almost a quarter of the 29-hectare sprawl for residential development; and the remaining will be for hotel, retail, hospital, school, and other public facilities.

In their PPP, the NHA is responsible for securing the project area against “unlawful” occupancy or any condition which shall delay the development of the project; clearing the project area of ISFs; and implementing the NHA relocation program. ALI will finance, plan, develop, manage, and market the project according to its expertise. It will also provide the necessary funding to finance the NHA relocation program through a Relocation Fund. ALI, through the JVA, has been granted unilateral control in adjusting, extending, and determining the closing date of the project for the fulfillment of the conditions precedent to project closing.

In 2015, SPI acquired 15.7 hectares from the NHA’s land share in the JVA, intending to develop a Solaire Resort and Casino. SPI serves as the development subsidiary of Bloomberry Resorts Corporation, the parent company of Solaire.

Pseudo-hierarchies Based on Census

The intervention of the NHA-ALI in the community has resulted in the establishment of discrimination amongst the communities resulting in hierarchies. Primarily based on the census status of ISFs—qualified or disqualified—some residents, for instance, were able to participate in government processes such as consultations and formal assistance if they were structure owners and not renters. These census statuses were determined based on the census conducted by the NHA in 2009, and Beneficiary Selection, Arbitration and Awards Committee (BSAAC) Reconsideration and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) in 2011. Consequently, ISFs are categorized as either qualified or disqualified based on these censuses discussed below. This census categorization determines whether an ISF is eligible for a relocation package and, if so, the type of relocation package available to them.

In compliance with its obligations under the PPP, the NHA conducted a census in 2009 to establish the criteria for selecting beneficiaries in its relocation program, which is funded by ALI. However, only structure owners and sharers (typically relatives of structure owners) qualified for the NHA's relocation program, while renters were deemed disqualified (Arcilla, 2020). Subsequently, the NAPC conducted another census in 2011.

For the PPP in Sitio San Roque, the BSAAC was created as a sub-committee of the Project Inter-Agency Committee (PIAC). PIAC is a multi-stakeholder body established in the context of a PPP development project and led by the City Mayor. It includes representatives from the LGU and its relevant departments, national government agencies (NGAs), people's organizations (POs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and from private sector entities. It is primarily responsible for preparing, implementing, and monitoring the relocation plan as well as registering beneficiaries from affected ISFs. The BSAAC ensured that housing units were allocated and distributed to “qualified” beneficiaries based on the beneficiary selection crafted by the PIAC (Dimalanta et al., 2024). Subsequently, due to

efforts by ISFs in Sitio San Roque, some were able to apply for reconsideration through the BSAAC. Those included through BSAAC reconsideration were clustered together with the NAPC 2011 census, which, in practice by state authorities, provided a lower level of relocation benefits.

Table 2 demonstrates that at various points in time (2018 and 2023)⁴, the majority of ISFs in Sitio San Roque were disqualified. This also highlights the significant decrease in the number of ISFs in Sitio San Roque since the onset of the pandemic. The censuses primarily included structure owners, as they are recognized as the legitimate owners of the housing structures. It was in the best interest of the NHA-ALI to prioritize structure owners in the census to streamline the provision of relocation packages and hasten their eviction from the community.

Table 2

Number of Qualified and Disqualified ISFs

	Number of ISFs (2018)	Number of ISFs (2024)
Qualified (NHA 2009; NAPC 2011; BSAAC Reconsideration)	1,924 (29.66%)	659 (24.55%)
Disqualified	4561 (70.34%)	2,025 (75.45%)
Total	6,485	2,684

Note. Adapted from NHA, 2019 (personal request for information, January 11, 2019); NHA, 2024 presented during a PIAC meeting.

⁴ The data in 2018 was obtained through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to NHA made in January 2019 by a student journalist from the University of the Philippines Diliman, who was in communication with Save San Roque. The latest figures in 2024 was from a leader of KADAMAY San Roque who attended a Project Inter-Agency Committee (PIAC) meeting in August 2024.

Moreover, substantial anecdotal evidence collected by KADAMAY indicates that numerous ISFs were omitted from the NHA census in 2009. Consequently, these families were disqualified despite being owners of their structures, primarily due to their absence from their homes during the census. This situation also explains the subsequent 2011 census conducted by the NAPC and the influx of reconsideration applications submitted by ISFs to the BSAAC expressing concerns over the exclusion of many in the initial census.

Sitio San Roque's Urban Poor Organizations

There are several urban poor organizations in Sitio San Roque before the pandemic: the San Roque Community Council (SRCC), SRCC-Magic 10 or SRCC Magic Circle Housing Cooperative (SRCC-MCHC), the United Muslim Association (UMA), and the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) (Arcilla, 2020), and the Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Kristiyano at Muslim (SMNK) or Association of United Christian and Muslims.

The SRCC stands as the oldest federation of urban poor organizations in Sitio San Roque, originally comprising 17 smaller groups at its peak. In 2014, 10 of these organizations branched off to establish the SRCC-MCHC which is now affiliated with Kilos Maralita (KM) and the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD). Both are adept in negotiating with state authorities and are associated with the country's social democratic movement (von Hofmann, 2009; Lero, 2018). The UMA, established in 1991, represents the Muslim community within Sitio San Roque.

KADAMAY is a national coalition of urban poor associations, workers, women, and youth groups rooted in impoverished urban communities across the Philippines. Aligned with the national democratic (ND) movement, KADAMAY advocates for genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization to address systemic inequalities. Its local chapter, as a result, has extensive knowledge and networks geared toward mobilizing disruptive collective action.

In mid-2019, an internal conflict within KADAMAY between the former Secretary General and other leaders resulted in the former Secretary General separating from the organization and forming the SAMANA North Triangle Federation in late 2019.

On the other hand, the leader of SMNK, Shaikram Abdulgar, is known in the community for having a dubious reputation due to his previous role as an officer-in-charge of NHA-ALI's private security guards in Sitio San Roque. Consequently, other urban poor organizations harbor significant doubts about the intentions of SMNK and, particularly, its leader in forming this organization.

Among the oldest organizations in Sitio San Roque, SRCC and SRCC-MCHC primarily require structure ownership as a membership criterion. Meanwhile, UMA prioritizes Muslim identity for membership, regardless of whether one is a structure owner or renter. Although KADAMAY initially organized structure owners when it began in 2010, by 2017, it started including renters in its membership.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, additional organizations emerged primarily through the Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) in Sitio San Roque. From the RCSP efforts of the NTF-ELCAC, other organizations within the community emerged: PMSR, SNBP, and NAGKAISA. Although not originally aligned with the NTF-ELCAC, SAMANA eventually developed relations with them during the pandemic.

Emerging Contention Repertoires in Sitio San Roque

It is through the struggle against the neoliberal urban development and its violent nature that the practices of KADAMAY San Roque emerged. Others may classify the experience of the Sitio San Roque residents as living through the “War on Slums”, whereby Indivar Jonnalagada described it as the “use of exceptional forms of state violence to control and reconfigure slum spaces that were deemed as threats to security and public health and

also as nuisances to elite aesthetic sensibilities” (2023, p. 233). In this context, KADAMAY in Sitio San Roque has, over time, developed routinary practices that aim to disrupt and end systematic attacks against their communities.

In September 2010, Sitio San Roque saw the demolition (including forced and coerced) of over 50 housing structures along the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) that left more than 120 families homeless. This was carried out by the demolition team assisted by around 300 Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) of the PNP. This, however, was successfully impeded by the community barricade led by KADAMAY in 2010.

Following the triumph of different Sitio San Roque urban poor organizations in carrying out the 2010 barikadang bayan, there was a significant shift in the eviction tactics employed by proponents of the QC CBD and Vertis North, including the NHA, ALI, and SPI (national state authorities and private developers).

This shift in eviction tactics was accompanied by changes in leadership in key positions within the QC LGU (local state authority) and the Presidential Administration (national state authority) who wield significant influence in the security forces. From June 2010 to June 2019, the City Mayor of the QC LGU was Herbert "Bistek" Bautista, followed by Maria Josefina "Joy" Belmonte, who has been serving since June 2019 and will continue until June 2025. On the other hand, Benigno Aquino II served as President of the Philippines from June 2010 to June 2016 while Rodrigo Duterte served from June 2016 to June 2022; the current presidential administration of Bongbong Marcos, which commenced in June 2022 and is expected to conclude in June 2028.

The changes in eviction tactics, coupled with shifts in government leadership at both local and national levels, have significantly impacted the arenas of interaction for KADAMAY with these various actors. These transformations have influenced the contention repertoires of KADAMAY as they navigate their relations with state authorities (both local

and national) and private developers. Furthermore, the pseudo-hierarchies established by the NHA and ALI have further complicated the dynamics among urban poor organizations within the community.

This section will examine the emerging contention repertoires of KADAMAY in their arenas of interaction with the abovementioned actors across four time periods: (a) September 2010-January 2014; (b) February 2014-October 2018; and (c) November 2018-July 2024 (Present). Table 3 illustrates how over a span of 10 years since the community barricade, the repertoires of contention of KADAMAY San Roque have expanded.

Table 3

Repertoires of Contention from 2014 to 2024

	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24
Street Occupation											
Tumbalik											
Community Development Plan and Temporary Shelter											

Note. Data collected by authors.

Street Occupation (September 2010-January 2014)

The 2010 barikadang bayan opened avenues for state negotiation with the DILG particularly benefiting urban poor organizations that conceded to relocation such as SRCC (Arcilla, 2020), while excluding KADAMAY and the other urban poor organizations that are still struggling for on-site development and rejecting the QC CBD and Vertis North. DILG, then headed by Secretary Jesse Robredo, assisted SRCC to gain concessions with the NHA-ALI. Then-President Benigno Aquino III, in December 2010, formed a Task Force for Informal Settlers, with DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo at the helm (Shahani & Mayuga, 2012). At the same time, Aquino III championed PPPs in the Philippines. In September 2010,

he signed Executive Order No. 8, which led to the establishment of the Public-Private Partnership Center of the Philippines, effectively reconstituting the Build-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT) Center (PPP Center, n.d.).

As pointed out by Arcilla (2020), what followed the 2010 *barikadang bayan* was a combination of large-scale demolition attempts and incremental evictions through “voluntary demolition”. Between 2010 and 2014, there were at least three demolition attempts in Sitio San Roque—one in 2011 and two in 2013 (KADAMAY, 2011, 2013). Additionally, a series of fires occurred in 2010, 2011, and 2012 (KADAMAY, 2010; GMA News Online, 2011; San Andres & Viray, 2012). Incremental evictions are carried out by offering structure owners increased financial incentives into agreeing to off-city relocation. Recio and Dovey (2021, p. 2) explain that “voluntary demolition” is a “complex mix of coercion, community fragmentation, surveillance and intimidation.”

Non-SRCC organizations, especially KADAMAY, were subjected to intense surveillance and policing after the 2010 demolition. Following the *barikadang bayan* in 2010, the NHA-ALI deployed numerous private security guards to monitor the community with KADAMAY being a primary target to constrain their protests and other militant activities. By 2011, these private security guards of NHA-ALI had already established outposts at strategic points within the community. These private security guards were also employed to prevent ISFs from constructing new housing structures. However, Ate Fe noted that "*sila rin [naman] ang nangunguna diyan...pinapayagan nila magtayo ang mga tao tapos nangongolekta sila ng renta mula sa mga pinayagan nila...Php 100.00 per week ang kinokolekta nila sa mga ito [they were also at the forefront...they allowed people to build and then collected rent from those they permitted...they collected Php 100.00 per week]."* This practice of the NHA-ALI private security guards was reportedly stopped by 2015 after being exposed by KADAMAY.

KADAMAY also observed numerous instances where alleged plainclothes PNP officers roamed the community, seeking out leaders and organizers to inquire about their activities and to invite them for “questioning” (Ortega, 2016b; Arcilla, 2020). In the experience of the KADAMAY and ND movement, invitations for “questioning” from security forces are almost synonymous with arbitrary arrest and detention, or even enforced disappearance.

At this time (September 2010-January 2014), the QC LGU, led by Mayor Herbert "Bistek" Bautista, introduced the 'Zero Squatters 2013' policy, as outlined in his State of the City (SOCA) Address (Ellao, 2011). The vilification of KADAMAY's militancy was particularly evident in the QC LGU's engagements with the organization. In both the demolition attempts in 2013, KADAMAY staged protests in front of Quezon City Hall, and on both occasions their pleas were ignored and they were met by battalions of the PNP, who eventually dispersed them with water cannons. Mayor Bistek, in the July 2013 encounter, even labeled KADAMAY as “professional squatters” who exploited the legitimate beneficiaries of the state housing programs (GMA News Online, 2013; Ortega, 2016b).

As a result of state negotiations, state authorities, particularly the DILG, compelled SRCC to not participate in protests led by KADAMAY or any collective action against the development project in the North Triangle (Arcilla, 2020).

On January 27, 2014, another large-scale forced eviction and demolition occurred in Sitio San Roque. This operation involved an overwhelming deployment of approximately 1,000 SWAT and PNP officers armed with guns, truncheons and shields, and tear gas, who employed brute force against KADAMAY and residents who joined the *barikadang bayan*.

KADAMAY once again led a community barricade to resist the demolition. However, they found themselves largely abandoned, with only UMA briefly participating. According to Ka Inday, "*Wala na talagang SRCC na nakilahok. Ang UMA, sumaglit lang din. 'Di na*

katulad nang dati na 'yung laban talaga nung 2010...bumabad talaga [ang lahat] [None of the SRCC members participated. UMA was only briefly involved. It wasn't like the 2010 struggle when everyone was fully committed]." The demolition in 2014 resulted in the displacement of over 300 ISFs. Ishioka (2016) likened the result of the demolition to the aftermath of an airstrike.

In response to this event, the street occupation as a repertoire of contention was formed. Although the community barricade in 2014 did not succeed in stopping the demolition, the community, led by KADAMAY, occupied Agham Road. They built makeshift shelters from the debris that had once been their homes. With no place to go and lacking the means to move to another urban poor community, the residents saw the street occupation as their only viable solution at the time. They managed to meet their immediate food and water needs through local purchases and support from networks of KADAMAY. Despite living on the street, many residents continued to work, and children continued to attend school (Quijano, 2014; Ishioka, 2016).

This served as a performance to contest the inhumane forced eviction and demolition, and the exclusionary relocation policy of the NHA. The week-long street occupation eventually pressured the NHA to include previously disqualified ISFs in their relocation program in Gaya-Gaya in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, and Montalban, Rizal; the ISFs were “transferred” to these relocation sites in early February 2014.

Table 4

Arenas of Interaction in the Street Occupation

KADAMAY and National State Authorities and Private Sector Entities, and Local State Authorities	KADAMAY and Security Forces	KADAMAY and other urban poor organizations	Repertoire of Contention
President Aquino III championed PPPs. NHA-ALI and DILG excluded non-SRCC urban poor organizations such as KADAMAY from negotiations.	NHA-ALI private security guards monitored and impeded the activities of	Arrangements with state authorities compelled SRCC to not participate in protest activities of	‘Barikadang Bayan’ then Street Occupation

<p>NHA-ALI created pseudo-hierarchies amongst ISFs in Sitio San Roque.</p> <p>NHA-ALI continued their clearing operations in Sitio San Roque through incremental evictions/”voluntary demolitions”.</p> <p>QC Mayor Bistek ignored concerns raised by KADAMAY and views their militancy negatively.</p>	<p>KADAMAY.</p> <p>PNP officers harassed</p> <p>KADAMAY.</p>	<p>KADAMAY.</p> <p>Divisions were furthered amongst urban poor organizations in the community due to the pseudo-hierarchies.</p>	
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Note. Data collected by authors.

Tumbalik (February 2014-October 2018)

During this period, Sitio San Roque continued to experience fire, with another incident occurring in August 2017; incremental evictions by the NHA-ALI also persisted, with the pleas of non-SRCC/SRCC-MCHC⁵ urban poor organizations, particularly KADAMAY, being consistently ignored by both NHA-ALI and the QC LGU. In October 2015, SPI entered the scene by acquiring 15.7 hectares from the NHA's share in the JVA with ALI. SPI is the development subsidiary of Bloomberry Resorts Corporation, the owner of the Solaire brand. Since then, the land purchased by SPI from the NHA has been designated as Area J—the “priority area” for demolition to construct the Solaire Resort and Casino within the community. Area J includes the Samanaka and Sebastian areas in Sitio San Roque, where the majority of the ISFs are affiliated with SRCC-MCHC, with some belonging to KADAMAY.

In June 2016, City Mayor of the QC LGU Herbert "Bistek" Bautista announced the relocation of more than 55,000 ISFs residing in Quezon City to areas outside the city, specifically Santa Maria and San Jose del Monte in Bulacan, and Antipolo, to “allow the unimpeded implementation of development projects.” The relocation was targeted to be completed within three to six years (Roxas, 2016).

⁵ In 2014, a segment of the SRCC urban poor organization broke away, creating the SRCC-MCHC.

By December 2016, the NHA, in collaboration with SPI, had begun eviction operations (Umil, 2017). Like the NHA-ALI, SPI deployed private security guards and established outposts at strategic positions encircling the Area J priority area. To facilitate the clearance of Area J, NHA hastened the relocation of SRCC-MCHC members, who constitute the majority of structure owners in the priority area. SPI also offered additional financial incentives to structure owners who agreed to “voluntary demolition”. Conversely, renters residing in these housing structures were left homeless and excluded from any compensation. In response, KADAMAY began recruiting and organizing renters in 2017, resulting in a significant increase in their membership.

At the national level, the Aquino Administration continued to prioritize fostering an optimal environment for private sector investments (IBON, 2015), and by the end of his term, Aquino had initiated more PPP projects than the combined total of the three preceding presidents (Tahara-Stubbs, 2016). This enthusiasm for PPPs was subsequently maintained by then-President Rodrigo Duterte upon assuming office in June 2016 (Sy, 2022). In his inaugural State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2016, Duterte outlined his plans regarding the urban poor in the country, framing his perspective on them as a “nuisance” to the government (Philstar, 2016). This stance was similar to that of Mayor Bistek, who viewed the urban poor as obstacles to development. Following the March 2017 housing takeover by another chapter of KADAMAY in Pandi, Bulacan, then-President Duterte expressed strong animosity towards KADAMAY, even threatening them with forcible eviction (Macas, 2017).

Since assuming office as President, Duterte has implemented the 'war on drugs' (Kine, 2017). This campaign was notably observed in Sitio San Roque in October 2018, where 53 residents were arbitrarily arrested and detained by the QC PNP. This incident coincided with a large-scale demolition attempt in the same month, prompting KADAMAY leaders to speculate that the drug war campaign might be used to bolster the demolition of Sitio San

Roque (Ellao, 2018). Sitio San Roque, according to KADAMAY, has experienced an increased presence of PNP officers during this period.

From February 2014 to October 2018, eviction operations were expedited, particularly targeting Area J in Sitio San Roque as a priority area for demolition. These operations became more frequent, conducted not only by NHA-ALI but also by SPI. Furthermore, there were instances when large-scale demolition attempts and incremental evictions took place simultaneously. As a result, KADAMAY developed another contention repertoire to ensure that their renter members have a place to stay after the structure owner's house is demolished—a practice known as *Tumbalik* (collective home restoration), combining the words *tumba* (tumble) and *balik* (re-erect) (Cunanan, 2020). Ate Fe elaborates on how KADAMAY executes this: “Tuwing may “voluntary demolition” ang structure owner, andoon kami para magbantay at mag-giit na hindi ma-ground zero at makapag-tira ng kapisang kwarto para sa renter. Nakikipag-nego[tiat] kami sa may-ari ng bahay at sa magdedemolish [Whenever there is a "voluntary demolition" by the structure owner, we are there to ensure that the housing structure is not completely razed to the ground so that the renter can retain a small portion of the housing structure. We negotiate with both the homeowner and the demolition team].”

Additionally, Ka Inday explained that if negotiations fail and the housing structure is completely demolished, only then is the process of *tumbalik* initiated. The primary focus of KADAMAY, according to her, is to prevent the complete destruction of the housing structure.

Table 5

Arenas of Interaction in Tumbalik

KADAMAY and National State Authorities and Private Sector Entities, and Local State Authorities	KADAMAY and Security Forces	KADAMAY and other urban poor organizations	Repertoire of Contention
<p>President Duterte continued mania for PPPs, and exhibited animosity towards KADAMAY (because of the housing takeover).</p> <p>Incremental evictions were carried out simultaneously with large-scale demolition attempts by NHA-ALI or SPI.</p> <p>QC LGU continues to ignore concerns raised by KADAMAY.</p> <p>Both QC Mayor Bistek and President Duterte view urban poor as impediments to development.</p>	<p>NHA-ALI and SLI private security guards monitored the activities of KADAMAY.</p> <p>President Duterte's 'drug war' resulted in heightened presence of security forces in the community.</p>	<p>Divisions between urban poor organizations due to the pseudo-hierarchies created by NHA-ALI persisted.</p> <p>KADAMAY organized non-SRCC/SRCC-MCHC ISFs (mostly renters).</p>	<p>Tumbalik</p>

Note. Data collected by authors.

Community Development Plan and Temporary Shelter (November 2018-July 2024)

Under the Duterte administration, the NHA-ALI intensified its efforts to evict the urban poor of Sitio San Roque. Concurrently, the administration continued its assault on KADAMAY, specifically targeting the organization's Pandi, Bulacan chapter for occupying unoccupied NHA housing units (Esguerra, 2019; Sy, 2022).

In December 2019, then-President Rodrigo Duterte also established the NTF-ELCAC through Executive Order No. 70. This aims to implement the government's “whole-of-nation approach” to achieving “peace” and “defeating the communist insurgency” by providing basic government services and social development packages, and developing necessary infrastructure for marginalized communities. In October 2019, the DILG, through its issuance of the Memorandum Circular No. 2019-169, provided the implementing guidelines for the RCSP. According to this, the RCSP aims to strengthen the community initiatives of the AFP

and to make the efforts to meet these objectives more LGU-driven (DILG, 2019; DILG, 2020; DILG Regional Office V, 2021; DILG, 2023).

In Sitio San Roque, incremental evictions continued through “voluntary demolitions” carried out by NHA-ALI and SPI; this was also accompanied by the continuing surveillance by private security guards from these entities. While tumbalik was developed by KADAMAY to mitigate the effects of these incremental evictions and prevent the displacement of renters, it was clear to the organization that this approach was primarily defensive in nature.

By April 2019, KADAMAY recognized the necessity of exploring alternative avenues for asserting their rights (Beltran, 2021), leading to them exploring the People’s Plan. Alvarez (2019, p. 53) defines this as “a new housing governance regime that proffered participatory approaches to slum eviction and resettlement.”

However, KADAMAY’s version aims to remove the neoliberal imperatives embedded within the People’s Plan⁶ (Dimalanta & Bautista, 2024). They oppose the commodification of housing, the market segmentation of ISFs, and the exclusion of renters and the poorest members of society. Moreover, they also reject the state authorities’ practice of shifting the responsibility for housing provision onto the urban poor, leaving them to their own devices (Berner & Phillips, 2005; Alvarez, 2019; Arcilla, 2020).

KADAMAY called its version of the on-site People’s Plan the Community Development Plan (CDP), marking another repertoire of contention. Ate Fe explained this: “*Iba kasi ang tradisyonal na People’s Plan...ang atin kailangan gobyerno mismo ang gagawa ng pabahay para sa atin* [The traditional People’s Plan is different from ours; in our case, it is essential that the government itself builds housing for us].”

⁶ The People’s Plan is a participatory, bottom-up approach to shelter planning, rooted in principles outlined in the LGU and the UDHA. Initially developed by civil society organizations advocating for urban poor housing, it aims to shift the process by which ISFs access government socialized housing programs. However, in practice, these principles are often diluted when applied within existing state housing policies (Dimalanta and Bautista, 2024).

The CDP started with a socio-economic profiling of the members of KADAMAY from April to June 2019. This profiling aimed to comprehensively survey the diverse socioeconomic conditions of KADAMAY's membership and to ensure that the CDP aligns with their financial capabilities and basic needs. This effort was carried out by KADAMAY in collaboration with Save San Roque (SSR) who conducted the interviews. Concurrently, SSR, composed of young professionals, students, and advocates for the urban poor, was officially launched in early May 2019 to support KADAMAY in developing its CDP. One of SSR's co-convenors worked as a community architect in an NGO that facilitates People's Planning with urban poor organizations.

With the ongoing incremental evictions by SPI in the Area J priority zone, by the end of May 2019, the area resembled an urban war zone, having become deserted, with only dilapidated houses left in the wake of SPI's operations. Subsequently, SPI began erecting fences around the perimeter of the demolished areas to prevent ISFs from re-encroaching on the land (Recio & Dovey, 2021).

In early June 2019, a re-orientation workshop was held to facilitate the discussion between members and leaders of KADAMAY and SSR on the participatory planning process, and to reaffirm the importance of people participation in this endeavor. To assist KADAMAY in identifying individual housing needs and preferences, a Dream House Workshop was conducted from late June to mid-July 2019. Following this, in late July 2019, a counter-mapping workshop took place to visually map and assess the impact of eviction activities on Sitio San Roque.

Another large-scale demolition was attempted in August 2019. However, KADAMAY, other urban poor organizations, and affected residents in Sitio San Roque reached out to the newly elected Mayor of Quezon City, Josefina "Joy" Belmonte who only assumed office beginning June 30, 2019. During this dialogue, KADAMAY raised the issue

that the Certificate of Compliance (COC) used for the planned demolition by NHA-ALI was signed by former QC Mayor "Bistek" and had already expired. Therefore, it was no longer valid under the new term of the QC Mayor, as the Local Housing Board, tasked with authorizing demolitions by approving or disapproving COCs, had not yet been reconvened. The COC, issued on June 19, 2019, had exceeded its 30-day validity period. After this dialogue, Mayor Joy committed that the said large-scale demolition will not happen. This event signaled to KADAMAY a new openness from the QC LGU under Mayor Joy's leadership.

Despite this commitment from the QC LGU, KADAMAY remained vigilant and continued to plan for a *barikadang bayan*. Concurrently, SSR sent formal letters to NHA (as well as DILG, QC LGU, and the Office of the President) challenging the legality of the scheduled demolition in August 2019. They requested the necessary documentation in accordance with DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2008-143 for the forced eviction to proceed. On the morning of August 7, 2019, KADAMAY, with SSR and its networks still prepared for a potential demolition; fortunately, the eviction did not occur.

Subsequent participatory workshops conducted in September and November 2023 were dedicated to enhancing KADAMAY's shared vision for on-site development in Sitio San Roque and planning for site development and suitable housing typologies for the CDP. During the FGD in 2021, a KADAMAY leader underscored the significance of the participatory process within the CDP, emphasizing that it was empowering as they themselves took charge of decision-making and designing the plan.

On the other hand, while the CDP was being developed from April to October 2019, SPI continued its incremental evictions in Area J and erected fencing. By November 2019, the fencing in Area J had become severe, with little to no access left for residents living there. From this situation, KADAMAY developed another form of contention—temporary shelters.

To ensure that renters were not displaced from the community, KADAMAY negotiated with SPI to arrange the transfer of its members (mostly renters) and even other non-KADAMAY renters to temporary shelters constructed by SPI. However, these temporary shelters, upon turnover from SPI, typically consist of core houses—having only walls, columns, and a roof. And as a result, requires substantial financial resources to make these shelters more livable.

Table 6

Arenas of Interaction in the Temporary Shelter and Community Development Plan

KADAMAY and National State Authorities and Private Sector Entities, and Local State Authorities	KADAMAY and Security Forces	KADAMAY and other urban poor organizations	Repertoire of Contention
<p>NHA-ALI and SPI continued its incremental evictions and large-scale demolition attempts before, amidst, and after the pandemic.</p> <p>QC LGU, through its HCDRD, opened its doors to KADAMAY for dialogues; after the pandemic, continued its dialogue with KADAMAY; it also explored the possibility of in-city relocation through ALI.</p> <p>President Duterte continued to view KADAMAY, and more broadly, the urban poor as obstacles to “development.”</p> <p>President Duterte, prior the pandemic, established the NTF-ELCAC to further the government’s anti-insurgency campaign; DILG, then, provided policy guidelines formalizing a dedicated team concerned with implementing RCSP for NTF-ELCAC.</p> <p>After the pandemic, NHA-ALI, moving to clear other parts of the community, attempted a large-scale demolition of Area H.</p>	<p>NTF-ELCAC increased its presence within Sitio San Roque especially during the height of the pandemic; NTF-ELCAC through its RCSP vilified KADAMAY.</p> <p>NHA-ALI and SLI private security guards continuously monitored activities of KADAMAY; SPI private security guards constructed additional fences and zone obstructions.</p>	<p>Divisions between urban poor organizations due to the pseudo-hierarchies created by NHA-ALI persisted.</p> <p>SPIs fencing physically divided the community, severing relations between and among urban poor organizations in Area J.</p> <p>KADAMAY, through SSR, gained access to knowledge on the process of People’s Plan.</p> <p>KADAMAY, through its pandemic community relief efforts, fostered collaboration with other urban poor organizations; however, NTF-ELCAC through its RCSP, sowed division among urban poor organizations.</p>	<p>Temporary Shelter</p> <p>Community Development Plan</p>

Note. Data collected by authors.

On December 9, 2019, KADAMAY with SSR and its networks, presented the CDP to Mayor Joy Belmonte following a festive protest mobilization outside the Quezon City Hall. Representatives from KADAMAY and SSR engaged in a dialogue with Mayor Joy to discuss the plan in the CDP, which is an on-site housing development, along with its procedural aspects. She also reiterated her earlier promise to review and investigate the JVA between the NHA and ALI, if the UDHA had been followed. The City Mayor assured that no large-scale demolition would occur in Sitio San Roque, pledging to reject any renewal of the COC for Demolition (in her capacity as Chairperson of QC LGU's LHB) and ensuring that residents' voices are heard. She also called for the cooperation from the national government agencies and private developers to achieve a "win-win situation" for Sitio San Roque. Moreover, she reaffirmed that "people are not the enemies of progress and development" and vowed to review and consider the CDP of KADAMAY.

Prospects for the KADAMAY's CDP

After submitting the CDP to Mayor Joy in December 2020, KADAMAY persisted in their efforts to realize its implementation. However, these endeavors were disrupted by the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. It was only in March 2022 that KADAMAY refocused on housing issues after prioritizing community relief efforts such as the establishment of *Kusinang Bayan* (community kitchen) and *Tanimang Bayan* (community food garden). Due to these solidarity efforts, collaborations between San Roque organizations were briefly facilitated.

Inter-organizational interactions, however, were short lived. The period of the COVID-19 crisis was coupled with increased surveillance within communities that heavily policed people's organizations. The NTF-ELCAC, as the primary conduit of the state for repressing communist insurgencies, targeted KADAMAY's leaders and members. This is expected as the *Tanimang Bayan* and *Kusinang Bayan* may be considered as repertoires of

contention, revealing the inadequacy of the government to address pressing issues of the masses during this unfortunate time. It further highlighted the incredible gap of government policies in truly considering the most vulnerable while in lockdown.

The red-tagging of KADAMAY's efforts led to a chilling effect among the community, resulting to a fragmentation of earlier established solidarity. Additionally, NTF-ELCAC also conducted other "counter-insurgency" activities through distributing relief goods, forming their own "people's organizations" that discouraged mobilization and anti-state sentiment, which were prevalent during that time. Government aids were thus used to incentivize people to go against KADAMAY and echo state propaganda.

During the pandemic, KADAMAY's interactions with the QC LGU, particularly with the Housing Community Development and Resettlement Department (HCDRD) represented by Acting Head Atty. Joselito "Jojo" Conejero, also revolved around these initiatives. Despite conducting at least two dialogues on the CDP with the HCDRD before the local elections in May 2022, there was no further progress from the QC LGU throughout 2023, despite KADAMAY's persistent follow-ups. It is important to note that since March 2022, there has been a shift in KADAMAY from advocating strictly for on-site housing to considering an in-city approach, following consultations conducted by KADAMAY in early 2022. Even with the dialogues with the QC LGU's HCDRD, NHA-ALI in November 2023 attempted a large-scale demolition. This time, in the Area H of Sitio San Roque.

It was only in early 2024 that the HCDRD of QC LGU responded to KADAMAY. At least two formal dialogues have been conducted by KADAMAY with the HCDRD, with another scheduled for August 2024. In recent dialogues in 2024, the QC LGU maintained its stance that it does not differentiate between qualified and disqualified ISFs—all are eligible for relocation packages, provided they have not previously received one. This has been their position since engaging with KADAMAY in 2022.

The change in 2024 involves the QC LGU's HCDRD now considering a 10,000 sqm (or 1-hectare) plot in Pingkian, Quezon City, owned by ALI, for in-city housing for Sitio San Roque, compared to the originally proposed 5,000 sqm in 2022 (also in the same plot). Moreover, in 2022, the LGU planned to purchase the land from ALI and oversee the housing development. However, as of 2024, ALI will reportedly take charge of developing the housing, while the LGU will procure it at construction cost and the land at fair market value. Despite these changes, the housing expense for ISFs from Sitio San Roque who may relocate remains unchanged at Php 800.00 per month, consistent from 2022 to 2024.

Ate Fe explained, "*Alam naman na namin na ang CDP natin... 'di talaga ibibigay ng gobyerno lahat-lahat ng gusto natin... mahirap kausap ang mga 'yan* [We know that with our Community Development Plan (CDP), the government won't fulfill all our requests... they are difficulty to work with]."

For KADAMAY, the CDP is a platform for empowerment and negotiating with state authorities who have control over state housing resources. Ate Fe stated that "*Ang pakikipag-usap ng QC LGU ay ibinunga ng pag-pasa natin ng CDP at iba pang pag-gigiit na ginawa natin* [Our dialogue with the QC LGU resulted from our submission of the CDP and other strategies we employed]." The outcome of the CDP, according to her, depends on how far KADAMAY can push state authorities to adopt inclusive, affordable, and people-centered socialized housing.

In the preceding sections, our case study of KADAMAY San Roque has shown the neoliberal character of the state and its intent on primarily protecting the best interest of the private sector through, for instance, the PPPs and putting development projects instead of public welfare. This is the primary logic from which it operates especially with regards to how it solves "the housing problem" and the development of the city. In the 10-year period analyzing the experience of KADAMAY San Roque, we made apparent how at almost every

turn, the state, whether through the NHA or the old LGU has only been concerned with violently displacing and uprooting the urban poor creating a milieu where they had to constantly struggle for survival.

As the state continues to railroad its “development” agenda—in this case the establishment of the QC CBD and Vertis North, the urban poor communities are again left as mere afterthoughts and eye sores that need to be cleared and moved away from the center. This process, besides being violent, also illustrates the undemocratic character of the development regimes in the country. It does not consult the grassroots and the marginalized. When they do consult them, it is often half-hearted. When left systematically unheard, social movements, in this case KADAMAY, develop different tools for contention. These tools unsettled the housing policies by democratizing its categorization of informal settlers accessing state housing resources. For example, previously renters were disqualified from accessing state housing resources, and even from other forms of interactions like dialogues, etc.

Because of this unfair treatment, KADAMAY San Roque has resisted and persisted. Shaped by the different dimensions of Areas of Interactions, specifically, KADAMAY and National State Authorities and Private Sector Entities, and Local State Authorities; KADAMAY and Security Forces, and KADAMAY and other urban poor organizations; we saw how their repertoires of contention has evolved from street occupation, to tumbalik, until the current CDP.

KADAMAY San Roque’s case shows the ingenuity of the marginalized in their resistance against unjust practices of the state, like mass evictions. It also shows some limited agency, especially given the imposing and undemocratic actions of the state. Through the lens of repertoires of contention conceptualized by Tilly (1993) and by extension, Alimi (2015), we saw how KADAMAY San Roque has learned to come up with different routines of

resistance due to the continuous onslaught of state marginalization. Further, the study made sense of the shifts in their collective claims-making such as the change in their openness to the idea of a CDP to counter traditional housing policies that primarily recognizes the issues with the People's Plan. This shift we saw was due to some semblance of democratic opening on the part of the LGU to really hear the organization.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through various Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and various field notes, this paper makes sense of the practices observed by the authors that were conducted by KADAMAY San Roque in asserting their claim for more democratic and inclusive housing policies. It introduced innovative ways that the residents contended the actions of state authorities and private developers that aim to displace them. Further and contrary to common misconception of militant organizations, the case of KADAMAY in Sitio San Roque is able to show that social movements do not only rely on disruptive forms of resistance but also draw from a variety of repertoires of contention developed through struggle. Their toolbox is not limited to disruptive practices; it also includes strategies that rely on negotiation. However, it is evident that these negotiation efforts are frequently accompanied by disruptive practices, which serve to further widen spaces for negotiation and amplify their assertions towards state authorities, private sector entities, and security forces.

Through the years of experience of KADAMAY San Roque and their subsequent innovative techniques in resisting the violent dispossession perpetrated by the government's War on Slums, we can gather some valuable lessons. While not fully a success, their development of various repertoires of contention brought some incremental gains for the community. In general, the strategies enumerated above pried open some important democratic concessions vis-a-vis the state. In this case, some notable gains were the provision of relocation packages and other options for the community. It also was able to prolong the

continuity of the community. Without resorting to these repertoires, Ate Fe claims the demise of San Roque: “*Yung strategies na ito ay nagbunga ng gantong klase, nagbubukas ang mga authorities, dahil lumaban ang KADAMAY. Kung walang KADAMAY, wala na ang San Roque—kayang kaya nila i-wash out* [These strategies brought about an openness of the authorities, since KADAMAY fought for it. Without KADAMAY, there would be no San Roque].”

However, these repertoires of contention have their limitations. One important factor noted was the temporal aspect of the strategy. Specifically, a time where the organization had its most members mobilized. Compound this with the hostile treatment of the security forces through the state and private interests, as well as the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, this has led to the deterioration of the social movement and its structure.

KADAMAY San Roque further illustrates the non-stationary characters of social movements. Following the framework of repertoires of contention and its arenas of interaction, we saw, through the years, the evolution of ways KADAMAY withstood unfair institutional policies and tactics. We specifically highlight their continuous restyling of practices from street occupations, tumbalik, temporary shelter, and CDP.

The case study of KADAMAY San Roque makes apparent the polar extremes in terms of housing policy. In terms of accessing housing programs, the marginalized are left to choose between state rigidity through NHA programs where a fixed menu of inhumane off-city relocation sites are presented. On the other hand, those opting out of this mode are left to their own devices, abandoned by the state. They are forced to come up with a “people’s plan” by themselves without adequate technical assistance that is important for its implementation such as spatial mapping and drawing blueprints. Housing policies, through the people’s plan pathways, should not be a means for the state to transfer their responsibilities in providing crucial resources such as housing. This trend of neoliberalism

should be critiqued, and aligns with the argument put forth by Berner and Philips (2005, p. 8): “Governments...need to make themselves responsive to, not absent from, poorer communities, and especially the poorest of the poor. They need to encourage initiative not by walking away but by offering stable, long-term, targeted financial and technical support.”

Regardless of the small democratic gains achieved by KADAMAY San Roque in their 10-year experience resisting the government’s inequitable neoliberal urban development policies to assert housing rights, this should not be interpreted by analysts to further shift the burden towards the capabilities of grassroots organizations and the ingenuity of the marginalized. Housing programs and policies should definitely be reformed and be pushed away from the neoliberal condition. In particular, housing should not merely be an afterthought or by-product of development projects between the state and private developers. Various state apparatuses, at baseline, should be more proactive in their planning especially with regards to public housing. Ideally, policies that concern communities should start from them. At the same time, the state should also recognize their duties and their capabilities at implementing these housing developments. Many of the technical aspects drawn in the CDP were in collaboration with architect, engineer, and research volunteers. The state should be the primary institution in proffering help to the marginalized such as crucial technical help needed in coming up with concrete and doable housing development.

The CDP is indicative of the marginalized to meet the government half way in resolving public issues, but at the same time resisting the issues embedded in utilizing the people’s plan approach within the current housing policies. As a concrete proposal, LGUs/NGAs should, for example, provide technical assistance like land surveying, settlement planning and other highly complicated processes in housing development. Government should play a more proactive role in making land available for housing the marginalized.

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