

Université de Montréal

Social Capital and Natural Hazards
Trust and Cohesion in the Eastern Visayas of the Philippines

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Résumé

Cette thèse porte sur le capital social et les mesures prises afin de se préparer aux aléas naturels aux Philippines. L'archipel est régulièrement soumis à de nombreux risques de catastrophe, générant parfois des conséquences désastreuses pour la population et le patrimoine économique du pays. Par ailleurs, ces îles portent un lourd héritage colonial rendant omniprésents les inégalités socioéconomiques, le manque de solidarité et la pauvreté. Le concept du capital social demeure encore très polémique, cependant nous croyons qu'il peut s'avérer utile afin de mieux réfléchir à la façon dont les sociétés humaines interagissent avec les aléas naturels.

Nos recherches mettent en avant l'importance des inégalités socioéconomiques, du contexte et de l'échelle géographique dans l'analyse du capital social et de la préparation aux aléas. Elles soulignent d'autre part que la compréhension des dynamiques sociales, telles que la confiance et la participation communautaire, ne peut être atteinte sans une considération des contextes politiques. Nous avons porté une attention particulière à l'examen des contextes et des différentes formes de capital social, et ce, à plusieurs niveaux géographiques (village, municipalité, région, pays). Un nombre croissant d'études montre que l'inégalité économique entraîne des conséquences néfastes sur le capital social. Des recherches récentes ont également commencé à interroger les rapports entre le capital social et les catastrophes dites « naturelles ». Notre thèse établit un lien entre ces deux approches en couplant une analyse générale de la situation des Philippines à une étude approfondie d'une municipalité rurale isolée de la région des Visayas orientales.

L'argument central de cette thèse est que l'inégalité économique produit des effets néfastes sur le capital social, entraînant des répercussions négatives sur la prévention des catastrophes « naturelles ». Par le biais de l'analyse de plusieurs échelles géographiques, cette thèse entend montrer comment les inégalités, de par leur impact sur le capital social, contribuent à augmenter les chances de voir les aléas naturels se constituer en désastres. Nous avançons qu'un usage circonspect du concept de capital social, prenant en compte les complexités politiques, historiques, et géographiques du contexte auquel il s'applique, a la capacité d'améliorer la manière dont les gens se préparent collectivement afin d'éviter que les aléas ne se transforment en catastrophes.

Mots-clefs : Capital social, préparations aux aléas naturels, communautés, inégalités socioéconomiques, confiance, Visayas orientales, Philippines.

Abstract

This thesis analyzes social capital and preparations for natural hazards in the Philippines. The research emphasizes the importance of inequalities, contextualization, and scale. It underlines the significance of historical and political contexts to better understand social dynamics.

There is a growing body of scholarly literature that shows the detrimental repercussions of inequality on social capital. Social capital is still a debated concept but it can be useful for thinking about how human societies interact with natural hazards. The thesis thus contributes to the growing scientific inquiries which have begun to address the connections between social capital and “natural” disasters. This dissertation contributes to the links between these two fields of knowledge by analyzing the Filipino situation in general, as well as making a specific case study of a rural municipality in the Eastern Visayas region.

The thesis’ central argument is that economic inequality is detrimental to social capital which then has negative repercussions on preparing for natural hazards. In an analysis at several geographical scales, this thesis shows how inequality, via social capital, makes societies more at risk of having natural hazards turn into disasters. The thesis argues that a cautious use of the concept of social capital, which is cognizant of the complexities of the context it is applied to, has the potential to improve the way people collectively prevent hazards from turning into disasters.

Keywords: Social Capital, Natural Hazards, Disaster Preparation, Community, Inequality, Trust, Eastern Visayas, Philippines.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACCORD | Assistance and Cooperation for Community Resilience and Development |
| ADPC | Asian Disaster Preparedness Center |
| BDRRMC | Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council |
| CAFGU | Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit |
| CBDRRM | Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management |
| CBMS | Community Based Municipal Statistics |
| CDP | Center for Disaster Preparedness |
| CFO | Commission on Filipinos Overseas |
| CLUP | Comprehensive Land-Use Plan |
| CNDR | Corporate Network for Disaster Response |
| CRED | Center for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters |
| DA | Department of Agriculture |
| DAR | Department of Agrarian Reform |
| DENR | Department of Environment and Natural Resources |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| DSWD | Department of Social Welfare and Development |
| GIZ | German Agency for International Cooperation |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IFRC | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies |
| LGU | Local Government Unit |
| MDRRMC | Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council |
| MSB | Municipality of Saint Bernard |
| MSJ | Municipality of San Juan (formerly known as Cabalian) |
| NCR | National Capital Region |
| NDRRMC | National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council |
| NEDA | National Economic and Development Authority |
| NPA | New People's Army |
| NSCB | National Statistical Coordination Board |
| NSO | National Statistics Office |
| OFW | Overseas Filipino Worker |
| PCA | Philippine Coconut Authority |
| PDRRMC | Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council |
| RDRRMC | Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council |
| UN-ESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNISDR | United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UP | University of the Philippines |
| WEF | World Economic Forum |

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Philippines is in the bowling alley of regular typhoons, as well as in Southeast Asia's "Pacific Ring of Fire" with many active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes (Gaillard et al. 2009; De Koninck 2012). The country is socially ill-prepared for these recurrent natural hazards: the former American colony is plagued by rampant poverty and staggering economic inequality (McCoy 2002; Anderson 2004; Habito 2012). All in all, the Philippines is¹ one of the countries most afflicted by disasters (Gaillard 2015). Every year thousands of people are affected, many see their homes and possessions destroyed, and many die. From 1900 to 2013, natural disasters² in the Philippines affected over 160 million lives and left over 60,000 Filipinos dead³ (Guha-Sapir 2014).

Researchers of disasters have only recently begun looking at the role of social capital in the management of disasters (Aldrich 2012; Meyer 2013; Reiningger et al. 2013). However, most of these studies are focused on post-disaster response and recovery, and mainly in the North American setting. This thesis contributes to the discussion by analyzing how the social capital lens can be used pre-disaster in the Philippine setting. There have been few studies of social capital in the archipelago; those that do exist point to the overwhelming preponderance of strong bonds within families (Abad 2005). The country also has one of the lowest levels of trust between strangers (Rothstein & Uslaner 2005). Social capital is still a debated concept, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the quality of relationships between people, and between citizens and their authorities, play a critical role in times of emergencies.

The general objective of this doctoral research is to analyze the links between social capital and pre-hazard preparations in the Philippines. The thesis's specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate social capital (group membership and trust).
2. Determine if people are prepared for natural hazards.
3. Underline the importance of economic inequality.

¹ Throughout this thesis, "the Philippines" will be referred to as a singular noun, following the recommendation of official governmental agencies.

² The conceptual framework will explicate the nuances to the term "natural disaster."

³ These figures are from the highly respected Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and they do *not* include epidemics as natural disasters.

4. Place these concepts in a socio-historical context.
5. Frame these analyses in a political context.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

Research Questions

How does social capital in remote rural villages of Southern Leyte Province impact preparations to natural hazards? How do personal and collective levels of trust influence people's preparations to natural hazards? How do different types of social connections influence participation to programs of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)?

Main Hypothesis

The thesis' main hypothesis is that villages with higher indicators of social capital (interpersonal and generalized trust, formal and informal group participation, etc.) have higher levels of preparation to natural hazards.

Secondary Hypotheses

- Places with more Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) tend to have lower levels of social capital (formal/informal group participation and personal/societal trust).
- Places more involved in traditional non-formal groups have higher indicators of social capital.
- Village officials who are politically affiliated with the mayor are more likely to adopt risk reduction projects.

The thesis' central argument is that economic inequality is detrimental to social capital which then has negative repercussions on preparing for natural hazards. In an analysis at several geographical scales, this thesis attempts to show how inequality, via social capital, makes societies more at risk having natural hazards turn into disasters.

Structure

The thesis begins with a review of the literature for both social capital and disaster studies. The first chapter ends with a description of the methodology as well as the selection of research sites and participants. Chapters II and III discuss the issues and zoom from Asia, to Southeast Asia, then focus on the dearth of social cohesion in the Philippines. Chapter IV

presents the dire socioeconomic background for the Eastern Visayas region. Chapter V analyzes the data collected at the municipal scale, and Chapter VI attempts to compare this data across two selected villages.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

Two fields of literature will be reviewed: social capital and disaster studies. The objective of this research is to fill a gap that lies at the intersection of these two bodies of relatively recent scientific scholarship. There have only been a few academic inquiries into the overlap between these literatures. The existing ones are mainly set in the United States, and have predominantly focused on how social capital can impact post-disaster resilience (Aldrich 2012; Meyer 2013). This thesis addresses the conceptual issue of the role of social capital in preparations to hazards. It does this while providing a contextualization of the social, historical, and political setting of the understudied region of the Eastern Visayas in the Philippines.

Social Capital

Over the past twenty years, the concept of social capital has meant many things to many different scholars. The Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz famously derided it saying it was “a concept with a short and already confused history” (Stiglitz 2000, p. 59). There has been abundant pushback against the concept from a number of academics, some of it more pertinent than others, and I shall address a portion of these debates in the literature review. Nevertheless, *E pur si muove*, there is undeniable value in social networks, trust, and other non-tangible aspects of human relations, especially in times of crisis such as exposure to a natural hazard. Studies of human capital, also controversial when they first began, have shown that “what you know” (skills, knowledge) can be as important as “what you have” (wealth, credentials, property). Still fiercely debated, studies of social capital argue that “who you know,” and how strong those connections are, also makes a difference, sometimes more so, because what you “know / have” is often determined by “who you know” (Marsden & Hurlbert 1988; Lin 1999; Lin 2000; Abad 2005).

Social capital has many detractors, but there is no question that the idea has struck a chord in contemporary society in general and amongst academics in particular. Social science “has shown a 200-fold increase (from 2 to 433) of citation about social capital in the Web of Science from 1991 to 2006” (Mauerhofer 2013, p. 65). Robert Putnam, the Harvard political scientist whose work is believed to have been the spark of this wildfire, is said to have been the most-cited social scientist of the 1990s (Bebbington 2009, p. 165). At the same time, there also emerged a corresponding swarm of academic counter-literature which pointed to the new concept’s alleged over-versatility and vagueness (Portes 1998; Schuller et al., 2000; Nakagawa & Shaw 2004; Portes & Vickstorm 2011), as well as its supposed hidden political agenda as a Trojan horse for neoliberal World Bank policies (Fine & Green 2000; Cornwall & Brock 2005). The concept has been criticized as “depoliticizing the essentially conflictual nature of development” (Wisner 2002, p. 183). While I strongly agree with Wisner’s very pertinent criticism, it must be remarked that various other academics have for decades been involved in a recondite debate that “often generated more heat than light” (Kawachi et al., 2004, p. 682). I find that the best roundup of this trench-warfare is from geographer Antony Bebbington:

“the debate has been characterized by more or less relentless insistence on the part of radical critics that social capital can only be de-politicizing, reactionary, and obfuscating; and a more or less equally relentless insistence from those who have worked with the concept that, on the contrary, it can be useful for understanding how institutions and political boundaries are transgressed and how reformist progress is made toward more inclusive and democratic societies” (Bebbington 2009, p. 169).

Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that this potential cooptation of progressive concepts by thinkers on the right of the political spectrum can be framed within a greater tendency of international development agencies to peddle feel good buzzwords that helps cloak these institutions with legitimacy and contributes to justifying their actions. These authors specifically analyze the use of the terms “participation,” “empowerment,” and “poverty reduction” and argue that “the terms we use are never neutral. They acquire meaning as they are put to use in policies. [...] If words make worlds, struggles over meaning are not just about semantics: they gain a very real material dimension” (Cornwall & Brock 2005, p. 1056).

It appears that in the early days of social capital's popularity, some believed that social capital was a panacea, and that it could be applied to all situations: "in the early days of the idea there was a certain 'irrational exuberance' among some enthusiasts, such that anything good was termed 'social capital,' but throughout the last decade, careful researchers have converged toward a rigorous core concept" (Putnam 2004, p. 1). The term has been independently invented at least six times since the early nineteenth century; the first known use of the term was in 1916, by a school supervisor in West Virginia named L. J. Hanifan. This government official lost in the Appalachian boondocks⁴ urged, almost a century ago, for more community involvement to improve rural schools, and referred to social capital as the "intangible substance" that

"count the most in the daily lives of people, namely good will, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up social unit, the rural community, whose logical center is the school. [...] The individual is helpless socially, if left to entirely to himself. [...] If he may come into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community" (Hanifan 1916, p. 130).

Hanifan in the early 20th century had already conceptualized the fact that healthy networks could make better organizations, in this case better public schools. In the late 20th century, the two theorists who placed the concept in a contemporary theoretical context were sociologists: Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman. They "produced quite distinct formulations during the 1980s, each of which has been highly influential but neither of which is now considered a satisfactory or full specification" (Szreter & Woolcock 2004, p. 654). For Bourdieu social capital is strongly related with the concept of an individual person's networks:

"Le capital social est la somme des ressources, actuelles ou virtuelles, qui reviennent à un individu ou à un groupe du fait qu'il possède un réseau durable de relations, de connaissances et de reconnaissances mutuelles plus ou moins institutionnalisées, c'est-à-dire la somme des capitaux et des pouvoirs qu'un tel réseau permet de mobiliser. Il faut admettre que le capital peut prendre une diversité de formes si l'on veut expliquer la structure et la dynamique des sociétés différenciées" (Bourdieu 1992, p. 95).

⁴ It is interesting to note that "boondock" is a word that migrated from the Philippines into the English spoken by Americans during their colonization of the archipelago. As often with borrowed words, the signification has slightly shifted with the transfer; in Tagalog and other Filipino languages "*bundok*" means mountain.

According to Bourdieu, the notion of social capital is part of an array of different kinds of capitals that each person possesses, such as financial capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, etc. Interestingly, the French sociologist used these concepts to better understand how elite families perpetuated and consolidated the positions of dominance of their offspring. The concept here is applied to the micro-level of a person and his or her household.

Putnam modified the concept of social capital and focused it on possible government policy where he presents it at a more macro-level, analyzing the concept as a collective entity. He also brought the concept into the realm of international development studies and was instrumental in the World Bank devoting a lot of time, and research money, to studying it. His lean and mean definition is: “social capital refers to social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity” (Putnam 2001, p. 21). The fundamental idea is that social networks have value. Value for the people in the network as well as for non-network members who happen to be in the same area: “Dense social networks – barbecues or dinner parties or whatever – in a neighborhood can deter crime, even benefiting locals who don’t themselves go to the barbecues” (Putnam 2004, p. 1). However, dense social networks and high levels of trust are also what characterize the Mafia and other criminal organizations.

Strong networks of trust within a particular group, also known as “bonding capital,” can be a source of tension with other groups (Ballet et al. 2007, p. 367). Unlike when the concept first gained popularity, in 2014 no one is claiming that social capital is a panacea; there is no doubt in anyone’s mind that social capital can be either socially positive or negative. Similarly, human capital allows people to fly airplanes commercially, or fly them into buildings. We shall see below, in the Filipino setting, that tight networks amongst elite families also have detrimental effects on politicians’ civic behavior, which in fact often results in perpetuating an inequitable society. In many regards, Filipino elites are very different from the majority of the population: the rich have multiple and diverse social connections, both domestically and internationally, robust financial capital, and are well-endowed in human capital, namely educations from Ivy League universities. This tight bonding of people within a same group, such as class, ethnicity or religion, is what is called “bonding capital” in the literature.

Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

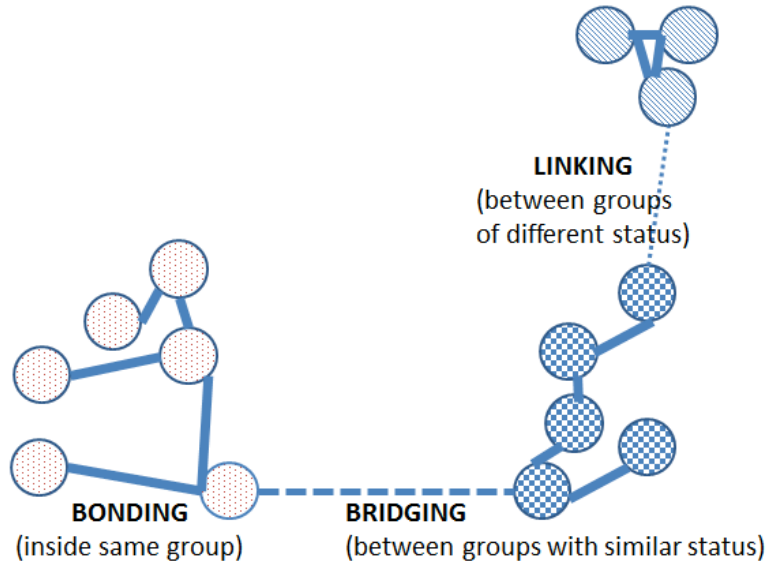
Gittell and Vidal are the authors often associated with making a distinction between two major types of social capital: bonding capital and bridging capital. On the one hand, they define bonding capital as the link between people who have similar characteristics, for example, same age, same socio-economic class, or fans of a common football team. Bonding capital is sometimes compared to the glue that holds groups together, and is good for supporting the less fortunate members of a community or “furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs” (Gittell 1998, p. 8). These kinds of bonds are intense but do not provide links outside of one’s group. On the other hand, “bridging capital” is the link that builds bridges over social cleavages; for example, a friendship between people from opposing hockey teams, or from different ethnic groups. Putnam argues that “bridging capital” is vital in multi-ethnic societies to prevent tensions from flaring up and to keep society cohesive. Other authors, such as Granovetter call this type of link a “weak tie” and point out that in certain circumstances, like when looking for a job, it can be useful to have acquaintances in social circles different from one’s own. Many have since argued for “the strength of weak ties” (Granovetter 1983; Putnam 2001; Abad 2005).

Authors using the social capital framework to analyze post-conflict situations argued for the need to transform exclusive bonding capital into inclusive inter-group bridging capital (Colletta & Cullen, 2000). It is important to take this into account because the Municipality of Saint Bernard was an area of high violence during the civil war of the Martial Law era. In the 1980s, several of the villages studied were sites of gun battles between governmental and rebel forces. We shall see below that although the studies of social capital in the Philippines are rare, they almost always underline the dramatic imbalance between the overpowering dominance of bonding capital compared to anemic levels of bridging capital, and even more timid linking capital, a type of connection described next. Before addressing the Filipino context, the conceptualization must further refine the kinds of links that exist in social capital, by taking into account criticism from social scientists who have justifiably been clamoring for more political economy in the theorization of the concept.

Linking Social Capital

For several years, the political economy perspective had been putting its finger on an important gap in the conceptualization of social capital: the absence of “explicit recognition of vertical power differentials in social relations” (Kawachi et al., 2004, p. 682). Already in 2000, authors such as Fine and Green had been underlining that class-conflict was not being properly addressed in the social capital theoretical debate. Two scientists using the concept of social capital for research in public health, Szreter and Woolcock, patch this conceptual gap with a seminal article where they identify a third kind of social capital: *linking* social capital. They define it as “norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal, or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society” (Szreter & Woolcock 2004, p. 655). This new categorization refines the concept of connections with people from “outside groups” into the horizontal equalitarian relationships of *bridging*, and vertical power relationships of *linking* social capital (Figure I.1).

Figure I.1. Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital⁵



In a post-conflict context, authors like Vervisch et al. (2013, p. 151) argue that social capital approaches are often based on a “communitarian” or “Putnamian” notion of the concept,

⁵ This figure is based on Aldrich 2012, p. 34.

which they claim is blindly positive. Vervisch et al. assert that this approach equates the concept with “voluntary, horizontal, civic associations at community level, in accordance with Putnam’s (1993) ideal notion of ‘network of civil engagement’” (Vervisch et al., 2013, p. 151). My own reading of Putnam’s later works leads me to believe that his fame and clout amongst policymakers made him an easy target for oversimplifications, and it seems to me that his ideas in his later work became more refined and that he did acknowledge the potential negative aspects of social capital: “Some networks have been used to raise finance for terrorism. Just as human and physical capital – through knowledge of chemistry or aircraft, for instance – can be used for bad purposes, so can social capital” (Putnam 2004, p. 1). That said, I too have qualms about certain aspects of the world-renown academic’s work, mainly in regards to his inattention to economic inequality. My objective here is not to judge if Vervisch et al. give Putnam’s work a fair treatment. Instead I want to focus on an important point they make, when they criticize what they see as the potential for “elite capture of communities” and the influence which that can have on social capital analysis.

Vervisch et al. add their voices to others calling for a broader political economy perspective on social capital. In opposition to the “communitarian view” or what they call the “Putnamian” notion of the concept, they draw on the work of Bourdieu to underline the importance of context in general and of power dynamics in particular. As mentioned above, the French sociologist’s work was intrinsically critical of intergenerational perpetuation of power, and of structural injustices. I agree with Vervisch et al. when they argue that social capital is “inextricably bound up with other forms of cultural capital (e.g. educational qualifications) and economic capital (e.g. resources directly convertible into money)” (2013 p. 152). These authors use a case study in post-conflict Burundi and show the potentially negative effects of social capital, such as accentuating unfair situations, if it gets “enmeshed in broader socio-economic power relations” (Ibid., p. 168). These authors also underline two other factors in their Burundi study that are relevant to my own Filipino research. The first is that Vervisch et al. mention their interviewees’ have a “preference for informal daily interactions rather than formal community associations or committees” (Ibid.). This is pertinent for my research, as I pay attention to both formal and traditional non-formal organizations, as my study

distinguishes between these two types of groups (formal and non-formal). I test this phenomenon in a rural Southeast Asian context. The second factor is the importance of roads and public transport to negotiate space: the value of “infrastructure work and public service provision as project activities which positively influence the social fabric of community life” (Ibid., p. 170). This insight can be transposed into my own research as I analyze the repercussion of a national highway, with regular commercial bus lines, cutting through the two villages that I study.

Social Capital and Human Capital

Human capital is related to social capital, and it is also a relatively newcomer to the socio-economic toolkit of concepts. Similarly, to the elusive “network,” human capital is significantly more difficult to measure than physical capital (tools, machines or other productive equipment). Human capital is “created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways” (Colman 1988, p. 100). For example, being trained as a surgeon is human capital that brings about skills that make a person able to act in new ways. “Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so too social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups” (Putnam 2001, p. 19). Human and social capitals are related: people learn their skills from those around them, and inversely schools are where we often create most of our networks, and having the right connections will get just about anyone into the most prestigious universities.⁶ Both concepts are somewhat controversial because of their intangible nature.

Social capital, however, takes this *abstraction* one step further, as it comes from the changes in the ways people relate to each other. “If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the relations among persons” (Ibid.). All forms of capital which are human-made (physical, human

⁶ And if you think I’m exaggerating here, just think of former US president George W. Bush.

or social) are created by investing time, effort, and often financial capital, into transformation activities to build tools or assets that “increase income in the future” (Ostrom 2000, p. 174).

There are interesting nuances between *physical* and *social* capitals. First, social capital does not wear out with use; on the contrary it fades when not used. “Using social capital for an initial purpose creates mutual understandings and ways of relating that can frequently be used to accomplish entirely different joint activities at much lower start-up costs” (Ibid., p. 179). Second, it is much more difficult to see and measure social capital than physical capital. Kilometers of road can be measured; hospital buildings are either there or they are not. Social and human capitals, however, are almost invisible to the naked eye. Even if people are asked about the different indicators of social capital (trust, network connection, etc.) they may answer what they believe the person asking the question wants to hear. Since the concept first went into the mainstream in the 1990s, however, there are now a variety of tools to attempt to measure different aspects of social capital. For better or for worse, large para-governmental organizations (such as the World Bank and the United Nations) have spent a lot of time and money in the pursuit of this elusive concept. A third nuance is the fact that it is harder for public authorities to intentionally build social capital than to build than physical capital (Ibid.), and this is one of the critiques of the concept.

Geographers and Social Capital

Geographers have argued for the importance of space in the formation of social capital: “How social capital plays out across space provides us with insights into the nature of social processes underpinning the concept” (Lovell, 2009, p. 786). Notably how one’s neighborhood influences “a range of indicators of social capital including levels of volunteering [...] (Davis-Smith, 1998, as cited in Mohan and Mohan 2002), neighborhood trust (Subramanian et al 2003), and voting patterns (Johnston et al. 2005)” (Ibid.). Certain geographers have been calling for a “greater scrutiny of how social capital is deployed across settings and how the concept may be most usefully drawn on within those different settings” (Ibid., p. 792), and saying that the concept could be used as a tool for positive social change at the local level. Geographers have pushed for social capital research “based on multilevel techniques, which

simultaneously analyze the relative role of individual and area characteristics” (Twigg & Mohan 2009, p. 178). My own research follows this line of thinking, testing the idea in the context of several different scales in the Philippines: village, municipal, and national. My research also looks at how new communication technology, such as cellphones and Facebook, may be modifying distribution of social capital across space in the rural Filipino setting.

Social Capital in the Philippines

In the Philippines, social capital research is uncommon (Abad 2005), even if scholars have studied other specific types of group organizations, which include kinship-based networks such as family solidarity (Porio 1978), non-kin-based networks that focus on friendship or work based relations (Morais 1981), and “alliance systems” (Hollsteiner 1963) that combine kin and non-kin members. Abad (2005) has written an important – and rare – contribution to social capital scholarship in the Philippines by analyzing the results from a national survey that describes two key notions I also use in my own research: networks and trust. Both notions “cut across the diverse literature on social capital” (Schuller et al., 2000, p. 14), “have their own research traditions” (Misztal 1996), and are “less contentious as concepts compared to social capital itself” (Koniordos 2005, p. 4). Abad uses data from a 2001 Social Weather Stations/International Social Survey Program (SWS/ISSP) survey administered to a random sample of 1,200 adults taken from across the archipelago, from both rural and urban areas (Abad 2005, p. 11). His results confirm that in 2005, as in earlier studies of Filipino social organizations, “Filipinos build strong binding social capital with family members and depend upon them for material, psychic, and symbolic needs throughout the life cycle” (p. 44). Abad also underlines the dearth of bridging ties to wider networks: “Filipinos have not taken much advantage of the strength of weak ties, one consequence perhaps being a general attitude of mistrust toward strangers” (Ibid.). Abad’s (2005) survey analysis suggests that membership in formal organizations “remains minimal despite the proliferation of civil society groups” (Ibid.). One of the article’s most significant points, in my opinion, is in showing the “asymmetry of social capital” depending on urban or rural residence, and more importantly, on socioeconomic status (Ibid.).

There is no doubt that Abad made an important contribution to the study of social capital in the Philippines, but I have questions about certain aspects of his research. I find it problematic that the scale of his analysis attempted to measure social capital on a national level (Ibid., p. 10). I suspect this was due to the limitations of the SWS/ISSP survey data set he was working with, even if, to his credit, Abad did cross-tabulate items of trust and networks with specific demographic characteristics such as rural-urban residence, gender, and socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, I believe that a finer grained geographical analysis shows significant regional variations. I also think that this watershed article could use more socio-historical contextualizing of its observations and findings. In view of this, my PhD thesis' socio-historical contextualization of the Municipality of Saint Bernard will thus be making a contribution to the literature on social capital in the Philippines.

Abad's pioneering article might also be criticized for not pointing clearly enough to the structural socio-economic problems that surround his analysis of social capital. In a style reminiscent of Putnam's, he ends his article saying that "The task of change will thus come from expanding social capital at the bottom, and shaking the 'other things' from above so that the system can dismantle its strategies of exclusion" (Ibid., p. 45). It is my humble opinion that the "other things" Abad refers to may perhaps be more pressing than "expanding social capital at the bottom." I concur here with Bebbington that one has to be careful with the concept of social capital, and be certain that it is not used to promote the acceptance of

"the status quo and delivering interpretations that for many critics have a whiff of 'culture of poverty' and 'blame the victim' arguments that see people as poor not because of massive resource transfers out of their countries, but because they have not made the effort to invest sufficiently in their own social organizations and networks" (Bebbington 2009, p. 169).

I by no means want to suggest that Abad himself might in any way be reactionary, since he does underline that "people of privilege – males, urban residents, better educated persons, those with higher family incomes, and to some extent older people – possess a better stock of social capital than their less privileged counterparts" (Abad 2005, p. 45). However, I do feel his work does not call enough attention to the underlying historical structural inequalities of

Filipino society, which in my mind, have inevitable repercussions on contemporary social capital.

Gender and Social Capital in the Philippines

There are many flagrant economic inequalities in the Philippines. Not surprisingly, when I present my research to social scientists, I am often asked about the situation of gender inequality. Western intellectuals have become quite keen on placing a gender lens to their studies, and this is in my opinion a very positive and long overdue development. In the following paragraphs, I wish to explain that while I respect and commend this trend to address gender inequalities, I do not believe it to be the most appropriate way to approach either inequalities or social capital in the Filipino context. As I will underline below, my analysis will be on the lookout for any gender differences in the data I have collected for both social capital and preparation to natural hazards.

Marie Godquin and Agnes Quisumbing (2008) make the interesting argument that the Philippines is relatively equalitarian when it comes to gender for measurements of social capital. These authors argue that the Philippines is “relatively egalitarian with respect to gender roles” (Godquin & Quisumbing 2008, p. 14). Kinship is traced on both the father’s and the mother’s sides; many Filipino languages do not distinguish between “son/daughter,” “brother/sister,” or “husband/wife.” Studies looking at actual food intake data as well as intergeneration transfers of wealth also find a relatively gender equalitarian society (Ibid., p. 15). In their study of social capital, Godquin and Quisumbing (2008) find that contrarily to conventional Western wisdom, in the Philippines “men and women have equal propensity to participate in groups and participate in an equal number of groups” (p. 15). They also underline that differences do exist along gender lines and that “the types of groups in which men and women participate are very different, suggesting that a gender division of labour may exist in the acquisition of formal social capital” (Ibid., p. 15). Instead of gender, they found that education was a much better predictor of group membership. Similarly, the distance to the town center had “significant negative impact on both male and female membership in groups

except for production groups” (Ibid., p. 23). It seems that in their study, as in mine, the poor – regardless of their gender – were the ones who were less likely to be part of groups.

In a relative sense, the Philippines is quite a progressive country when it comes to gender equality. This is not to say that the archipelago is free of gender discrimination, abuse, or inequality, but rather that, in my opinion, the country does not need to be given gender lessons from Westerners. The World Gender Gap Report for 2013 rates the Philippines as the 5th most gender equalitarian country out of the 136 countries analyzed (WEF 2013). This places the former Spanish colony ahead of Ireland, Switzerland, the UK, Canada, and the United-States. The Philippines is ranked first place in the specific categories of both “Educational Attainment” as well as “Health and Survival.” Thankfully these positive national trends seem to be on the upswing.

The Eastern Visayas, the region this thesis focuses on, also claims to have positive gender equality. The local branch of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) underlines in its July 2013 *Labor Force Survey*, that 79.5 percent of employed “professionals” in Region VIII were women. The NSCB also write that

“more than half or 52.9% of the 274,000 officials of government and special interest organizations, corporate executives, managers, managing proprietors and supervisors in the region are women. This shows that more women than men occupy managerial and supervisory positions where they exercise decision-making functions” (NSCB 2014, p. 1).

Men, however, were more present in the military, as well as farmers, fishermen, and other unskilled workers (NSCB 2014). These results will be corroborated and discussed in my own data analysis.

I am conscious that the paragraphs above might be unpopular amongst certain Western academics, but I will risk making the argument that the question of class is – in the Philippine context – the more appropriate issue to be looking at to analyze inequality. Godquin and Quisumbing (2008) argued in their conclusion that in the Filipino context

“wealth inequality is more pronounced than gender inequality. The finding that significant differences in group membership exist across asset quartiles, but not

between men and women, suggests that programmes to help the poor and vulnerable should be targeted first according to wealth, rather than gender” (Godquin & Quisumbing 2008, p. 31).

In my own fieldwork, I also found that compared with many Western countries, wealth inequality was much more pronounced than gender inequality. Nevertheless, many Western researchers and funding agencies have for years been pushing projects and research focusing on gender issues in the Philippines. In view of the country’s international standing in the Gender Gap Report mentioned above, as well as from observations in my own fieldwork, I think it is worth questioning this contemporary ideological incarnation of colonial gun-boats. I suspect this “politically correct” intellectual trend of forcing a cookie-cutter gender lens on every situation, in every country, is counter-productive for several reasons. On one hand it distracts attention from the Philippines’s festering economic inequalities, and on the other hand, by having “kettle” Western countries calling “teapot” Asian countries “gender black” it damages the credibility of women’s movements everywhere. International actors put pressure on the Filipino government to divert scarce public funds towards issues that seem important to Western intellectuals but that may not in fact be what is most appropriate in the Filipino setting.

The State and Social Capital

Szreter and Woolcock argue that “social capital per se should not encompass features of the state” (2004, p. 656), but they nevertheless acknowledge that it is “impossible to understand how particular networks and social structures are initiated and sustained without reference to the state” since the state and its laws inevitably influence patterns of associations. They argue that findings on social capital remain incomplete, and possibly misleading, if not placed in political context. They see the state as “the public arbiter of the liberal polity’s collective resources” (Ibid.). Szreter and Woolcock incorporate into social capital, (1) power relations (with “linking social capital”), and (2) the role of the state; this allows for an analysis significantly more integrated with a political economy framework. However, their paradigm of the state as a benevolent “public arbiter” could seem humorous for observers who have followed the marathon of corruption scandals that has characterized the dysfunctional Filipino

state over the last centuries (McCoy 2002). The Filipino state is very much captured by the elite and often provides little service to its population (Ibid.).

The State in the Philippines

The American colonial authorities had launched a decentralization process which strongly fortified the power of regional elites.

“The Americans had a two-fold interest in strengthening Filipino landed elite. Economically, it was the landholdings of the elite that provided the raw materials which the Americans required. The demand for export crops was a powerful stimulus for more land purchase by landowners. *Hacenderos* enlarged their holdings and intensified exploitation to take fuller advantage of the demand for their products under free trade conditions. Thus the *hacienda* system that had been born as a result of capitalist linkage during the Spanish occupation was strengthened under American rule. The tenancy problem worsened during the same period. Politically, the landed elite constituted the most stable allies of American colonialism and many of them were recruited into office. Their prosperity gave them a definite stake in the colonial set-up” (Constantino & Constantino 1975, p. 306).

This “definite stake” that was created during the colonial era has resulted in a contemporary state apparatus strongly skewed in favor of the elites.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the elite-families and the state. Powerful families are usually the ones that have managed to gain positions at both the local and the national levels. There are often strong connections between local and national power: “Even the most violent of provincial warlords tried to win lucrative rents, either through allies in Manila or by exercise of their de facto local autonomy” (McCoy 2002, p. 20). This they achieved through assuring votes on one side and giving themselves juicy national contracts on the other: “If elected, the politicians will repay the investment many times over through low-cost government credit, selective enforcement of commercial regulations, or licenses for state-regulated enterprises such as logging and broadcasting” (Ibid.). This is the practice of “rent seeking” between the Filipino elite and the state, where the state gives a particular entrepreneur an artificial advantage. The result is negative for the economy as a whole, since “no value is created in the process; indeed, the monopolization involves a net destruction of value. The rents secured reflect a diversion of value from consumers generally to the favored rent seeker, with a net loss of value in the process” (Ibid., p. 11). At the local level of the

Municipality of Saint Bernard, I was able to observe two elections and I have data to illustrate the processes described by McCoy. Szreter and Woolcock (2004) argued that the state and its laws inevitably influence patterns of association. My research analyzes how different kinds of social capital at the village and municipal level are influenced by the state and, more importantly, powerful local families.

Centrality of Family in the Philippines

Family is everything in Filipino politics and it is the key to understanding the country's state apparatus. Family is also central to social organization in the Philippines (Abad 2005). Some social scientists may occasionally seem to neglect its importance, but family remains important in the archipelago. Family is "the strongest unit of society, demanding the deepest loyalties of the individual and coloring all social activities with its own set of demands. [...]" The communal values of family are often in conflict with the impersonal values of the institutions of the larger society" (Grossholtz 1964, pp. 86-87). Interestingly, the dominance of family in the Philippines still seems almost absolute in the 21st century, as beautifully illustrated in the Swiss philosopher Lukas Kaelin's 2012 book appropriately entitled *Strong Family, Weak State*. This can be in part explained by the fact that during the 20th Century, the state collapsed (partially or totally) at least four times due to wars or revolutions (McCoy 2002, p. 12). As a result of this experience, "Filipinos have learned to rely upon their families for the sorts of social services that the state provides in many developed nations" (Ibid., p. 7). This applies to both the wealthy and the poor. My thesis tests this theory in a rural setting to see what kind of rapport people and their families have with the state, especially when it comes to preparing for natural hazards.

Family is so central to Filipino culture that the state itself recognizes its primacy in the Philippine Civil Code: "The family is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects" (quoted in McCoy 2002, p. 7). The Civil Code also writes explicitly that family has the primary responsibility for the social welfare of its members: "Mutual aid, both moral and material, shall be rendered among members of the same family. Judicial and administrative officials shall foster this mutual assistance." Even the country's 1986

constitution makes it a basic national principle: “The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as the basic autonomous social institution” (The 1986 Constitution quoted in McCoy 2002, p. 7). The importance given to family is so preponderant that the contemporary Philippine state, created by the elite for the elite, has successfully managed to bow itself out of many of the responsibilities (social services) that states usually provide in other countries, such as programs to prevent future natural hazards from turning into disasters.

Trust and Filipino Families

This relationship between a disjointed state and tightly knit families is somewhat of a vicious circle. We mentioned earlier that within Filipino society there is a dearth of social cohesion and a lack of trust of “the other” (Rothstein & Uslaner 2005), of people outside one’s family. Nevertheless, during times of disasters, there are vociferous proclamations in the national media of “*bayanihan* spirit” (a traditional form of village level solidarity, which we discuss more extensively below). However, the state, in its day to day actions, especially at the national level, does not really seem to care very much for its citizens (Kaelin 2012). This is not to mean that individuals, both inside and outside of government, will not make acts of generosity and solidarity in times of disasters.

It is clear that trust is often extremely strong within the Filipino family. Many times during my interviews, I heard people say “blood is thicker than water” in the sense that family allegiances trump all others. A notorious strongman from Cebu Island, Ramon Durano, famously said that “politics is not something you can entrust to non-relatives” (quoted in Cullinane 2002, p. 163). The surprisingly pious warlord similarly justified his own attribution of trust to family with parallels to the life of Jesus Christ, by reminding his audience that “all but two of Jesus’s twelve apostles were his relatives” and that the two non-family members were “Judas, who betrayed him, and Thomas, who doubted him” explaining that he “like Christ, trusted only family members” (Ibid.). Similarly, on the other end of the political spectrum, it is surprising how fundamental family remains within extreme left-wing political movements. Even amongst the “new men” certain families dominated the communist underground: “For years the leading

lights of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) were four Lava brothers, three of whom became secretary-general of the party” (Coronel 2004, p. 57). Close bonding relations, especially those found in family, are extremely powerful in the Philippines. Generalized trust toward strangers, however, is abysmal. Trust nevertheless remains an important indicator of social capital, and thinkers across the political spectrum agree that trust is an essential and highly desirable component for healthy societies.

Trust, social cohesion, and inequality

Trust is believed to be a key indicator of social capital. The concept of social capital is still quite controversial, even if it has been around for about a century. What is certain is that it is a concept which means different things to different people. Trust, however, is slightly easier to measure, and is a somewhat less contentious concept; I devote a lot of my analysis to it, as one of my key indicators for social capital. Surveys in the United States⁷ have established that people trust each other significantly less today than they did a quarter of a century ago.⁸ Studies looking at specific US states revealed that people trust each other more in states where there is more equality. This is also the case on an international level: more unequal countries are also less trusting (Figures I.2 and I.3).

In a broader sense, recent research suggests that income inequality is associated not only with lower trust but also with increased criminality, fractured social cohesion, and all sorts of other social ailments (Kawachi 1999). Wilkinson and Pickett make a solid case that “the quality of social relations deteriorates in less equal societies” (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010, p. 51). These authors found strong correlations between the quality of social relationships and levels of equality, which are believed to contribute to, amongst other problems, higher levels of interpersonal violence (Wilkinson 2004). Where inequality is high, people are less likely to be involved in community life, which many thinkers have argued is what “social capital” is all about. Inequality is a crucial issue in Filipino society. This thesis has tried to keep inequality in focus throughout the fieldwork as well as in the data analysis to see how people prepare for disasters.

⁷ Which might not seem that “united.”

⁸ Several authors, such as Wilkinson et al. (2009), argue that this is because there was less economic inequality in the past.

Figure I.2. Relation between trust and inequality *in US states*

(Source: Wilkinson & Pickett 2010, p. 53)

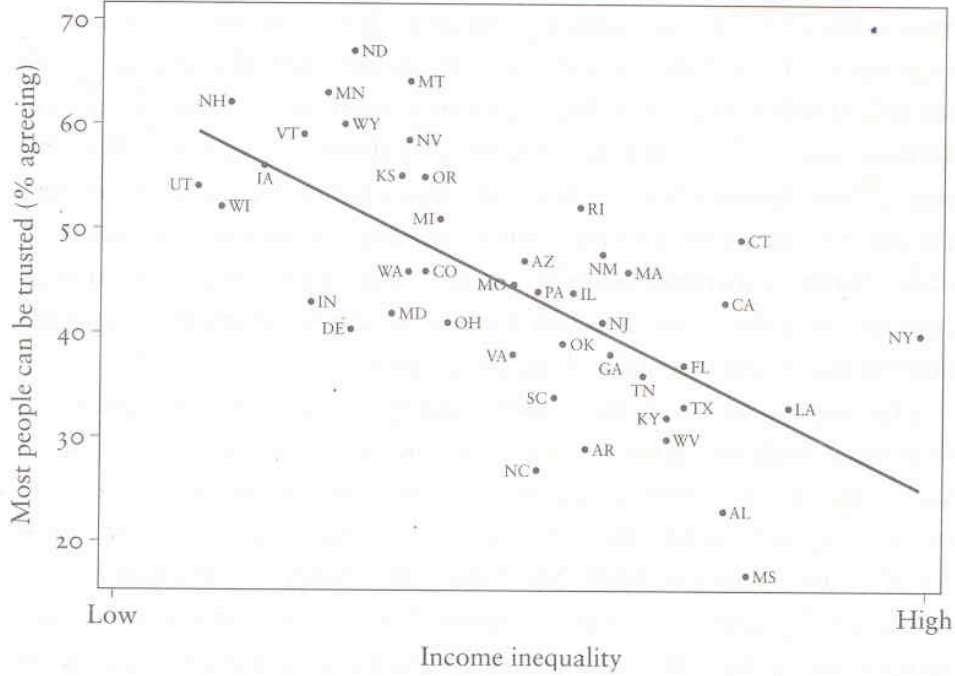
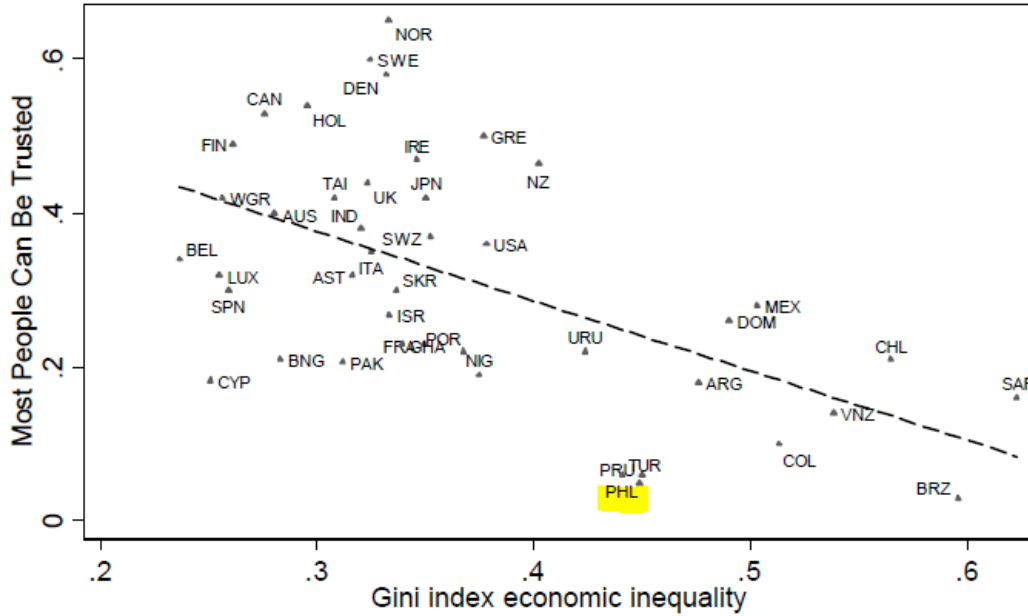


Figure I.3. Relation between trust and inequality *in different countries*

Note that the Philippines, PHL, has one of the lowest trust levels in graphic below. (Source: Rothstein & Uslaner 2005, p. 49).



Disaster Studies

After the above overview of social capital scholarship, it is now time to review the literature in the field of disaster studies. Until recently the study of disasters was left in the hands of engineers, but over the last decades more and more social scientists have been studying calamities, what they mean for societies, and how to better manage them. There has emerged an interdisciplinary social science literature focused on dealing with the risk of disasters. One of the most fundamental aspects of risk is the following equation: Risk = Hazard x Vulnerability (Wisner et al., 2004). This equation implies that not all hazards have the risk of becoming disasters. The amount of risk depends on both elements in the equation. A powerful hurricane causes more risk of disaster than a small thunder storm; however it is only when the population exposed to the hazard is vulnerable that this can lead to a high risk of catastrophe. This implies that there is nothing “natural” about natural disasters (Ibid.). Indeed “without people, there is no disaster” (O’Keefe et al. 1976, p. 566).

Table I.1. Definitions in disaster studies (UNISDR)

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hazard | A dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. |
| Risk | The combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences. |
| Disaster | A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope, using its own resources. |
| Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) | The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events. |
| Mitigation | The lessening or limitation of the adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters. |
| Preparedness | The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions. |
| Vulnerability | A set of conditions and processes resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors that increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards. |

“Natural” disasters are increasing

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC 2002) argues that the number of people killed by natural disasters has stabilized, for now, around 80,000 people a year, but that the figure of people affected by disasters and the associated economic losses have both soared.

“During the 1990s, an annual average of around 200 million people were affected by natural disasters – nearly three times higher than in the 1970s. Economic losses from such disasters in the 1990s averaged US\$ 63 billion per year – nearly five times higher in real terms than the figure for the 1970s. Even this figure is dwarfed by an estimate from Munich Re’s leading geo-scientist, Gerhard Berz, that global warming-related disasters could soon cost over 300 US\$ billion every year” (IFRC 2002, p. 10).

Judging from the sources of this information, it is prudent to say that natural disasters will definitely be an issue with which human societies are going to have to grapple within the coming years.

Increasing trend

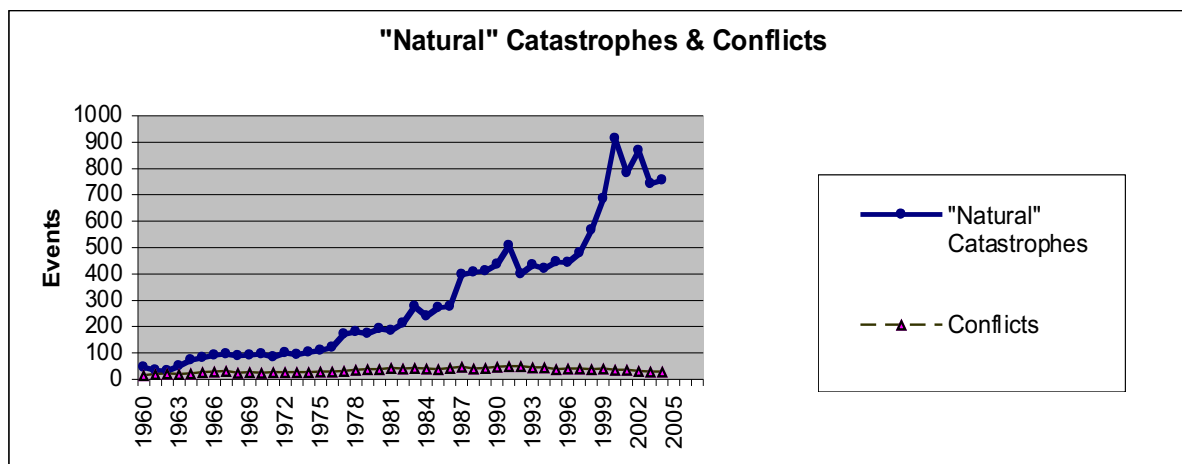
Natural disasters are becoming an increasingly important issue: they have increased in frequency over the last century. According to the highly respected Brussels-based Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster (CRED),⁹ in the last decades there have been dramatic increases in occurrences of “natural” catastrophes. From only about 30 events in the 1960s, the figure has skyrocketed to about 800 in the early 21st century (Figure I.4).¹⁰

Comparatively, the number of conflicts has remained under 100 per year (Figure I.4). However, one should not downplay the importance that government and international aid agencies need to place on resolving conflicts. Nevertheless, the data vividly expresses the evolution of the trends. At the time of writing this text, natural disasters have slowly gained interest from the international community, but it was not long ago when aid agencies were completely obnubilated by other issues, such as “complex humanitarian emergencies” in war-torn countries.

⁹ This trend is backed up other studies by insurance mammoth Swiss Re.

¹⁰ The sources for this graphic are the CRED in Belgium for natural catastrophes and the Department for peace and conflict at Uppsala University in Sweden for conflicts.

Figure I.4. “Natural” catastrophes and conflicts



(Sources: CRED 2005 & Department of peace and conflict studies, Uppsala University 2005)

Disasters and (d)isasters

Another important aspect of disasters is that the number of people affected by natural hazards is seriously larger than the figures we currently have for natural “Disasters.” For an event to qualify as a Disaster (with a capital “D”) it needs to be reasonably noticeable. There are different ways to define exactly what constitutes a disaster. This thesis follows the commonly used criteria from EM-DAT International Disaster Database (2009) that at least one of the following criteria has to be fulfilled:

- 10 or more people reported killed
- At least 100 people reported affected
- A call for international assistance
- Declaration of a state of emergency

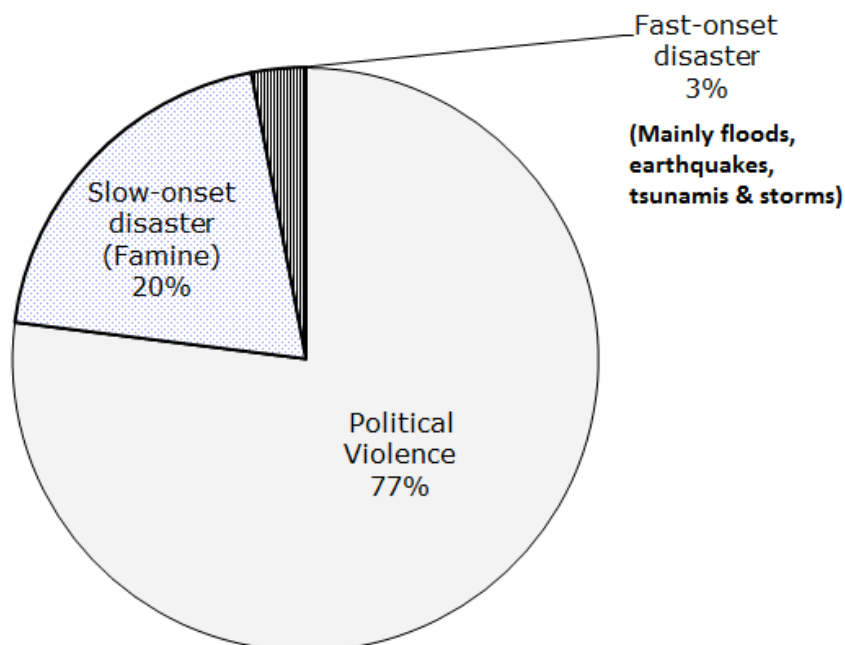
In some countries small everyday disasters cumulatively cause more damage than the official Disasters with a capital D that are formally recorded. For example,

“data from one country, Guatemala, covering the period 1988-1998 (excluding Hurricane Mitch) records 1,666 individual events leading to 1,393 deaths and 395,961 people affected. Over the same period (including Mitch), CRED’s EM-DAT database records only 19 disaster events in Guatemala leading to 859 deaths and affecting 192,830 people” (IFRC *World Disaster Report* 2002, p. 11).

The above Guatemalan example illustrates how official disaster figures may in fact be underestimating the gravity of the problem, by focusing only on the larger event.

Nuances: Total number of deaths. The above trend clearly makes “natural” disasters worthy of study, but in all scientific honesty it is necessary to underline important nuances in the proportional importance of natural hazards in respect to the ratio of reported deaths. The seminal *At Risk; natural hazards, people’s vulnerability, and disasters* by Wisner et al. (2004, but first published in 1994) underlines that some definitions of disasters include political violence and famines and that these are really the threats that kill the most people (Figure I.5). In view of the global trend of increased threats from natural hazards, the distribution could evolve in the future, increasing the percentages of deaths due to natural hazards.

Figure I.5. Death ratios from selected disasters, * 1900-1999



(*Not including epidemics, transportation and industrial disasters. Sources: CRED for fast and slow onset disasters; Sivard 2001 for political violence data, cited in Wisner et al. 2004, pp. 3-4)

Causes come in shades of gray

Human activities are not always to blame, even if most authors in the field *do* believe that it is often the case that human activities play a critical role in allowing natural hazards to turn into natural disasters. It seems especially important to stress this point because it is still sometimes

believed that “natural disasters” are unavoidable natural phenomenon, unpreventable events, or “acts of God.” In 2005, when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in the US, many fundamentalist Christian preachers claimed that the disaster was God’s punishment for the City’s connection with homosexuality, brothels and so-called loose morals (Repent America 2005).

Sometimes, however, it can also be the case that human activity plays no role in causing natural disasters. There is a gradient for the responsibility of human activities and there are some rare occurrences where there is no social component to a disaster. Such an example occurred in 1986 in Africa when

“a cloud of carbon dioxide bubbled up from Lake Nyos in Cameroon, killing 1,700 people in their sleep. In the complex balance of human and natural influences, this event was clearly at the ‘natural’ end of the spectrum of causation. The area was a long-settled, rich agricultural area. Rich and poor suffered equally. There was no difference in social or personal protection possible” (Wisner et al. 2004, p. 9).

There was not much this society could have done to prevent the disaster, so this example lies on the very “natural” end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum are situations where daily life is a disaster. Under “normal conditions,” that is without any natural hazards, basic survival is already an issue, which is the case for many poor farmers across Southeast Asia.

Vulnerability

It is necessary to realize the importance of the complex human factors of vulnerability. According to Wisner et al. vulnerability is

“the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. It involves a combination of the factors that determine the degree to which someone’s life and livelihood is put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature or in society” (Wisner et al. 2004, p. 9).

These authors underline the need to take into account the potential victim’s livelihood. In other words, it is not just a matter of having a home that will withstand hurricane winds but also being able to keep one’s job, or at least feed one’s family, after the storm has passed. One

could ask the question: if a man survives a hurricane but starves to death a month later because he has lost his livelihood, is he any better off than if he had been killed instantly during the storm?

Building better bridges, enforcing zoning regulations, and improving building codes, are important Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities. However, it is not enough for authorities to devote themselves to improving the technical defenses to hazards. In many countries deep social problems cause large percentages of the population to live in a state of perpetual survival, and this in itself is an important cause of vulnerability. If “normal life” is already a disaster (or is on the brink of disaster) then even mundane natural hazards can spark major disasters. It is not unlike the predicament described in the opening quote from Tawney (1966, p.77) on the first page of James Scott’s *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976): “the position of the rural population is that of a man standing permanently up to the neck in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him.” This metaphor of a state of constant precariousness applies quite well to the situation of many farmers in the Municipality of Saint Bernard.

There are clearly limitations to looking for technical answers to deep social problems. If reduction of vulnerability is really to be taken seriously, then authorities will have to go beyond the “simple” technical measures, and take a deeper social – and more holistic – approach. Wisner et al. write:

“Normally, vulnerability is closely correlated with socio-economic position (assuming that this incorporates race, gender, age, etc.). Although we make a number of distinctions that show it to be too simplistic to explain all disasters, as a rule the poor suffer more from hazards than the rich, although poverty and vulnerability are not uniformly or invariably correlated in all cases” (Wisner et al. 2004, p. 9).

Nevertheless, the key point is that to better understand most disasters it is crucial to look at socio-economic factors. Several authors have argued that money is not sufficient. In a study of post-disaster recovery with case studies of villages in both India and Japan, Nakagawa and Shaw illustrate convincingly the importance of social capital. They argue that “mere financial

resources cannot solve the recovery issues; social capital plays a crucial role” (Nakagawa & Shaw 2004, p. 16).

Social capital and disasters

The potential importance of social capital has only recently been addressed in disaster studies. The incorporation “of social capital in disaster management has been rare” (Nakagawa & Shaw 2004, p. 5). Adger looked into social vulnerability in Coastal Vietnam (Adger 1999) in the context of climate change. This author makes the interesting disaggregation of social vulnerability into “the two distinct aspects of individual and collective vulnerability in order to clarify the scale issue and the unit of analysis” (Adger 1999, p. 252). Adger nevertheless acknowledges that the two aspects of vulnerability are “obviously interlinked” (Ibid.). This scalar approach is similar to this thesis’ analysis of both social capital and preparedness in the Philippines. Adger also has the merit of putting his study into historical and political context, as I endeavor to do for a rural Visayan setting.

In his 2012 book entitled *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*, Daniel Aldrich makes some interesting points that money is *not* the most significant factor for recovery (p. 9), and that instead “high levels of social capital – more than such commonly referenced factors as socioeconomic conditions, population density, amount of damage or aid – serve as the core engine of recovery” (p. 15). I have several reservations concerning Aldrich’s work, not least of which is his focus on post-disaster situations. Similarly, he seems quite uncritical of the socio-economic inequalities that underlie his case studies. In a tone reminiscent of Putnam’s work, Aldrich (2012) proposed not to address structural societal problems, but rather to increase social capital by giving “incentives for community participation” such as offering payment to encourage people to volunteer (p. 160), or to build community centers where people can “create deeper levels of trust” (p. 161). Similarly, in the summer of 2013, Michelle Meyer at Colorado State University submitted a PhD thesis in sociology entitled *Social Capital and Collective Efficacy for Disaster Resilience: Connecting Individuals with Communities and Vulnerability with Resilience in Hurricane-prone Communities in Florida*. Here again, I would underline the value of addressing the importance

of social capital, and I do appreciate Meyer's (2013) analysis of "collective efficacy" and the nuance she makes between disaster and non-disaster social capital (p. 226), as well as her call for future research demonstrating the importance of geography on social networks in disasters (p. 229). However, as in many of these studies linking social capital with disasters, I wish to underline what I perceive to be a certain political shallowness combined with scarce historical and political contextualization.

Disaster management is conceptually composed of several phases: preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. In a US focused study of potential pandemic outbreaks of influenza, Koh and Cadigan (2008) address the phase of disaster management that my research is interested in: preparedness. They highlight that "all preparedness is local" (Koh & Cadigan 2008, p. 277) and the importance of engagement at the local level. They also underline the importance of drills (p. 282) which are analyzed in this thesis' review of preparations in the rural Municipality of Saint Bernard. Koh and Cadigan call attention to the fact that this focus on the preparation facet of disaster management is still relatively recent and they call on future academic research to investigate this concept (2008, p. 283).

Preparedness

Social capital has been shown to be a good predictor of effective disaster response and recovery at both the individual and community level (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Aldrich 2012; Reininger et al., 2013). However, the majority of academics have been looking at what happens chronologically *after* a hazard strikes. Up to now this review of the disaster studies literature has mainly discussed vulnerability as a whole. There are many facets to vulnerability, several of which happen after a natural hazard has struck, such as disaster response, disaster management, and disaster recovery. But what happens chronologically *before* a hazard strikes? In other words: disaster preparedness. The UNISDR defines preparedness (Table I.1) as "the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions." In one of the rare articles to address the role of social capital in disaster

preparedness, by Reininger et al. (2013) who are looking at the situation in the United States, underlines the need for more of this kind of research: “Studies have yet to examine social capital’s association with disaster preparedness among marginalized populations who live in an area where the threat of natural disaster is common” (Reininger et al. 2013, p. 51).

Community preparedness in the Philippines

The Philippines has a long tradition of local organizations “committed to individual and community welfare that enhance people’s capacity to withstand the magnitude and frequency of misfortunes” (Bankoff 2007, p. 330). The historian Greg Bankoff studied the evolution of formal and informal local association in the archipelago starting from the late 16th century. He writes that many of these multi-purpose organizations have remained under the radar of social scientists until quite recently. Interestingly Bankoff (2007) argues that regions with the most hazards are also the most likely to have these types of organizations (Ibid.). He also gives an excellent translation of *bayanihan*, a Filipino concept of solidarity which we mentioned above: “toiling on another’s behalf, and assuming another’s burdens. The meaning behind the concept is definitely more complex than mere ‘unity’ or ‘togetherness’ and has the connotation of shared identity and common association” (Ibid., p. 332). Bankoff’s work begins making the links with Filipino concepts, such as *bayanihan* and *pakikisama*, and more Western ones such as social capital and community. This thesis continues to analyze how to build bridges between these two ways of conceptualizing the preparing for natural hazards.

Nuances to “community”

It is widely acknowledged that local people themselves are the ones who do most of the emergency response and rescue in disasters (Cannon 2008, p. 1); gone are the days when locals were considered helpless, “vulnerable and waiting passively for outside help” (Ibid., p. 2). One must be wary of over romanticized rose-colored images of communities because there is “a lot of evidence that people who live in what are assumed to be communities do not always behave favourably toward each other” (Ibid., p. 12). As soon as a researcher scratches below the surface, most communities have a “self-interested and self-reproducing power structure” and they are as “rife with interest, power, and divisions as any market, corporation,

or city government” (Brint 2001, p. 6). This was what was observed in the municipality of Saint Bernard, as well as on a more micro-level in the selected villages. This underlines the importance political-historical contextualization to studying how social capital impacts preparation to natural hazards in the rural Filipino Municipality of Saint Bernard.

METHODOLOGY

“One works ad hoc and ad interim, piecing together thousand-year histories with three-week massacres, international conflicts with municipal ecologies. The economics of rice or olives, the pool of ethnicity or religion, the workings of language or war, must, to some extent, be soldered into the final construction. So must geography, trade, art, and technology. The result, inevitably, is unsatisfactory, lumbering, shaky, and badly formed: a grand contraption. [...] [O]ne who wishes to complicate his contraptions, not close them in upon themselves, is a manic tinkerer adrift with his wits” (Geertz 1996, p. 20).

There are three main aspects to this thesis’ methodological approach: (1) an analysis at several scales (village / municipal / region / country); (2) an analysis that takes historical and political factors into consideration since the area of study has a tumultuous past with ramifications in the lives of today’s inhabitants; and finally, (3) the importance of fieldwork, of the type I have carried out, while living nearly two years in the municipality of Saint Bernard, gaining the trust and friendship of many of its citizens.

Ethical considerations

The Philippines is a peculiar setting for a Westerner to be in, particularly to conduct research. People of European origin have been tinkering with the archipelago since Magellan’s 1521 crucifix planting in the Eastern Visayas¹¹ and many Filipinos have a complex love-hate relationship with the West. A Swiss philosopher who studied the country argues that

“for too long, foreigners have come and imposed their ways of life and their value systems on the society. Institutions like the church and state as well as the widely spoken English are largely imported and have been appropriated and modified to different degrees. Understandably, any statement made by a foreigner may be given a great importance and/or may be interpreted as another intrusion into the Filipinos’ domestic affairs” (Kaelin 2012, p. xvii).

¹¹ Magellan’s expedition landed near to my research site, and celebrated the “first Christian mass” in the Philippines on the Island of Limasawa in what is today Southern Leyte. They also planted a cross on the highest point of that island.

Kaelin goes on to underline how difficult it is for anyone, let alone a foreigner, to make sense of what is really going on because of the many “overlapping influences from different and indigenous value system[s]¹² form an almost impenetrable palimpsest” (Ibid.). It must also be noted that Filipinos are particularly sensitive to opinions of foreigners. One can argue, as Mulder does in the preface of *Filipino Images*, that “Filipinos are oversensitive to foreign opinion” (Mulder 2000 quoted in Kaelin, 2012, p. 162). For my research, this meant that as a foreigner, I had to be mindful of not offending local pride, and always be wary of not saying anything that could be interpreted as too critical or boastful. This also meant showing due respect and consulting with local authorities on the municipal and village levels.

On a personal level, this research implied remaining cognizant of the power dynamics of being a Westerner and to keep in mind the feelings of locals. In many ways, this simply meant basic courtesy and respect for the people one is doing research about. On a more institutional level, the ethical nature of the data collection was assured by a rigorous review and procedure that finally gave my research an **ethical certificate** from the *Université de Montréal*’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences’ Ethic Review Committee. I address this issue in more detail below in the fieldwork methods section.

Pre-validation procedure

During my initial visits to the municipality in 2009 and 2010, I tried different questions to draw out measurements of trusts, networks, and levels of preparation. Some of the strategies worked and were kept for the 2012-2013 field season, others were not appropriate for the context and were discarded. From this initial data was then published a working paper for the ChATSEA project (Challenges of the Agrarian Transition in Southeast Asia). Writing this working paper, and the comments that came from the anonymous peer reviewers, gave me valuable feedback that I integrated into my third and final visit.

¹² I added the plural to *indigenous value systems* because I fear that Kaelin, as most foreigners, spent most of his time in the Tagalog speaking area, that is, Manila, which often results in an oversight of regional identities.

Measuring social capital

Social capital is still a highly debated concept and its study in the Philippine context is still rare. Abad wrote a groundbreaking contribution in the *Philippine Sociological Review* (2005). In this article, Abad operationalizes social capital by looking at measurements of both networks and trust in the Philippines. This thesis follows a similar approach, and the next section explains some of the methodological choices.

Measuring networks was done by asking people how many groups they were members of. During the interviews, we always took the time to draw out what types of groups these were (basketball clubs,¹³ women's cooperative, collective farming alliances, etc.). Religious affiliation was also noted, as well as frequency of church attendance. Because of this interest into how people were formally or informally associating with others, after a couple of weeks of research it was clear that one type of group that the majority of people participated in was a kind of collective funeral cooperatives, called *dadjung* in the Visayan language. I spent several days and nights¹⁴ participating in wakes and trying to understand how the system worked.

The conceptual framework reviewed bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The first type of relationship is with close friends and family, people who are part of one's tightly knit and highly trusted network. The latter two are with people outside of this seraglio. There exists a rich literature on the concept of trust, and similar to the difference for social capital between "strong ties" and "weak ties," a distinction is often made between "thick trust" and "thin trust." Certain authors argue that thick trust is a calculation of risk based on previous experience with a particular person, while thin trust is an estimate of the moral standards of the surrounding society (Delhey & Newton 2003). The thin – generalized – trust is argued to facilitate formal and informal transactions and reduce verification costs (Fukuyama 1996; Glaeser et al. 2000) and is highly sought after for its supposed positive economic effects.

¹³ Unlike in the North American situation described by Putnam in his seminal social capital book *Bowling Alone*, there never where any "bowling leagues" in Saint Bernard. Basketball, however, is ubiquitous; even some of the smaller farming villages which I studied had invested in basketball courts.

¹⁴ In the Philippines, wakes are elaborate events that range from three days to a week, with 24-hour gambling, special meals, and rituals. I will address these events in more detail in a forthcoming chapter.

Measuring trust during the initial field seasons was not immediately successful, and I had to experiment with several strategies to find the right way to measure it in my particular rural Filipino context. I initially used the same question I had seen in a lot of the literature on trust: a binary alternative between “most people can be trusted” and “you can’t be too careful in dealing with people” (Rosenberg 1956). This question, known as the Generalized Trust Question (GTQ), and its derivatives (for example, “most people would take advantage of you if they had a chance”), has been criticized over the years by various scholars (Glaeser et al., 2000; Ermisch et al., 2009), but nevertheless remains one of the most frequently deployed ways to measure generalized trust (Delhey & Newton, 2003). The GTQ did not work for me, perhaps because of the power dynamics of being a white male from North America. People I was interviewing often seemed eager to please, or tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. Throughout my interviews, I always emphasized that there was no “right answer” and that I was really just interested in their impressions and opinions. Consequently, while in the process of doing my fieldwork, and with the assistance of Filipino scholars, I attempted to craft my questions in a different way.

In my quest for alternative ways of measuring trust I came across what I now call the *pitaka*¹⁵ question in which I put people into a scenario: What do you think would happen if you lost your wallet with a lot of money in it? Would people return it? Would the money be in it? The possible answers were: *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*, followed by a discussion. Below I’ll explain my choice to not use a Likert scale. Often people were keen to make the nuance that they thought their wallet would be returned with their important ID cards, but that the money would be gone. I would first ask this question with the scenario of them losing their wallet in the area around their home, in what is called a *purok* in the Philippines, then at the scale of their village, and finally in the municipality at large. This sheds light on the trust levels that the interviewees felt at different geographical scales.

In 2010, a group of Japanese civil engineers attempted to measure social capital in one of Manila’s many urban slums (Matous & Ozawa 2010). While their theoretical framework is a

¹⁵ *Pitaka* means wallet in many Filipino languages. Different versions of this “lost wallet” question have been used by others to identify levels of trust. See Helliwell & Wang 2010.

bit light, as would be expected from down-to-earth engineers, their paper is extremely interesting in many regards, not least of which is its candor and pragmatism. Matous and Ozawa found out during their pilot tests that “some respondents felt it was appropriate to ‘agree’ with all agree-disagree questions” (2010 p. 139). This would help to explain the paradoxes observed by Abad (2005, pp. 43-44) in his analysis of social capital in the Philippines, notably when it comes to measuring trust. This weathered Filipino social scientist seems to have been surprised with some of the results he was extracting for a national survey. In my own preliminary fieldwork in 2009 and 2010, I also found that many interviewees felt it was polite to agree with everything that I said. Similarly, in my initial experimentation with the “wallet question,” I found that interviewees were all saying they would return a lost wallet, if they were the ones to find it. I had to frame the question in a manner that expressed what they thought “others” would do, and thus give me an indication of my respondent’s perception of their community.

Matous and Ozawa (2010) also underline the very low levels of literacy of people living in dire poverty, and the repercussion this had for research methods. This is interesting for my own interviews, because many of the farmers I interviewed also had limited formal schooling. The Japanese engineers seem surprised that “some respondents had never been exposed to formal surveys. A question format that is standard elsewhere was incomprehensible for some respondents. The respondents with less exposure to formal education generally concentrated for a shorter time” (Matous & Ozawa 2010, p. 138). I am not certain how much I agree with their impression of people’s concentration capacities, but I do concur with the importance of keeping the interview pleasant for the respondent. After the first couple of days of the Japanese research in the Manila slum, “news had spread among the community that there was nothing difficult about the survey, that it was not long, and that it was not too boring” (Ibid., p. 140). I think this is essential both out of respect for the respondent, mentioned in the ethical considerations above, and to ensure the quality of answers given. In view of this, I find that answering (or administering) Likert-scale questions to be dreadfully boring and I thus opted for a simpler, yes/no/maybe followed by a healthy human to human discussion.

Fieldwork methods

Semi-structured interviews are the core field work method of this research. Statistical data from municipal, regional and national agencies provide the foundations upon which couch the more delicate interview material. The quantitative information, socio-economic status, migration rates, and livelihood types, helped guide the more sensitive qualitative research about social cohesion: trust levels and group membership. The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately an hour, but discussions would extend for several hours, if the interviewees were receptive, and if they had both the time and interest.

The interviews would begin with an introduction that would present both my assistant and myself and explain what the research was about, where we were from, as well as the general structure and length of the interview. It was at this point that the contents of the oral consent form, mentioned above, was said to the potential interviewee. It was made explicit to the potential respondents that it was possible to withdraw at any point from interview. It was also made very clear that if there were ever any question they felt uncomfortable with, they could always pass to the next question, and that that would be completely acceptable for the research. After been told all of this, the interviewees were specifically asked for their consent to proceed with the interview. If they agreed, which was always the case, the semi-structured interview would begin. The questions and structure of these interviews are in Annex 1.

Beyond the semi-structured interviews, I attempted to follow Kerkvliet's description of his methodology for his superb study on power dynamics in an agricultural village in Central Luzon: "During all my stays in San Ricardo, I emphasized conversations, observation and (whenever appropriate and possible) participation in village activities, and documentation. The common objective was to learn about the social, economic, and political history of the area" (1991, p. 277). Kerkvliet categorizes his conversations into three main types. The first being "chance encounters with people" which he describes as happening "while walking through the village, waiting for a bus, observing a gathering, buying something at a village store" (Ibid.).

The second type of conversations described by Kerkvliet was those that he planned in order to learn more about particular individuals and their families. He initially wanted to speak to all household heads but realized that with some 230 houses, the task was impossible, even with the extended fieldwork he was engaged in. After a few months in his village he realized that

“some people highly important to political life in San Ricardo do not reside there. They are prominent because they are the owners of land farmed by tenants or wage laborers living in San Ricardo, the employers of a significant number of nonagricultural laborers from the village, or both” (Kerkvliet 1991, p. 278).

In my own work, something similar happened in the sense that I also conducted extensive interviews with landowners in the municipality’s main town, the *Poblacion*, who were influential in some of the villages I was studying, even if they themselves did not live there. I also conducted interviews in Cebu City with several people originally from Saint Bernard but who had migrated to the Cebuano speaking metropolis. Notably I was fortunate to be able to interview great-grand-father in his late nineties, who was a World War II veteran and former vice-mayor, and who had been instrumental in the foundation of the municipality in 1954. His children and grand-children still held key positions in the area when I was there from 2009 to 2012.

The third type of discussion that Kerkvliet describes was those with people from whom he “sought out specific information. Frequently this was to learn more about particular events, problems, and episodes in the village that were germane to that person’s life or about which the person was said to be knowledgeable” (Kerkvliet 1991, p. 279). In the case of my own field research these included particular provincial or municipal officers who were in charge of issues related to my research. For example, this included several interviews with the municipal disaster risk management officer, or the provincial staff in charge of coping with diseases that afflict coconut trees.

Translator/Research Assistant

First and foremost, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having good local assistants to help with both the cultural and linguistic aspects of the interviewing. Without these helpers, it would have been futile to attempt to dig below the most superficial aspect of life in my rural

villages. I had the great fortune of finding kind and competent people, with whom I often developed high levels of trust, and who became friends with whom I'm still in contact with today.¹⁶ Their help went way beyond the simple translation of colloquial expressions which I did not understand in the local languages. They guided me through a lot of the subtext of what was going on in the interviews.

On one hand, their knowledge of local histories elucidated many situations for me. For example, who was in a feud with which family, about what disputed transaction over a carabao; or which of our interviewees had once gone into a drunken rage and hacked his neighbor to death on the village's public square; or whose sibling was once murdered by government soldiers for suspected collaboration with the Maoist rebellion. On the other hand, being accompanied by a local would always improve the amount of trust villagers would give me. At the beginning of many of our interviews, before I had introduced myself and my research, as well as gotten the interviewee's oral consent to participate in the research, the villagers and my translator would spend some time figuring out who they knew from each other's families, and how they might be somehow related to each other. Also, potential interviewees often wanted to know about my pedigree, if I was a "kind person," if I was my translator's husband, and, very apropos, if my translator thought I could be trusted.

Participant Observation

Throughout my field work I tried to participate as fully as possible in all community activities, whenever it was appropriate. Whether this meant replanting rice in the paddies with a group of cooperative workers in the midday heat, or helping to cook a 3AM meal during a funeral wake, or being a godparent, *compare*, to a friend's child. My objective was to be as integrated as possible into the villages that I was researching. To study social capital and trust, one needs to be trusted. I found out a lot of things from my formal interviews with key stakeholders and general villagers, but many – essential – bits of information about the town's history and current political intrigues were gleaned from simply spending time with people.

¹⁶ Thanks in large part to social media sites like Facebook and texting on cellphones.

Importance of Long Term Research

Many foreign researchers fly into the Philippines for lightning field seasons of a couple of weeks or a couple of months, sometimes only a couple of days, then fly back out. I realize that my two years of field research may seem measly to certain anthropologists who have spent decades on their field sites but I nevertheless feel strongly that fieldwork is a form of commitment to the people being studied, and I agree with Stevens when he says that longer term research contributes more interviews and observations but also

“a greater depth and breadth that better encompass complexity, history, and regional variation.[...] Long-term fieldwork makes possible research on multiple topics and sensitive issues, comparative study in a number of communities in order to assess regional variation, wide use of one-on-one and repeat interviews, extended work with particularly knowledgeable individuals, and the ability to gather and cross-check oral history testimony from enough elders and places to develop detailed local and regional insights into economic, environmental, and landscape history” (Stevens 2001, p. 68).

This is all the more crucial when investigating issues such as disaster situations and trust in a place that has been scarred by a long colonial legacy and a recent civil war.

Data Analysis Strategies

The core strategy of this research’s data analysis is the qualitative analysis of the more than 200 interviews that I conducted during nearly two years of fieldwork. The semi-structured interviews have provided me with both quantitative and qualitative data, but this thesis remains clearly based on a qualitative approach. In each village, between 33 and 42 individuals have been selected to represent its diversity. See the section below for an explanation of how I selected villagers for interview. A total of 142 villagers were interviewed across several parts of the municipality (see Annex 2 for a more detailed description of these distributions), and to these were added interviews with a number of stakeholders at the village, municipal and provincial levels.

During my interviews with the 142 villagers, I graded several of the responses given by my interviewees. In Chapter VI, this descriptive quantitative data is analyzed to compare two villages. These findings have serious limitations, but it was important to experiment with the

use of this quantitative data, if only for heuristic purposes. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data was used to attempt to make comparisons between the villages.

During the actual interviews all the data was noted by hand in small A5 notebooks. In 2010, I briefly experimented with adding a digital recording device to the interviews, but it became rapidly obvious that the interviewees, especially the people in the villages, were uncomfortable with the presence of this technology, even if they politely agreed to the recordings. It later also became apparent that the transcription process was extremely time-consuming. In view of these setbacks, I decided to focus on a simpler and humbler strategy, where the interviewees would feel most at ease, even if for me it sometimes meant furious note taking and inventing an armada of abbreviations. Upon returning to Montreal in June 2013, I began transcribing the data from the notebooks into two digital formats: 1) an Excel table for the quantifiable data, and 2) a Word document for the qualitative data. Both of these documents were classified according to the themes that I wanted to address in the thesis. The processing of this data into digital form took several months.

To conclude about my data analysis strategy, a fundamentally qualitative approach was most appropriate for this thesis, precisely because it aims to provide a historical and political contextualization of its findings concerning both social capital and preparation to natural hazards.

SELECTION OF SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Why the Eastern Visayas?

This thesis focuses on the Eastern Visayas, also known as administrative Region VIII. This part of the archipelago is mainly known for its bellicose past and its poverty stricken present. Region VIII has always been on the sidelines of the Philippine economy (Langes 2010), unlike the Central Visayas, centered on the City of Cebu, that has experienced a substantial industrial boom, the “Ceboom,” over the last 20 years, or the Western Visayas that had a glorious past in the heyday of sugar cane exports. Both Western and Central Visayas are more economically dynamic than the Eastern Visayas Region in part because they are relatively sheltered from

typhoons. Region VIII has a current population of approximately four million, almost half of whom live in poverty, according to the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB).¹⁷ It is composed of six provinces spread over three islands: Samar, Biliran, and Leyte, all of which regularly get hit by typhoons.

Leyte Island is mainly known because of the bloody naval battle that took place off its coast during World War II, starting in October 1944, when US troops wrestled the island from the Japanese. The island's principal city, Tacloban, is the official center of the Eastern Visayas, and most national agencies have their regional offices there. In November 2013, both Leyte and Tacloban were devastated by Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest storm ever recorded (Harris 2013). In 1960, the island was divided into two provinces: the Province of Leyte on the North of the island, where two languages are spoken, Cebuano and Waray-Waray; and the Province of Southern Leyte, where Cebuano is the dominant language. Cebuano, also known as "Bisya" or "Visayan," is the most common language across the Visayas Islands (De Koninck 2012, p. 113).

The Province of Southern Leyte is a province with just under 400,000 inhabitants and an annual population growth rate of 1.13 percent (NSCB 2008). The province spans approximately 1,790 square kilometers. Maasin is the provincial capital as well as its largest town with a population of just under 80,000. The major agricultural crops are coconut, rice, banana, cassava and abaca. The province's principal exports are abaca handicraft and copra (partially dried coconut). In 2007, almost two thirds of national roads in Southern Leyte were concrete, 31.9 percent were gravel, but less than four percent were asphalted (Ibid.).

Why Southern Leyte?

Following an exploratory field visit in 2009, I selected the Eastern Visayas Region as my study region. There were several reasons for this. First and foremost, this part of the archipelago is very highly exposed to natural hazards. Also, the Eastern Visayas still contains many regions

¹⁷ The poverty rate for Region VIII oscillates between 48.5 percent and 41.4 percent depending on how it is measured by the NSCB for the 2006-2010 period. This statistical camouflage of poverty will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter's section on Poverty in the Eastern Visayas.

where non-commercial cooperative associations and local indigenous environmental knowledge still flourish. In many regards, Southern Leyte is a remote place, far away from the capital and until recently thoroughly neglected by the national government.

Several NGOs were implementing DRR projects in Southern Leyte because of its high hazard exposure, and recent disasters. The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) as well as Accord and other local organizations were present in the area and were welcoming to my research. Finally, Southern Leyte is not a province where much academic research has been done, whether by Western or Filipino academics, for various reasons, not least of which is the area's remoteness from Manila and, appropriately for my own research, high exposure to natural hazards.

Municipality of Saint Bernard is a four to five-hour bumpy bus ride south from Tacloban. It currently has a population of over 25,000 spread out over 30 villages; 28 rural and two "urban" villages. Only about ten percent of the municipality's citizens live in town. The population has more than doubled since 1960 – a relatively slow rate of growth by Filipino standards – when it was first recognized as a municipality.

The municipality covers a land area of almost exactly 100 square kilometers, a good portion of which is occupied by a spectacular mountain range that seems to come straight out of the Pacific Ocean and straddles the Philippine Fault Line (PFL). The region is highly seismically unstable and earthquakes occur frequently. This seismic activity, combined with steep-sloped mountainsides and heavy typhoon rains, makes landslides common. These have regularly cut off the municipality from the rest of the country.

Why Saint Bernard?

In February 2006, the Municipality of Saint Bernard (MSB) was the site of a massive landslide that smothered an entire village. Over one thousand people were killed. Before the landslide, few people outside the area had ever heard of Saint Bernard, but within days of the tragedy, newscasters and humanitarian organizations from across the country and around the world had

swarmed to the municipality. Dramatic images of the disaster were being broadcast on the BBC (Buckley 2006) and other media. Because of the spectacular visual magnitude of the landslide, Saint Bernard received a lot of national and international attention, bringing new resources and fresh ideas to what had been a sleepy agricultural town. The disaster's aftermath led to profound and accelerated political, economic, and geographical changes in the municipality. Nevertheless, despite these substantial social changes, Saint Bernard remains overwhelmingly rural and its citizens continue to be highly exposed to a wide range of natural hazards. Last but not least, the town's elected officials at the time of my research were open to ideas of disaster preparations, as well as to my research.

Selection of the two villages within Saint Bernard

In order to attempt to better understand the link between social capital and preparation to natural hazards, two specific villages were selected within the municipality. Following my exploratory research in 2009, I had identified certain barangays as potential research sites because of their exposure to natural hazards as well as the diversified social make-up of their residents: high and low concentration of OFWs, wealthier or poorer villages, geographic positioning within the municipality, presence or absence of political affiliation with the municipality's mayor, and enthusiasm – or lack thereof – to participate in DRR projects. When I came back to the area in 2012, I consulted the authorities again at both the municipal and village levels to see “where I might be welcome.”

Differences between the villages

The two barangays were also selected because of their differences: one had a relatively high proportion of OFWs. During my first visit to the region it was immediately clear from the type of houses that one of the towns had many OFWs and thus some relatively wealthy families. The barangay captain in this “richer” village confirmed that many citizens from his area had a foreign spouse and that many households had at least one of their children working overseas. Most residents in both villages remain in relatively humble living conditions, making the barangays with OFWs more unequal from a socioeconomic standpoint.

Another difference between the villages lies in their receptivity to collective projects aiming to reduce disaster risks. Certain villages seemed to be reluctant to implement collective risk reduction measures, while others with generally poorer infrastructure seemed to have a greater willingness to work collectively to reduce disaster risk.

How did I select participants?

Several factors determined participant selection. First and foremost, they were selected for their availability and willingness to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The second criterion was getting a broad cross section of village members. The objective was to get the voices of community leaders as well as marginalized individuals: men and women, elders and youths, rich and poor, people living in the periphery of the village and people living in the center of the village. Third, getting the broadest possible spectrum of diversity of adults in the village explains the choice of not limiting the interviews to the sacrosanct “heads of households.” These family leaders were sometimes interviewed, but a strong effort was made to listen to more marginal voices. In certain circumstances the head of household was interviewed, but later another member of the same household was also interviewed, to see if these people had different perceptions on social capital and preparation to natural hazards. Finally, there were many interviews with staff from organizations such as NGOs, as well as local and national governments.

Summary

This introductory chapter has reviewed the literature from the two main bodies of knowledge of interest for this thesis. On one hand, the short history and contemporary complexity of social capital was explicated. On the other hand, the growing social science field of disaster studies was given a review. The chapter then explained the thesis’ methodology and fieldwork methods. The data analysis strategies and reasons for the geographic location of the study were developed. Finally, the selection process for participants was described.

CHAPTER II: Asia and the Philippines

Introduction

In the previous chapter the subject was introduced, the research question and methodology were established, and the thesis' conceptual framework reviewed. In this second chapter the socio-historical context is laid out for Asia and the Philippines.

The objective is to provide the historical and geographic background for the contemporary social tensions and lack of cohesion within the archipelago. Setting the historical background is vital for understanding contemporary dynamics: "History is the present, and the present is history" (Heer 1961, p. 1.). This should be particularly remembered in the analysis of crises: "When we look more closely into the crises and catastrophes, the hopes and fears of our own day, whether we know it or not we are concerned with developments whose origins can be traced back directly or indirectly to their source in the [past]" (Ibid.).¹⁸ The historical and geographical background are discussed to illustrate the fractured nature of social capital on the national level in the Philippines, and how that relates to the country's vulnerability to natural hazards.

This chapter begins by looking at natural hazards across the Asia Pacific Region, with a focus on Southeast Asia. Second, the chapter gives a socio-historical contextualization of the Philippine Islands. And third, it reviews the Filipino state and the contemporary approach to managing catastrophes.

1. ASIA PACIFIC

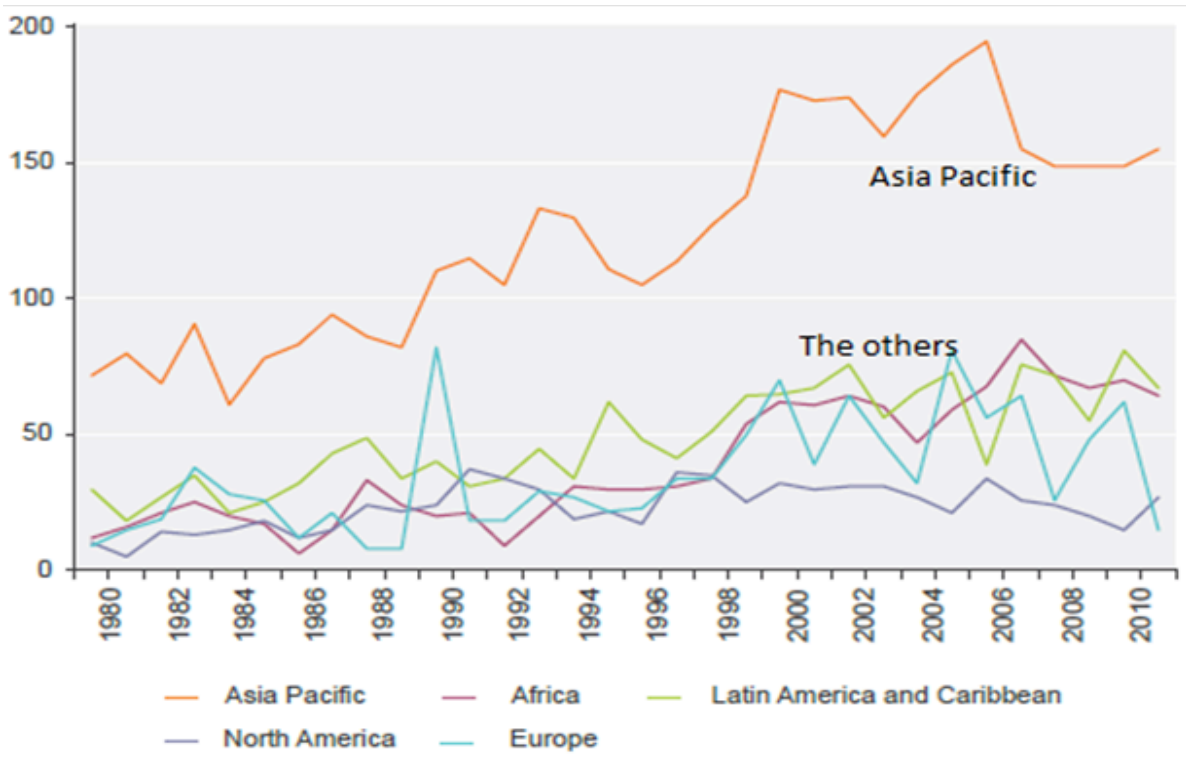
The United Nations Economic and Social Committee for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) argues that since the 1990s there was a surge in what it calls "natural disasters"¹⁹ and that the Asia Pacific region has been bearing the sharpest increase of this trend (Figure II.1). "In the past decade, a person living in Asia and the Pacific was almost twice as likely to be affected by a natural disaster as a person living in Africa; almost six times more likely than someone in

¹⁸ The text refers to the "*high Middle-Ages*" not "*the past*," but this modified quote is nevertheless pertinent to underline the importance of historical contextualization of contemporary crises.

¹⁹ The previous chapter discussed the nuances implied in the term "natural" disaster.

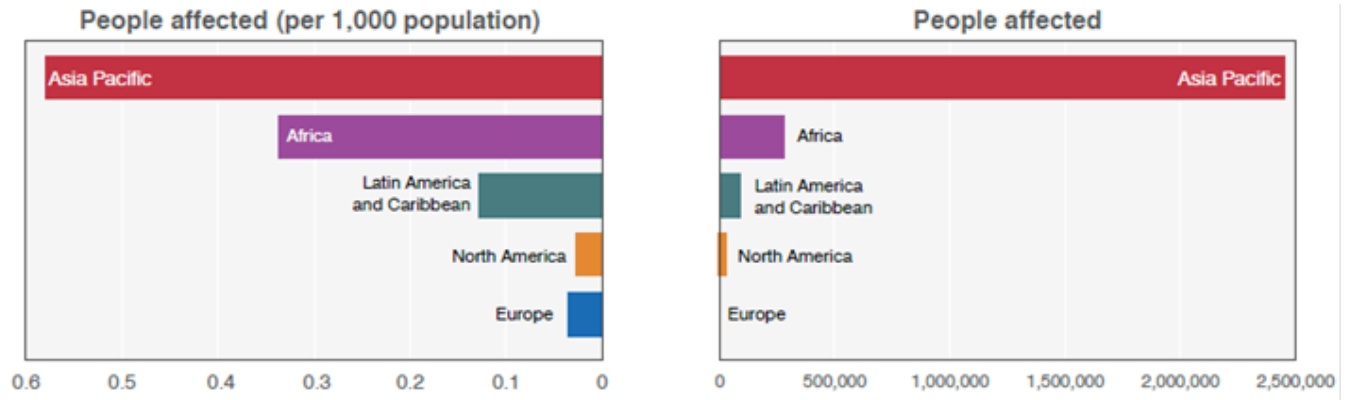
Latin America and Caribbean, and almost 30 times more likely than a person living in North America or Europe” (UN-ESCAP 2013, p. 14). These natural hazards do affect a large number of people (Figure II.2).

Figure II.1. Reported disasters caused by natural hazards from 1980 to 2011.



(Source: UN-ESCAP 2013, p. 15)

Figure II.2. Risk of being affected by natural disaster between 2000 and 2012



(Source: UN-ESCAP 2013, p. 15)

As discussed earlier, it is important to look not only at the number of incidences, or the number of deaths, but to take into account the total number of people affected by a disaster. These victims give a starker image of the real extent of catastrophes. It is not only in absolute numbers that Asia is most affected by disasters; this can almost be expected since this huge geographical realm includes demographic titans like India and China. But overall, people in the Asia and Pacific region live with much higher risks of disasters caused by natural hazards than in other parts of the world (Figure II.2). According to the latest figures, in 2014 over 79 million people in the Asia-Pacific were said to have been affected by natural disasters; the region reaps more than half of the world's natural disasters for that year (UN-ESCAP 2015, p. 3).²⁰

1.1. SOUTHEAST ASIA

“Words like ‘Southeast Asia’ and ‘unicorn’ enable us to discuss topics about which we would not otherwise be able to hold a conversation, but we should be wary of attributing any more solidity to these concepts than the fact will allow” (Waddell 1972, p. 3).

Hazards in Southeast Asia

Within the Asia Pacific, which already has the world's lion share of disasters, the area referred to as Southeast Asia is particularly hit by natural hazards. The region is undoubtedly one of the world's most struck by catastrophes. Almost every country in the area is faced with many natural hazards, often with relatively severe intensity (Table II.1). Amongst Southeast Asian countries the Philippines is unmistakably the one with the most types of natural hazards with severe intensities (Table II.1 & Map II.1).

Table II.1. List of hazards affecting Southeast Asian countries (Source: Bildan 2003)

| Country | Typhoon | Flood | Drought | Landslide | Tsunami | Earthquake | Volcano | Fire |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|-----------|---------|------------|---------|------|
| Cambodia | L | S | L | | | | | L |
| Indonesia | L | M | M | L | L | S | M | M |
| Lao PDR | L | S | M | | | | | M |
| Malaysia | M | S* | S | L | M | | | L |
| Myanmar | M | M | M | M | | S | | S |
| Philippines | S | S | L | S | S | S | M | S |
| Thailand | L | S* | S | L | | L | | L |
| Vietnam | M | M | L | S | S | L | | L |

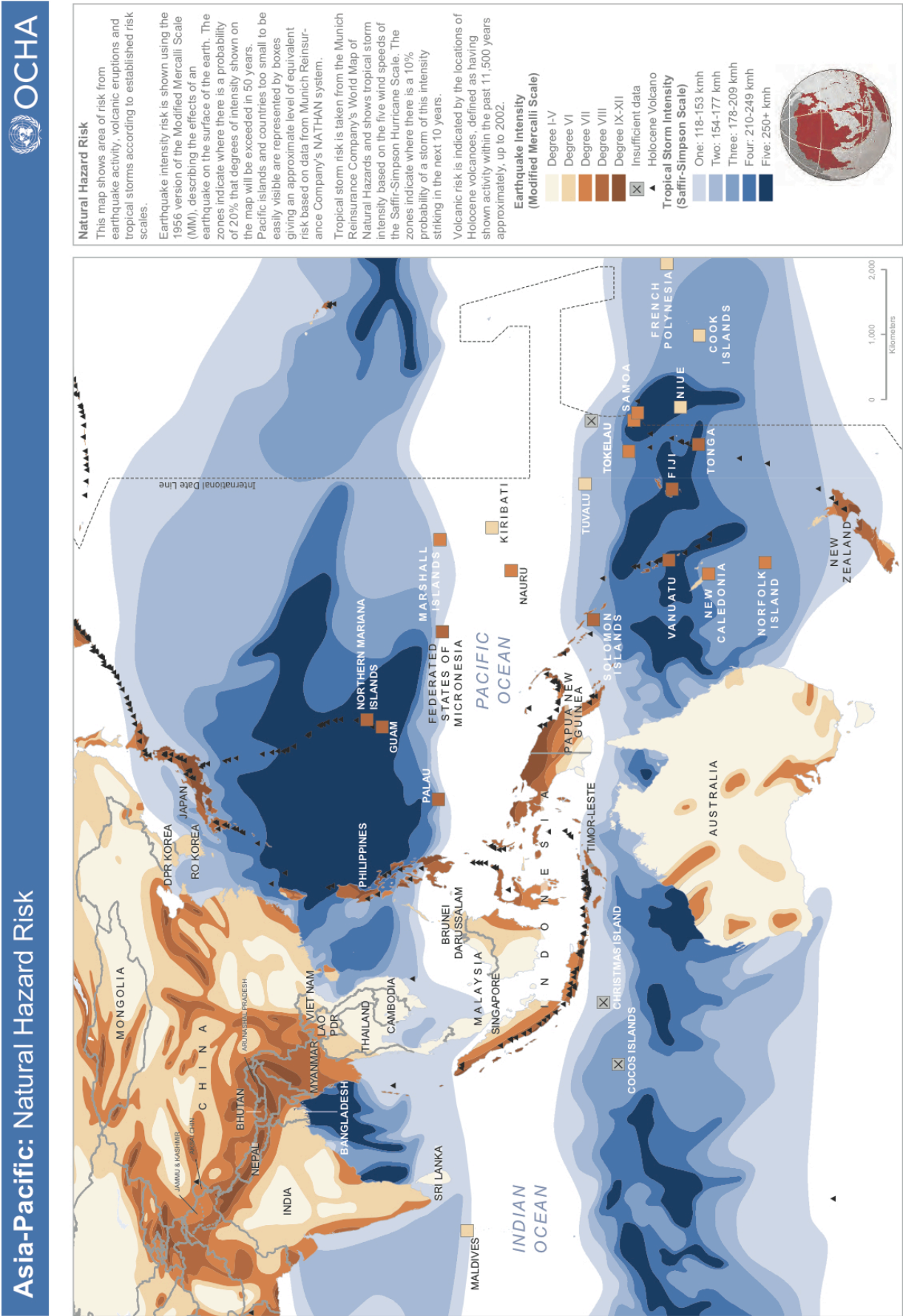
Source: Whitehouse and Burton, 1999, ADB 1991, country reports

Legend: S- severe; M- moderate; L- low

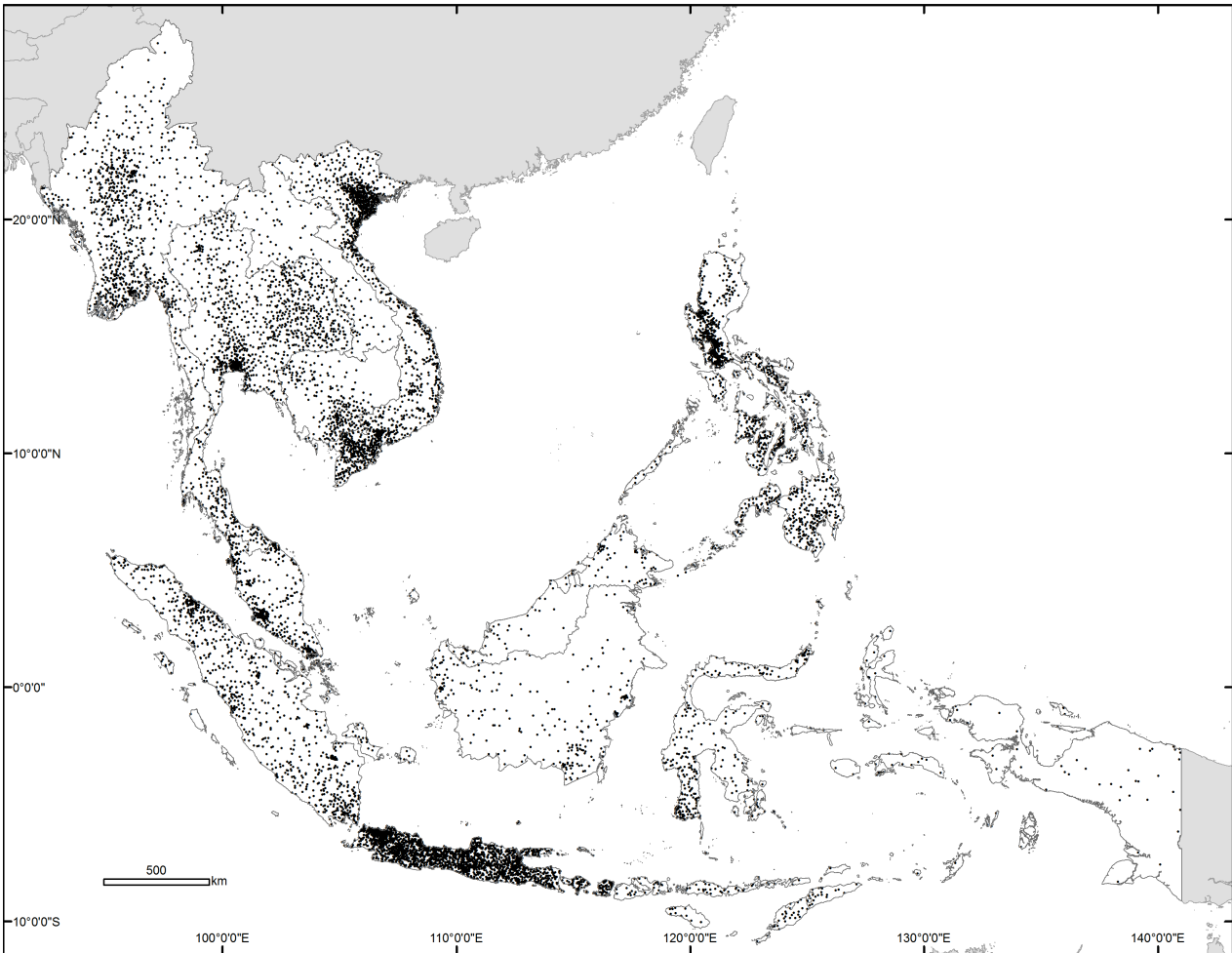
Note: *coastal flooding

²⁰ 52.7 percent according to UN-ESCAP.

Map II.1. Hazard map courtesy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



Map II.2. Population density in Southeast Asia (circa 2005); each dot represents 50 000 people



(Source: R. De Koninck and T. H. Pham, 2015)

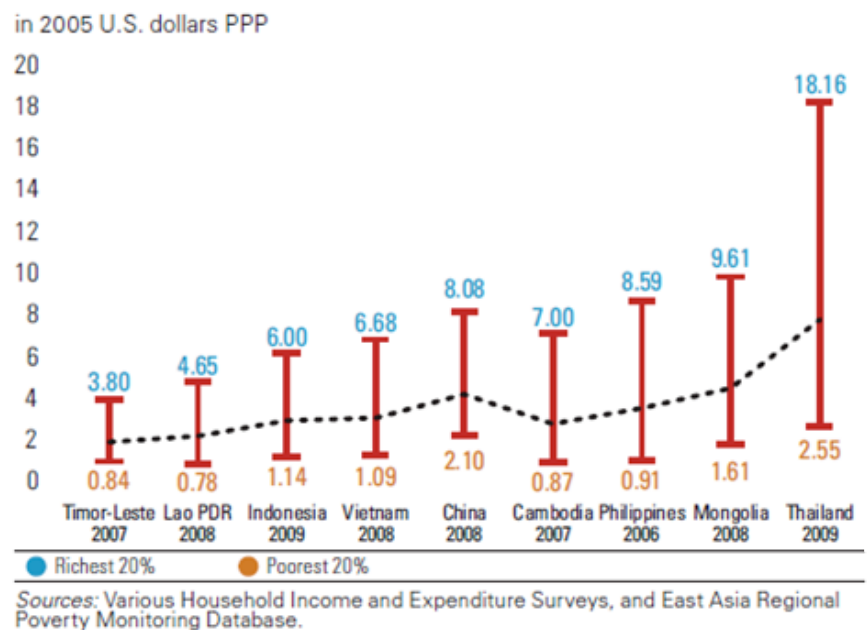
What matters is not only the frequency of the hazards themselves, but how human societies are exposed to these violent events. Not only are the Philippine islands highly exposed to various types of natural hazards, they are also densely populated, with a high number of people exposed to these violent events (Map II.2). High population density further exacerbates the pressure on an environment regularly exposed to natural hazards.

Southeast Asian Inequalities

Socioeconomic inequality has a dramatic impact on social cohesion (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009). When compared to other parts of the globe, Southeast Asia is more equalitarian than

Africa and Latin America, thanks to its looser social stratifications. Nevertheless, policymakers are concerned that growing inequality in the region will “polarize society, lead to social tensions, and eventually undermine the growth process itself” (Sharma et al. 2011, p.1). One way the World Bank measures these economic inequalities is by looking at the spending of the richest 20 percent of the population in a country and comparing it to the spending of the poorest 20 percent (Figure II.3). In Thailand, the richest quintile outspends the poorest by about seven times, in Cambodia by about eight times, and in the Philippines a whopping nine times more (Ibid.). The World Bank underlines that assets, what people actually possess as opposed to what they spend, are likely to be significantly *more* unequal. “Such large disparities, especially when perceived to be generated in ways lacking legitimacy, have the potential to weaken social cohesion and fuel social strife” (Ibid.).

Figure II.3. Spending of the richest 20 percent compared to the poorest 20 percent



(Source: Sharma et al. 2011)

Figure II.3 may initially give the misleading visual impression that the spending inequality is greatest in Thailand, but because the Thai bottom quintile spends more than the Filipino bottom quintile; the actual spending inequality is in fact higher in the Philippines. This also speaks volumes about the depth of poverty in the *Pearl of the Orient Sea*.²¹

²¹ From Rizal’s poem, *Mi último adiós*, written on the eve of his execution in 1896: “*Adios, Patria adorada, region del sol*

2. PHILIPPINES

The Philippine islands are highly exposed to all types of natural hazards: meteorological,²² geological,²³ and others.²⁴ It is often said that the former Spanish colony is one of the countries most exposed to natural hazards (Table II.1),²⁵ being both on the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” a hotbed for seismic activity, as well as in a typhoon bowling alley, with an average 20 typhoons per year (Bankoff 2003b, p. 33).²⁶ In one of his remarkable books entitled “Cultures of disaster: Society and Natural Hazards in the Philippines,” the historian Greg Bankoff does a superb job of reviewing the Philippines’s monumental experience with natural hazards. The Philippines’s contemporary high exposure to natural hazards is vividly illustrated by the United Nations (Map II.3). The Philippines’s high exposure to violent environmental events is compounded by dramatic levels of human vulnerabilities. On the social side of the equation, the country is plagued with rampant corruption (Rauhala 2015) and high poverty rates. The archipelago is also characterized by stark social inequalities (De Koninck 2012, p. 118). The strikingly disjointed geographic configuration underlies all of these social vulnerabilities.

2.1. Islands spread in the Seas

The land surface of the Philippines is just under 300,000 km² which in absolute terms is comparable to the size of Italy or the State of Arizona in the US. This comparison is misleading because the archipelago is in fact extremely parceled and spread-out. The Philippines has a gigantic coastline of over 26,000 km (Ibid., p. 108), which results in almost six times more sea area than land area – a ratio twice as high as that of neighboring Indonesia (Ibid.). In fact, it is one of the highest in the world and explains, in part, the country’s vulnerability to meteorological hazards (Map II.3). In 2011, only about 20 percent of 30,000 km of roads crisscrossing the archipelago were usable year round (De Koninck 2012, p. 123). Maritime transportation is less inadequate; nevertheless, the merchant marine and harbour installations are dilapidated. There are over 2,000 ferry-boats connecting the islands but more than half were built before the 1970s (Ibid.).

querida, Perla del Mar de Oriente, nuestro perdido Eden!”

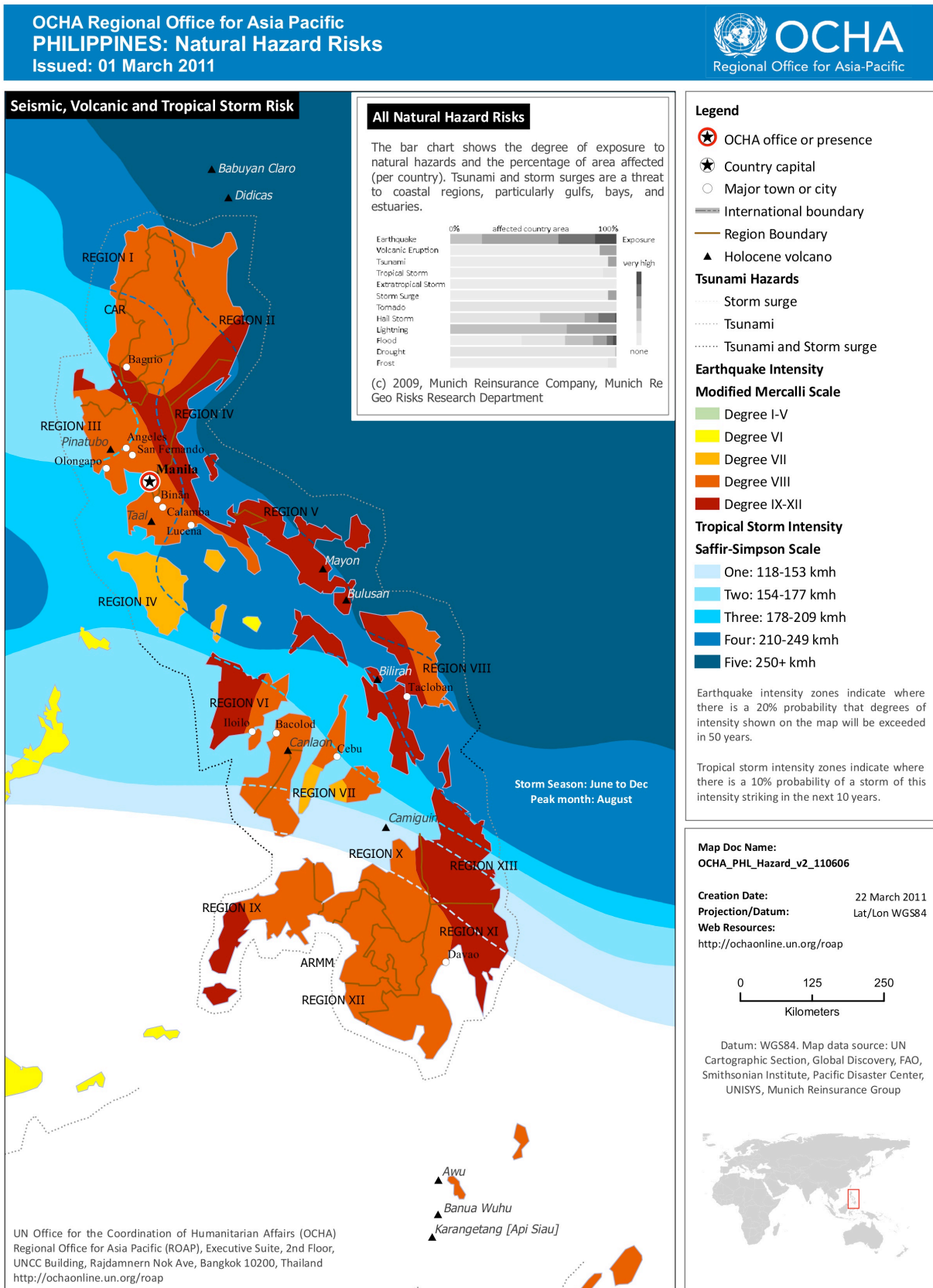
²² Droughts, typhoons, and floods.

²³ Earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions.

²⁴ “Others” can mean a combination of geological and meteorological such as: Landslides, liquefactions, etc.

²⁵ In fact, it seems that the only major types of natural hazard that do not afflict the Philippines are ice storms and avalanches.

²⁶ N.B. not all 20 typhoons make landfall every year, but many do.



Map II.4. Comparing the scattered archipelagic Philippines with the Eastern US



(Source: CIA n.d.)

The parceled – not to say scattered – nature of the Filipino archipelago (Map II.4) helps explain the challenges the country has faced in its attempts to create national unity. The sprawled geography also has repercussions on both of this thesis’s themes: social capital and preparation for natural hazards. The immense culture-linguistic diversity (De Koninck 2012, p. 114),²⁷ combined with the country’s particular colonial history have long made it difficult for citizens from

across the archipelago to identify to each other (Anderson 2004, p. 201). The romantic nationalist narrative running through the work of certain Filipino intellectuals seems to be looking, sometimes frantically, for signs of collective national cultural history.

Population distribution, growth, and concentration

The oft cited – and astounding – figure of 7’107 islands helps explain the country’s impressive maritime index. This figure needs to be taken with a grain of (sea) salt, as less than 150 of the Filipino islands are permanently inhabited, and most of population is concentrated on the larger islands. Indeed, 98 percent of the population is located on the 11 largest islands (De Koninck 2012, p. 110).

In 1591, the population of the Visayas and Luzon is estimated to have been of approximately 668,000 inhabitants (Doepper & Xenos 1998, p. 3 as cited in Zialcita 2005, p. 62). Three centuries later, in 1903, and with the addition of the Southern islands, American colonial authorities estimated the archipelago to have 7.6 million souls. The figure had swollen to 88.6

²⁷ Over 80 languages and dialects.

million by 2007 (De Koninck 2012, p. 113), to now over 107 million inhabitants in 2014 (CIA 2015).²⁸ In pre-colonial times, the population in the Islands “had densities of ten to twenty times lower than that of neighboring islands” (Kaelin 2012, p. 87). When European arrived in the 16th century, the Visayas and Luzon had densities of a “low 4.0 versus a high 30.3 for Java, 79.7 for Bali, and 59.5 for Japan of the same period” (Junker 2000, as cited in Zialcita 2005, p. 62). Kaelin (2012, p. 89) argues that during the pre-colonial setting, the abundance of land but dearth of people to work it, made the control of labor important. This phenomenon influenced the dynamics of social cohesion and it impacts preparation to natural hazards. However, because of the soaring population growth over the last century,²⁹ the country now has a density of 333 inhabitants per km² in 2010 (CIA 2015), which is the highest in Southeast Asia. The density creates high demands on an already fragile environment (De Koninck 2012, p. 117) and radically strains social dynamics. This is especially the case because such a large portion of Filipinos are poor and have to rely on agriculture to survive. The contemporary Philippines has a large population, with a high density in most of the inhabited islands with notable exceptions such as Palawan (Map II.5). This density is visible from Luzon in the North, to the Visayas in the center of the country, to the vast but contested southern Island of Mindanao.

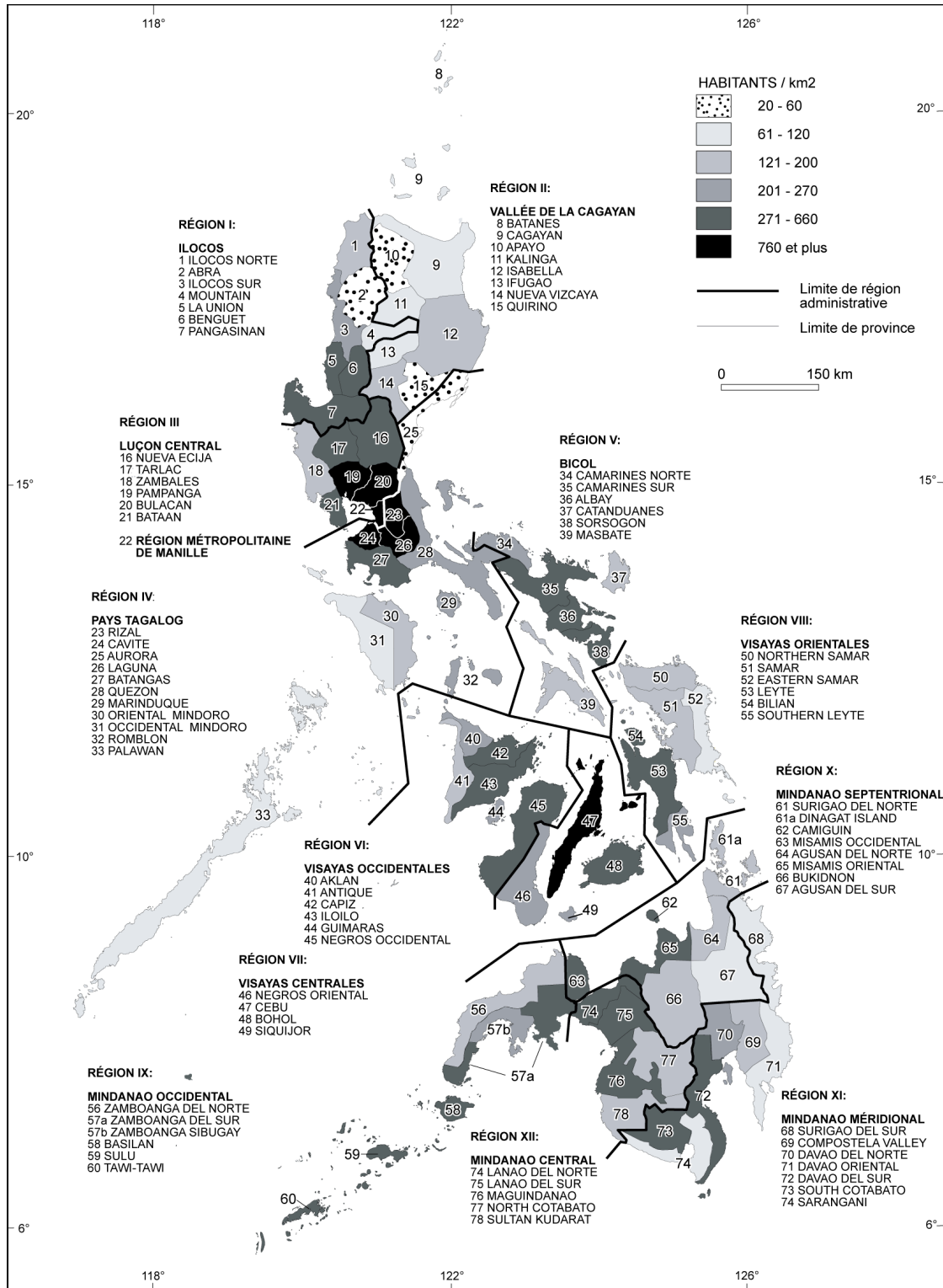
Land and agriculture in the Philippines

According to the 2007 census, half of Filipinos still live in villages, even if like everywhere else in the developing world, urbanization has been increasing. The total land area of the country is of approximately 30 million hectares, of which 45 percent are said to be “upland/forest,” and 47 percent are alienable/disposable lands which are open for titling (Angoc 2009, p. 132). The country has approximately 10 million hectares of agricultural land (Ibid.). Agriculture in the Philippines remains an important part of the economy even if it has shrunk from about 30 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in the 1960s to 20 percent in 2004. Over the same period, the industrial sector remained at approximately 30 percent, while the services sector grew significantly from 30 percent to approximately 50 percent of the GDP.

²⁸ CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html> (accessed 2 February 2015)

²⁹ What Benedict Anderson cheekily refers to as the “characteristically tropical Catholic birthrate” (2004, p. 209).

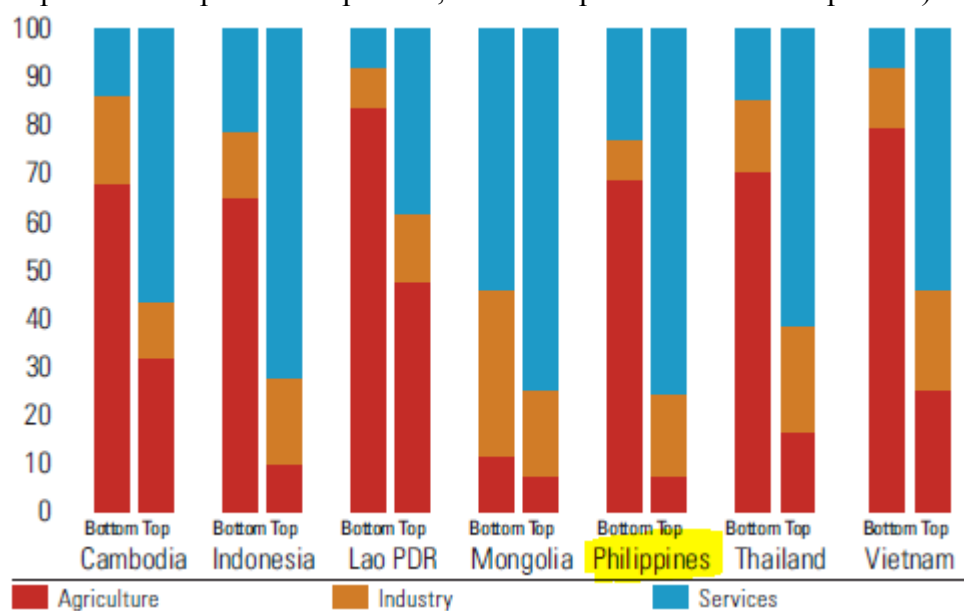
Map II.5. Population density by province (2007)



(Source: M. Girard, in De Koninck 2012, p. 113)

Agriculture remains a key sector since it employs two-fifths of the total population (Borras 2007, p. 12). If one considers “a broader definition that encompasses agricultural [...] related activities” the figure comes up to nearly 70 percent (Balisacan & Hill 2003, quoted in Borras 2007, p. 12). Poorer people in the Philippines are particularly dependent on agriculture (Figure II.4). The bottom poorest 20 percent of Filipino society is overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture as their main occupation while the wealthiest quintile is most likely to be in the services.

Figure II.4. Percentage of households depending on agriculture as main occupation “Bottom” represents the poorest 20 percent, while “Top” is the richest 20 percent).



(Source: Sharma et al. 2011, p. 4)

Low productivity and low quality

The average yield per hectare of rice in Philippine is one of the lowest in East and Southeast Asia, and fails to produce enough quantity for national consumption (Borras 2007, p. 94). “Since 1991, the country has been transformed from a net agricultural exporting country to a net agricultural importing country, in contrast to the performance of its Southeast Asian neighbors” (Ibid., p. 92). The annual growth rate of the Filipino agricultural sector has been of a measly 1.4 percent from 1980 to 2000. Borras says that these anemic performances are linked to insufficient investments from the state into rural infrastructure, such as roads and

irrigation (Ibid., p. 96). The country's agrarian structure helps illustrate the Filipino state's activity, or lack thereof, in promoting agriculture.

The agrarian structure in the Philippines is notorious for its inequity. Land monopolies continue to wreak massive poverty in the rural Philippines (Borras 2007, p. 13): nearly 75 percent of the poor in the Philippines live in the countryside (Schelzig 2005, p. 64). The year that the Marcos dictatorship was swept out of power, 1986, and before the start of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), the government said "that around 20 percent of Filipino families controlled 80 percent of the lands" (Angoc 2009, p. 133). This imbalance has not changed much over the last 30 years. The inequality of the agrarian structure in the Philippines has a long – enduring – history.

Throughout recent history these glaring imbalances in the agrarian structure have led to peasant revolts, most of the time focusing on land rights or tenancy problems. The recurrent and sometimes violent mobilizations of peasants have not succeeded in obtaining much change, as these unrests have only managed "intermittent concessions from the country's land-owning classes and the central government in the combined forms of limited land and tenancy reform and resettlement" (Borras 2007, p. 12). What the uprisings did achieve were the elite's "persistent efforts at co-optation and [bloody] repression," either directly with private armies or via the state apparatus (Ibid.). The regional caciques have been on the winning end of the archipelago's land-distribution structure, and as a result "none of the political administrations during the past century has ever seriously addressed the underlying cause of peasant revolts, that is, landlessness" (Ibid.). Why would they? The oligarchic families who control the country would lose from any true reform.

The current agrarian structure can trace its roots to the emergence of capitalist agriculture in the Philippines in the mid-19th century, when the Spanish colony began exporting abaca hemp, coconut, sugar cane, and minerals into a budding global economy. According to Borras, it is at that time that Spaniards³⁰ as well as Filipino mestizos began concentrating land into large

³⁰ Both friars and non-clergy.

haciendas (Borras 2007, p. 83). However, it was really under the American occupation that local and foreign elites expanded their accumulation of lands, namely those formerly owned by religious orders.

Zialcita asks an interesting question about the pre-colonial archipelago: “Was land owned privately or communally among Filipinos before the advent of Westernization?” (Zialcita 2005, p. 81). Answering this, he debunks the romantic belief that all pre-Hispanic peoples “did not know land as private property” (Ibid.). All sorts of well-meaning thinkers advocate returning to an idealized ancestral communalism to resolve the country’s very real contemporary social ills:

“[A]dvocates of structural change depict pre-Western Philippine societies as egalitarian and communal. In advocating agrarian reform, they also promote cooperatives, and blame ‘colonial individualism’ for negative aspects in farmers’ behavior. Salvation allegedly lies in returning to the Garden [of Eden] before the intrusion of the Western serpent. While I agree with the need for agrarian reform and cooperatives, I disagree with the idealization of the pre-Hispanic past. Though inspiring, this approach promotes a Utopia that either never existed or is mal-applicable today. The much praised open access to land occurred under swidden conditions. Obviously swidden cannot apply to situations with high population densities” (Zialcita 2005, pp. 108-109).

During pre-colonial times there was, according to Zialcita, a diversity of approaches to land-ownership across the archipelago: “Visayan swiddeners regarded land as a free good, while Tagalog wet rice farmers bought and sold land” (Ibid., pp. 82-83). He goes on to highlight that private land ownership and landlordism were found among non-Hispanized sedentary inhabitants of the archipelago (Ibid., p. 90). In the Visayas “outsiders” needed the local chief’s permission to make use of anything on the land:

“According to Alcina ([1668] n.d., 4:67-68), one of the many reasons for enslaving another took place when barangay members caught an outsider ‘hunting in their mountains or fishing in their waters or looking for something he needed in their land without the permission of the datu who was the master of all of these.’ Indeed they imposed such slavery not only on the intruder, who came from afar, but also on ‘neighbors themselves and who lived close to them’ (ibid.)” (Zialcita 2005, p. 92).

Early Spanish descriptions of the Visayan people say they may have occasionally had land as “an open resource among members of a barangay” but that in the same region “human beings

could be privately owned as slaves and could thus be bought and sold” (Ibid.). Owning slaves seems to have been common and may have been required for exploiting the abundant – and sometimes communal – land. Again, slaves “rather than land, constituted the most highly valued factor of production” (Ibid.). This changed in the late 17th century when population density began increasing and Spanish law abolished slavery. Zialcita (2005, pp. 100-101) argues that from this point onward the ownership of land, as well as trade and manufacture, became the main sources of wealth. These trends were accelerated during the American colonization.

In the early years of the 20th century, US colonial authorities implemented the Torrens land titling system, which led to the domination of the Western concept of property rights, making clear distinctions between private and public rights over resources (Borras 2007, p. 84).³¹ This way of organizing land-ownership intended to help systematize private property but in fact led to “wholesale land-grabbing by those who knew about the law and had access to courts and, on the other, to the displacement of many poor peasants and indigenous communities who did not know about it and had no access to the new cadastral registration system” (Ibid.). Pre-existing inequalities were exacerbated.

The first honest jab at agrarian reform only came in 1954 under the Magsaysay presidency. Mainly in terms of increasing tenants’ shares to 70 percent of rice and corn crops as well as improving security of tenure. “The law was by no means radical; but the Administration’s serious attempt to enforce it was new” (Wurfel 1988, p. 167). David Wurfel interestingly contends that fear of Huk rebels pressured Congress, controlled by landlords, into passing the law. However, left-wing guerrillas lurking in the mountains and charismatic President Magsaysay³² did not manage to obtain any real success in land-redistribution, as the landlord controlled Congress made the bill almost impossible to apply (Ibid.). Magsaysay, who is one

³¹ Borras writes that the concept of *property rights* had been introduced during the Spanish era, but the public/private rights over resources were strengthened with the Torrens system.

³² Magsaysay was a popular and charismatic politician, who had worked as an automobile mechanic before getting into politics.

of the rare Filipino presidents not to be tainted with corruption scandals,³³ did not finish his mandate, as he died abruptly in a 1957 plane crash.

Quickly after the declaration of martial law in 1972, Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 27 that called for “the emancipation of the tiller of the soil from bondage.” A year later he said that “land reform is the only gauge for the success or failure of the New Society.”³⁴ If land reform fails, there is no New Society” (Marcos 1973).³⁵ The shrewd dictator’s strategy was to create mass support for his regime, legitimize himself abroad, and undermine potential rivals from the wealthy land-owning oligarchy. However, by the 1980s, the “Chief Cacique’s” agrarian reform had failed to strengthen the regime’s rural legitimacy, while for “the rural poor the oppression of wealth and power was greater than ever” (Wurfel 1988, p. 175). Marcos failed for several reasons, not least of which was his need for local strongmen to perpetuate his own patrimonial system (Ibid., p. 176).

There are many interconnections between the agrarian structure, the country’s state apparatus, and other stately functions such as preparation to natural hazards. The agrarian structure has had a profound impact on power relations within the state, but inversely the state was historically – and continues to be – instrumental in the perpetuation of agrarian structures.

2.2. Filipino governmental institutions

“The actions of the state [...] are invariably shaped by the prevailing distribution of power. In a setting of marked political and economic inequalities, one can expect state policies with respect to the natural environment to favor the interests of the rich and the powerful over those of the poor and the powerless. If environmental degradation benefits the former at the expense of the latter, it will continue until such time as it is blocked by the mobilization of countervailing power” (Boyce 1993, p. 241).

The concept of “state”

Clifford Geertz called the state the “master noun of political discourse” (Geertz 1981, p. 121). It has been a human phenomenon for approximately the last six millennia and has had a

³³ Although he is tainted by the fact that his campaign was run by CIA advisors. See Anderson 2004, p. 207.

³⁴ New Society being the dictator’s grand program for the country.

³⁵ Quoted from Wurfel 1988 who quotes it from the *Philippine Daily Express*, September 22, 1973.

plethora of different incarnations, “among them patrimonial monarchies, the Islamic state, the Buddhist polity in south Asia, the Sino-Confucian kingdom, the Indic state [...], the far-flung empire state, the city-state, the feudal state” (Young 1994, p. 14). Crawford Young argues that for the last three million years, most of humanity has lived in the shadow of a state, of one form or another, except for the “interstices where societal organization operated without the benefit or burden of state institutions” (Ibid., p. 15). Authors such as James Scott and others have written extensively about these “interstitial” societies, but as interesting as they are, they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Crawford Young claims that despite the historical variety of states mentioned above, the contemporary concept of the modern state has been dominated by the format that evolved out of European hegemonic institutions where “[r]ulers created standing armies and professional bureaucracies; royal writ and law penetrated the territory; flows of revenues beyond the circumscribed income from royal estates secured the treasuries” (Ibid.). The dominance of the European intellectual image of the “state” across the world is explained by the globalization of its imperialism and the subsequent “forcible imposition or defensive imitation” (Ibid., p. 16). In the 15th century, European states began expanding, conquering and colonizing, until finally reaching a quasi-global imperial dominance by the early 20th century.

Spanish state building in the Islas Filipinas?

From the mid-16th to the late 19th centuries, the Spanish crown officially “ruled” over the Philippines, but in fact the archipelago “offered few incentives for an intensive exploitation of local resources” (McCoy 2001, p. 6). In the pre-steam-boat era, the colony was extremely far from Madrid³⁶ (Ibid., p. 2014). It did not produce any valuable spices and McCoy argues that the territory did not have the density of population necessary for exploiting either mines or plantations (Ibid.).

Young writes that the colony was “highly decentralized and localized sociopolitical structures dominated, whose leading families became incorporated into a loose-knit Spanish system of

³⁶ The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced by half the voyage from the Iberian Peninsula and thus “*greatly increased the attractiveness of the Philippines for Spanish appointees*” (McCoy 2001, p. 204).

rule” (Young 1994, pp. 275-276). This, however, is somewhat contradicted by Wurfel’s description of early Spanish rule as extremely centralized, citing examples of provincial friars having to travel several days to Manila in order to get an authorization to replace a parish door (Wurfel 1988, p. 5). One possible explanation for these seemingly contradictory images of Spanish rule is that the colonial state, although highly centralized in theory, was in fact not very strong as soon as one left Manila and a handful of other ports. Putting these debates asides, what is clear is that there were few Spaniards actually living in the colony: “In 1850 the Spanish population was only five thousand, of whom nearly half were friars” (Young 1994, pp. 275-276). In many provinces, the Church remained for a long time the sole representative of Iberian authority (Anderson 2004, p. 194). What is also clear from the Spanish period is that corruption of a gigantic scale was endemic at every level of the colonial state: “*l’omniprésence de la corruption est, apparemment, un élément de continuité remarquable au point que la prévarication semble consubstantielle à l’administration coloniale espagnole des Philippines*” (Huetz de Lempis 2006, p. 10). The contemporary Philippine state’s corruption seems to run deep historical roots.

Spanish religious orders seem to have been involved in many corrupt activities throughout most of the colony’s history; friars were the sole representatives of colonial authorities in many provinces, and embezzlement is believed to have been endemic (Ibid.). Church involvement in the governance of the state was such that, in the year 1719, friars in Manila led a mob which murdered Governor General Fernando Bustamente, after this Spanish official appeared to have become too conscientious about cleaning up the colony’s corruption (Ibid.). The notorious venality of the Spanish clergy is eloquently described in José Rizal’s classic novel *Noli Me Tangere* (1887).

It is impossible to talk about Filipino institutions without mentioning religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular. McCoy argues that in the Philippines the Catholic Church “remained an alien institution that extracted tribute and gave ritual in return” (McCoy 2002, p.

7).³⁷ Kaelin, a Swiss philosopher who taught at the Jesuit Ateneo de Manila University between 2006 and 2008, lukewarmly challenges this view, claiming in a hazy prose that:

“the Church, not negating its conservative tendencies, hardly functions as a monolithic institution, but rather has become a social actor on many different levels. Although repeatedly engaging actively in political processes, organized religion fails to challenge the social structure responsible for the rampant inequality in terms of access to health care, education and opportunities. The focus of religious teachings remains on the correct moral behavior” (Kaelin 2012, p. 130).

Kaelin argues that the Church was instrumental in the formation of the state as well as founding a common identity across the Philippine Islands. He holds that the “import of Christianity through the Spanish colonization facilitated the emergence of common identity. Common religious practices brought together kin and non-kin alike into a community [...]” (Ibid.). The Swiss philosopher further purports that “religion has proven to be better equipped in bringing people from various families and background [sic] together than ‘secular nationalist rituals’” (Ibid.). On a more local level, Greg Bankoff highlights the importance of religious fraternity organizations, known as *cofradías*, which as early as 1594 were already providing important “social and charitable enterprises that extended aid to the unfortunate and the needy” (Bankoff 2007, p. 331) and helped in times of emergencies.

American colonial authorities initially focused on increasing local capacity and consolidating control throughout the territory, this was done in part by “Filipinizing” the colonial bureaucracy. In 1903, locals only held half of the colony’s bureaucratic jobs; by 1921 the proportion had risen to 90 percent (Anderson 2004, p. 202). Spanish colonial rule had kept locals out of the state apparatus; Americans were keen on distinguishing their rule from that of the Spanish, and the new masters were determined to build a colonial state where “politics [would] not undermine bureaucratic development” (Abinales & Amoroso 2005, p. 120). It is questionable whether or not they achieved that objective, but the new colonial authority did succeed in cutting out some of the Catholic Church’s power and founding an embryonic public education system.

³⁷ It must be noted that this book is also published by Ateneo Press, much to the credit of the Jesuit’s tolerance to a degree of intellectual independence.

US authorities can claim some, albeit mild, successes such as the creation of public schools across the archipelago. Thanks to the new educational system, English became the country's first common language, as very few Filipinos spoke Spanish. Friars had supposedly discouraged natives from learning the imperial language, giving the bilingual religious officials more power (Robles 1969, p. 219). "Till the very end of the Spanish regime no more than five percent of the local population had any facility with the colonial language. [...] Peasants and fishermen in different parts of the archipelago could not communicate with one another: only their rulers had a common archipelago-wide speech" (Anderson 2004, p. 195). Before the Spanish conquest, various regions had related Austronesian languages, but it is "highly improbable that the various island peoples were then aware of belonging either to a single archipelago or to an archipelago wide community" (Zialcita 2005, p. 61). All of this runs contrary to the quixotic nationalist narrative that relishes the cultivation of the myth of a common ancestral history.

Zialcita further undermines the mellifluous nationalist storyline which postulates that "if the Spaniards had not come, we would have eventually formed a confederation to span the entire archipelago" (Ibid.). But Zialcita rightly follows up with the question of "where does the archipelago begin and end? The Batanes? But Taiwan used not to be Chinese, and it is home to hill peoples who are Austronesians like us. Tawi-Tawi? But the sultans of Sulu used to claim suzerainty over northern Borneo" (Ibid.). The concept of Filipino identity probably owes a lot to the US colonial period. The Spanish-speaking European-educated elite, the *Ilustrados* as they were known, had begun tinkering with the concept of a national identity by the end of the 19th century, but they were a new and infinitesimal sub-section of the population.

Even amongst the local elites, and contrary to the standard contemporary narrative, there were strongly diverging economic interests. McCoy makes the convincing argument that "Tagalog entrepreneurs who leased their rice lands from the Spanish church estates ringing Manila had every reason to support the nationalist revolt. Pampangan and Visayan sugar planters, who owned their own plantations, had equal cause to rally to the side of Spain and the colonial order" (McCoy 2002, p. 8). The author reasons that the elites' diversified systems of

production during the 19th century contributed to an archipelago of “separate societies that entered the world economic system at different times, under different terms of trade, and with different systems of production” (Ibid.). All of these diverging interests amongst native elites have had repercussions on the country’s national social cohesion. The result is a disarray of mistrust which was aggravated by the brutal coercion enforced by the American colonial state in its attempt to control its vast and disjointed Asian archipelagic dominion.

The territorial unification of the islands was initiated during the Spanish colonial period, but the national boundaries were only consolidated by the United States (De Koninck 2012, p. 11). It is important to underline that the American colonial period was not “a stroll in the park” for the local populations. Public schools certainly cropped up around the country and the common language of English was taking root, but it is essential to remember that the 20th century’s first large scale Western counter-insurgency campaign in Asia took place in the Philippines, and not in Malaysia or Indonesia (Ibid., p. 72). The US presence in the archipelago was brutal: the bloody oppression of civilians during the Filipino-American war, the subsequent coercive colonial occupation,³⁸ and the extended economic exploitation of the country’s resources, which continues to this day according to certain authors (Bello et al. 2005).³⁹

The violence delivered by American colonial authorities, as well as from the later incarnations of the Filipino state, must have left deep psychosocial traces in terms of the ambient mistrust between citizens and their institutions. Some of the most strikingly recurrent systemic injustices in the Philippines, throughout its colonial and post-colonial history, were the amazingly unfair situation in both land tenure and taxation. This less-visible structural violence⁴⁰ could not have left social coherence unscathed.

³⁸ For more information about the extremely violent American counter-insurgency in the Philippines consult Borrinaga, R., 2003. *The Balangiga Conflict Revisited*. Doctoral dissertation, Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City. As well, John Sayles’s excellent full-feature historical fiction 2010 film *Amigo*.

³⁹ Walden Bello goes into great depth about this in many of his books. *The Anti-development State. The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines*, 2005, published by the University of the Philippines, definitely digs into this theme.

⁴⁰ By structural or systemic violence, I am referring here to Galtung’s distinction between direct and structural violence, where structural violence does not need “any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.” (1969, p. 171). Žižek later took this theme further and illustrated our common blindness to the systemic violence of capitalism, where unlike in Communist regimes, when “one draws attention to the millions who died as a result of capitalist globalization [...] responsibility is largely denied. All this seems just to have happened as the result of an ‘objective’ process, which nobody planned and executed and for which there was no ‘Capitalist Manifesto.’” (Žižek 2008, p. 14).



Picture II.1. Soldiers from the 35th US Volunteer Infantry torturing a Filipino with what was called “the water cure,” an early relative of “water boarding” during the “pacification” of the archipelago between 1899 and 1902. (Source: Wolf 2014 for PRI using the US National Archives).

The failed attempts of US colonial authorities to reform land tenure and taxation

Abinales and Amoroso (2005) write that the two main failures of American colonial authorities, in terms of state-building, were their attempts to reform tax and land policies. In 1903, US officials bought 165,922 hectares of land from friar estates with the objective of selling the land to cultivators. This was supposedly to quell peasant⁴¹ revolts that had plagued Spanish rule, as well as to improve relationships with Filipino elites (Robles 1969, p. 122). The latter were pleased but peasants were, once again, left short changed. “Peasants working village plots within the purchased estates immediately received parcels, but the 80,937 hectares that were still virgin forest were not transferred to landless peasants. Instead, the

⁴¹ In this thesis we will use the term “peasant” as landless and near-landless tenants and farmers, farm workers, and other rural wage laborers and rural semi-proletariat.

Department of the Interior sold or leased them to American and Filipino business interests” (Ibid.). As in many of the subsequent attempts of land reform, there was a dire lack of infrastructure and technical support from the state for the alleged “beneficiaries.” Filipino farmers had a “tantalizing glimpse of freedom and [were then] abandoned to find their own way out of the agrarian wilderness” (Sturtevant 1976, p. 55). As was going to happen time and time again in the following century, this initial attempt to reform the agrarian structure failed as most farmers, unable to make a living off of their lands, were forced back into tenancy for the benefit of a wealthy Filipinos elite.

US colonial attempts to improve tax policies were also a failure. Americans succeeded in removing the church from tax collection, but failed in making the system more equitable. The regressive *cédula* – head tax from the Spanish era – was maintained. American authorities had planned a tax to inheritances and corporations but instead, pandering to the local landed Filipino elite, US officials scraped the progressive legislation in 1904 (Luton 1971, pp. 70-71). This regressive taxation system favored elites and their concentration of land-ownership into the *latifundias* that still exist today. Contrary to what is often believed, these gigantic ranches come from the American colonial period and not from the Spanish *encomiendas* system (De Koninck 2012, p. 74). Regardless of its exact origins, there is no doubt that a highly inequitable society had already started taking shape during the Spanish period (Angoc 2009, p. 133) and that expansion of inequalities continued with the new colonial power.

Non-organic state apparatus

Both Spain and the United States had attempted to forge a bureaucratic apparatus based on their Western social practices but since “the modern Philippine state did not evolve organically from Filipino society, it could not induce compliance through shared myth or other forms of social sanction” (McCoy 2002, p.11). Since local populations would not voluntarily cooperate, the colonial regimes used coercion.⁴² In addition, the US administration “extended the powers of the central bureaucracy they had inherited from Spain while simultaneously experimenting

⁴² Although, it can be argued that coercion is often the main ingredient in state formation, regardless of whether it happens in a colonial setting, but that is another discussion beyond the scope of this paper. What is certain is that most of the state apparatus in the Philippines was “imported.”

with grassroots democracy in the form of local elections. In effect, the United States tried to moderate the imagined excesses of Iberian centralization by introducing the Anglo-American tradition of local autonomy” (McCoy 2002, p. 12). In other words, Americans gave a lot of political power to the lower levels of administration, such as municipalities.

To prevent local “tough guys”⁴³ from taking advantage of this decentralization, US administrators had created the Philippine Constabulary, or the “PC” as they were commonly known, a police force supposed to be “a political force to check abuses of the peasantry by caciques” (Ibid.). This system of supervised decentralization seems to have worked⁴⁴ as long as Washington was really in control, but it fell apart during the Japanese occupation, and never really recovered after World War II. Under the Republic, 1946-72, which came with “official” independence after the war, the system seems to have spiraled into cyclical corruption and political violence (Ibid.). Following the declaration of martial law in 1972, the Marcos regime brought new depth to the term “kleptocracy,” but the dictator also did attempt to confront the traditional oligarchs. While the strongman no doubt plundered the state to enrich himself and his cronies, his attempts to dismantle the century old system may have nevertheless been sincere, even if his motive for fighting the ruling families was to secure his own reign. It is possible that his tampering with the established system upset the “powers that be” thus precipitating his final downfall and flight to Hawaii, in the midst of the 1986 so-called “People Power Revolution.”

A shake in the kaleidoscope of oligarchic power

Right after the “People Power Revolution” which brought Corazon Aquino to the presidency, some of the large landowners got scared. The media and middle-class urban reformists were calling for real land reform. Even the World Bank, as well as Japanese and American officials asked for it. “The alarm was real, if probably ill-founded. COLOR (Council of Landowners for Orderly Reform – 500 magnate members) was hastily established; it sent Corazon resolutions signed with (happily, its own) blood, threatening civil disobedience in the event of serious

⁴³ Anderson’s terms are “cacique” as well as “warlord.”

⁴⁴ “seems to have worked” only means that corruption by caciques was limited, not that the local rural population was being well treated.

land-reform” (Anderson 1988, p. 27). But in the end the landlords fretted about nothing. After all, Corazon Aquino’s maiden name was Corazon Cojuangco, and the Cojuangcos are one of Luzon’s largest land holding families. Subsequently in 1987, congress appointed a pro-landlord Committee on Agrarian Reform. Then in 1988, local and provincial elections really brought back the pre-martial law oligarchy (Ibid., p. 29). So in the end, as Anderson ever so eloquently expressed it, the “revolution” was just another “shake in the kaleidoscope of oligarchic power” (Ibid., p. 28). What we have to this day, preciously unperturbed, are slightly new colors and slightly new patterns, but a structure which remains deeply unequal.

2.3. The Contemporary Filipino state

Because of its history, the post-colonial Filipino state has adopted many political structures, and rituals, from the United States: the three branches of government are supposed to be equal and perform specific functions outlined by the Constitution. Officially, congress has authority over the national budget, determines promotions in the military, and is generally supposed to keep tabs on the executive, but in fact “[i]f the presidency has the central state to serve its purpose, congressional power is based on a combination of institutional authority granted by the Constitution and an extensive network of allies, supporters, and relatives at the local level” (Abinales & Amoroso 2005, p. 15). Abinales and Amoroso make it clear that they believe the crux of congressional power lies at the local level:

“Members of the House of Representatives are elected through adept handling of local network often centered on the family (or political clan) and extended through their district by alliances and patronages. Incumbents have a tremendous advantage in building and protecting networks through their control of ‘pork barrel,’ discretionary funds allotted to each representative and senator (and released at the discretion of the president)” (Abinales & Amoroso 2005, p. 15).

Clientelism is defined by a political science textbook as “an informal power relationship between unequals, in which the higher status ‘patron’ provides benefits to (a) client(s); these clients in turn reciprocate by providing the patron with support, including voting for the patron of a third party of the patron’s wish” (Siaroff 2005, p. 307). The Philippine state is clearly clientelist, but there are nuances, and different types of clientelism.

The patron-client relationship is perhaps the most “traditional” form of clientelism, and much academic literature of the 1960s focused on this social phenomenon. Authors such as Hollnsteiner (1963) and Landé (1965) characterized Filipino politics as being defined by networks of personal relationships in which more powerful individuals give protection and material welfare in exchange for political loyalty, which sounds quite a bit like the textbook definition of patron-client relationships quoted above. This analysis was dominant during several years for the understanding of politics on the local level, and still holds true to a certain degree: “Highly personalized, multifunctional, and affect-laden in nature, patron-client ties were described as binding together individuals of unequal wealth, status, and power. Such dyadic face-to-face relationship [is] perhaps exemplified by that between landlord and tenant” (Sidel 1999, p. 7). The asymmetric power relationship between landlord and tenant is common in rural Filipino interactions. It represents an archetype of a special category of social capital: linking social capital. It binds people from different socio-economic backgrounds and there are blatant power dynamics at play.

Sidel, however, showed the serious limitations to the famed patron-client relationship, namely the persistent and **growing importance of coercion** in local politics. Peasants and other lower-class people were not only obedient⁴⁵ because the strong social bonds they might have with their landlords (Kerkvliet 1991), but because of the threat – and frequent use – of physical violence. Other authors, such as James Scott, make an inverse argument,⁴⁶ and contend that there has been an erosion of patron-client relationship which in turn contributed to the omnipresence of coercion in Filipino politics. Scott writes he already noted the disaggregation of patron-client relations as early as 1969 (Scott 1969 & 1976). He described important changes in rural areas, not least of which are the industrialization of agriculture, cutting out the need for lots of unskilled labor, but also, the geographic migration of landlords to larger towns and cities. The latter phenomenon meant that the rural poor were significantly less in contact, physically, with the wealthy landlords that may have lived in the countryside in the past. The argument being that the growing geographic divide led to a break-down of social bonds, and

⁴⁵ This is glossing over the many peasant rebellions throughout Filipino history as well as the day-to-day resistance of foot dragging and “breaking the tools.” Kerkvliet develops this theme extensively in his seminal *Every Day Politics in the Philippines*, 1991.

⁴⁶ Scott’s argument does not, however, oppose Sidel’s. On the contrary, the two theories complement each other quite well.

erosion of trust. Both Scott (1976) and Sidel (1991) describe this geographical migration of the rich and the subsequent dilution of social bonds between rich and poor in rural areas.

From “Patron-Client” relationship to “Guns, Goons, and Gold”⁴⁷

By the 1970s state apparatus continued becoming a source of capital for those with the right connections. The traditional patron-client concept was sidelined, while vote buying and political violence soared (Quimpo 2005).⁴⁸ The new name of the game had become “Guns, Goons, and Gold,” also known as the three “Gs” of Philippine politics.⁴⁹ Local warlords were ubiquitous across the archipelago.

In the Central Visayas one of the most notorious and enduring “bosses” was Ramon Durano whose iron fist ruled over the north-eastern towns of Cebu Island for over 40 years following World War II. His family remains omnipresent in local politics to this day. Michael Cullinane from the University of Wisconsin goes into a detailed analysis of Durano’s “warlord politics.” Goons were either contracted or full time “employees” and often came from the slums of Cebu. The high season for the goon market, so to say, was right before elections (Cullinane 2002). The whole system was quite institutionalized “During the 1960s, the Duranos’ use of goons and guns became institutionalized. Although they continued the old technique of recruiting casuals from outside, they also established the Insular Security and Investment Agency (ISIA) in Cebu City” (Cullinane 2002, p. 191). ISIA was administered by Durano’s daughter. The strategy was to place about 10 armed goons in each *barangay*,⁵⁰ and they did this in all of the Province of Danao. Furthermore, “it is felt that the presence of goons is made more effective if there is at least one political assassination on the election eve” (Ibid.). Politically motivated assassinations were, and unfortunately still are, common around election time in the Central Visayas as well as throughout the archipelago. The ISIA’s official slogan says it all “Be Sure and Get Results” (Ibid.).

⁴⁷ This also happens to be the title of a sub-section, p. 188, from McCoy’s appropriately named 2002 book *An Anarchy of Families*.

⁴⁸ According to Quimpo 2005, the 1971 elections were marred by a record of 905 politically related deaths.

⁴⁹ More recently, some say that the fourth ‘G’ is Girls, as scantily clad young women have also become a common appendage of political campaigns.

⁵⁰ A Barangay in the Philippines is the smallest official administrative unit. It is the equivalent of a village in rural areas or a neighbourhood in urban settings.

As mentioned in the historical overview of the colonial period, there can be no doubt that this ambient institutionalized violence must have had repercussions on the social cohesion and the trust people had in their local public institutions.

Violence: Thick trust, thin trust, no trust

In this thesis's conceptual framework the distinction was drawn between thin trust and thick trust.⁵¹ The thick version is given to family and friends, with whom one has strong bonds, while the fragile and oft sought after "thin trust" is a person's estimation of the general moral standards of the surrounding society. Several authors point out that within Filipino society there is a dearth of social cohesion and a lack of thin trust (Abad 2005; Rothstein & Uslaner 2005). How could it be otherwise in a society where the rich and powerful use such brutal coercion? Even if violence is not served directly via a goon's M16 rifle, the vast masses of the downtrodden nevertheless feel the heel of systemic violence from such an unequal society.⁵² How can the masses trust those in power if the latter seem to have so little concern for the poor's survival, never mind their wellbeing?

There certainly are vociferous proclamations in the media of *bayanihan*⁵³ when a natural hazard strikes a part of the archipelago, but the oligarchs who control the country don't really seem to care much for the large portion of the population which remains downtrodden, even when no natural hazard has struck. This is not to say that individual people, both inside and out of government, will not make acts of grandiose generosity and solidarity, but the Philippine state does not seem to sincerely care for its most vulnerable.

⁵¹ Section entitled "Measuring Social Capital."

⁵² As mentioned above, I take here from Galtung's definition of structural violence (1969) to argue that violence does not need to be administered by an individual onto another to still be violence. If people are "starving when this is objectively avoidable, then violence is committed, regardless of whether there is a clear subject-action-object relation, as during a siege yesterday or no such clear relation, as in the way world economic relations are organized today" (Galtung 1969, p. 171).

⁵³ A Filipino term for type of solidarity.

2.4. Inequality and poverty in the Philippines

Inequality could be an explanation for the low levels trust and social cohesion in the country. In pre-colonial times, inequality was not based on landownership, but on controlling labor.

Zialcita refuses the

“widely popular notion that ownership of land by the broad community of residents, including nonrelatives, prevailed prior to the conquest and that present inequality stems solely from the Spanish conquest. The truth is that inequality existed even before the conquest: This was based not on land, but rather on the control and ownership of manpower. Had the Spaniards not come, would absentee landlordism have developed in the islands? The experience of uncolonized societies, such as prenineteenth-century European monarchies and Japan, suggests that the answer is a highly probable yes [...]” (Zialcita 2005, p. 102).

Inequalities increased with colonization(s), particularly under the American regime. The result is that today, inequality remains one of the Philippines most dazzling social phenomenon, and it is increasing. In 2012 the collective wealth of the 40 richest Filipinos jumped by over 37 percent from the year before to reach US\$ 47.4 billion. Tourist guidebooks refer to the country as a “mixture of Malay, Madrid, and Madison Avenue” (Wright 2013, p. 26) because of the chic neighborhoods in Manila. Cielito Habito, former head of the government’s National Economic and Development Authority, NEDA, underlines that in 2012 the 40 richest families had a wealth increase equivalent to more than 76 % of “the country’s overall increase in GDP at the time” (Keenan 2013). The Filipino economist also highlights how different that is from the rest of the region: in Thailand the wealth of the “40 richest families increased by only 25 percent of the national income growth during that period, while that ratio was even lower in Malaysia and Japan, at 3.7 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively” (Ibid.). The Philippines has always been an unequal country, but Habito argues that inequality has been soaring to ever starker extremes. While the country has become the new darling of international investors, increasing the wealth of a minority of elite families, the living conditions of the masses stagnate at survival levels, in the best of cases.

Despite the good fortunes of the fortunate, most still struggle to survive. UNICEF statistics for the country reveal that 32 percent of children under the age of five suffer from “moderate to severe stunting” due to malnutrition (UNICEF 2013). About 60 percent of Filipinos never see

a health professional during their entire lives (Keenan 2013). The annual reports of 2009 found that more than one out of four Filipinos lived on less than 1\$/day “a poverty rate roughly the same as Haiti’s” (Ibid.). The current administration of Benigno Aquino the III⁵⁴ has been making gestures with its “4Ps program,” a form of financial assistance for the poorest families. Authorities hope this will drop poverty incidence by 16 percent by the end of 2016 (Alegado et al. 2013). Even if these modest goals are reached, poverty will remain rampant, while the rich continue to get richer.

It must be emphasized here that beyond the internal forces that have created inequality in the Philippines, neoliberal reforms of the last decades have accentuated the problem. Several authors have been decrying this situation on the global level (Milanovic 2003; Milanovic 2011; Piketty 2014). In 2007, Kemal Dervis the then administrator of the United Nations’ Development Program explained it as follows:

“Income inequalities are rising rapidly within many countries, with increasing concentration of income in the top 0.1% of individuals, accompanied by income stagnation at the bottom of the distribution in many countries, rich and poor. In fact, the beginning of the twenty-first century can be characterized as a time of exploding inequalities” (Dervis 2007, p. 4).

Cornia and Court in their research for UN-WIDER concur that income inequalities have risen in most countries, often drastically so, and argue that this global surge is strongly linked to “the excessive liberal economic policy regimes and the way in which economic reform policies have been carried out” (2001, p. 1). Indeed, since the 1980s governments everywhere have been applying the so-called Washington Consensus pressed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. A growing number of academics have been questioning the impacts these policies have had on inequality and poverty (Gilbert 2007; Milanovic 2011; Piketty 2014). The Philippines is the poster-child for this trend of economic growth amidst rampant poverty (Habito 2012; Keenan 2013).

⁵⁴ The son of Corzaon Cojuangco Aquino.

Inequality, intersections, and hope for the future

In countries like the Philippines with high and increasing inequality there is no intersection between the lives of rich and poor. They may live side by side, geographically close, but their “children attend different schools, they use different health care services; and in many cases the poor can’t afford either of these services.⁵⁵ The rich are protected by both the police and private guards, while the poor see those groups as their natural enemies” (Rothstein & Uslaner 2005, p. 46). Rothstein and Uslaner are some of the rare authors who point to how the “sense of a shared fate” between the rich and the poor is eroded, if not disintegrated, in unequal societies (Ibid.).

These authors refine the conceptualization of equality – or lack thereof – into two categories: 1) economic equality, and 2) equality of opportunity. The second dimension is “the chance that people⁵⁶ see for economic progress in the future – even if society is highly stratified now” (Ibid., p. 47). It is possible for well-guided governments to “enact policies that offer greater opportunities for economic equality” (Ibid.). An example of this kind of constructive policy would be universal educational programs that open up the long-term opportunities for everyone to improve their economic situations (Ibid.). Generalized healthcare would be another such example. In the Philippines, however, no such government programs are being considered, and the “lack of hope” among many sectors of society might be a contributor to the low levels of generalized trust because “[w]hen people believe that the future looks bright, trusting strangers seems less risky” (Ibid., p. 51) and inversely.

Rothstein and Uslaner also argue that there are other factors that shape trust. With elaborate statistical analyses, they draw out that “Protestant societies have higher levels of trust, while former communist nations and countries that have experienced civil war have lower levels of trust.” The Philippines is an extremely Catholic society that is still in the midst of a long lingering civil war, and as a result of which there are large swaths of the country under communist control. This is combined with dramatically unequal distribution of income,

⁵⁵ Again, about 60 percent of Filipinos never see a health professional.

⁵⁶ When they say “people” they are not referring to the elites, whose future is always bright anyway.

wealth, and opportunities. If we use Rothstein and Uslaner's analysis there are indeed many reasons for the Philippines's low levels of generalized trust.

“Trust varies widely across nations. In Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands about 60 percent of people believe most other people can be trusted, whereas in Brazil, the Philippines, and Turkey about 10 percent trust others” (Ibid., p. 42). Some measurements of trust are low in the Philippines; however, there are many different types of trust. “Thick trust,” the kind found inside Filipino families or groups of friends,⁵⁷ is extremely strong: “In the Philippines, family trust is so strong that justice is a victim.[...] In the name of social capital, it makes other people excluded.”⁵⁸ For most people it seems that when members of their families made a request of them, it was difficult, if not impossible, to refuse. These high-trust/high-expectation dynamics, similar to what one finds in organized crime⁵⁹ are what Rothstein and Uslaner call “particularized trust, where people have faith only in their in-group” (Ibid., p. 45). The strong allegiance to one's family is ubiquitous amongst most people across the Philippines. In the archipelago “blood is thicker than water.”

What is blood and what is water? Who is in and who is out?

Who is part of the “in-group,” with lots of thick trust, versus who is part of the “out-group,” who is not to be trusted? How does one define that boundary? How wide is the radius of one's familial trust and care? This dichotomy between in-group and out-group also has repercussions on how people behave in times of intense hardship, such as emergencies brought by natural hazards.

To help think about the range of one's community feeling,⁶⁰ it can be useful to remember the dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft*, made by Tönnies back in 1887. Both German words refer to what in English would be called “society,” but both refer to different kinds of societies. Tönnies's ideal *Gemeinschaft* was the family or the rural pre-modern village: dominated by a supposed natural will. He contrasts that with *Gesellschaft*, which

⁵⁷ It even has a name in Filipino languages: “*barkada*.”

⁵⁸ Said to the author in an interview with a professor in Cebu City.

⁵⁹ Like the Mafia in Italy or the *Yakuza* in Japan.

⁶⁰ With all the ambiguity the term “community” brings with it.

would be dominated by rational will. Vela-McConnell explains that “[as] social groups grow larger, *Gemeinschaft* is succeeded by *Gesellschaft* and the community and its intimate ties are lost within an impersonal, individualistic world based on contracts with strangers. There is a strong element of nostalgia in Tönnies’s writings on this subject, even though he acknowledges that *Gemeinschaft* is still found within some associations of *Gesellschaft*” (Vela-McConnell 1999, p. 5). It is important to underline that all societies do not follow the same linear progression from traditional to modern; this would be an unacceptable oversimplification. That said, the distinction helps to better understand the nuance between “ingroups and outgroups,” (Ibid., p. 33) with Filipinos often keeping their trust for people within their *Gemeinschaft*. Vela-McConnell underlines that “social psychologists explain the relevance of social proximity and distance to the social cohesion described by Tönnies in much greater detail. Social proximity and distance at the micro-level, and especially our ability to create both, have far-reaching consequences for the social cohesiveness of society” (Ibid.). As mentioned above, social cohesion on the national level is in reality quite limited in the Philippines.

Zialcita underlines that historically even within the same municipality and amongst people of the same language group, individuals are suspicious of each other: “The Tagalog value of ‘*pakikipagkapwa-tao*,’ or oneness with the other, was most likely practiced largely within the small circle of kin within a village or a cluster of hamlets” (Zialcita 2005, p. 62). This author again goes against the grain of the standard nationalist narrative which argues that “a broad sense of community has been present in our culture from the very beginning” (Ibid., p. 38). Zialcita further questions if “Filipinos have always believed in the equality of all human beings, have respected each other’s personhood, and have cared for each other even as mutual strangers” (Ibid.). He also debunks the idea that “[a]llegedly under the impact of Western colonialism, society split into classes; Visayans, Tagalogs, and Ilocanos fought each other; and people thought only of their own individual selves. Many see erasing Western influence and returning to indigenous ways as the solution” (Ibid.). Here again, Zialcita is arguing against the quixotic constructions of Filipino nationalism which like Constantino and Constantino claimed that “Spanish colonialism accelerated this disintegration of communalism and the

breakdown of the collective spirit” (Constantino & Constantino 1975, p. 37). Colonialism was without a doubt a deeply traumatic experience, which has left a slew of exploitative structures that continue to spread suffering and injustice across the archipelago today. However, it seems overly idealistic and self-serving to portray pre-colonial societies as a lost paradise, *perdido Eden*, blessed with kindness and equality for all.

How is the circle of trust defined? The definition of “family” is neither self-evident nor static. The concept has evolved across history:

“Neither the family nor the state is an eternal concept, which had been there from time immemorial. The family, as we know it in the form of the nuclear family, emerged fairly recently in world history, namely first in the European context in close connection with the early Capitalist developments, which allowed the nuclear family to emancipate itself from the larger kinship group. Modernity thus brought about an important transformation of the family”⁶¹ (Kaelin 2012, p. 17).

Many authors (Abinales & Amoroso 2005; Kaelin 2012) point to how the contemporary Filipino concept of family is strongly influenced by its per-Hispanic inheritance: namely its bilateral – cognatic – kinship system. For Hegel, the family was the “basic social institution” (Kaelin 2012, p. 19). According to this famous⁶² German philosopher, the modern family can survive only thanks to the economic world, which he calls “civil society.” In this world view, the great opposing forces within society are Family on one side, opposed to on the other side, the Economy. For Hegel, the state’s role is to be the referee between family and economy (Ibid.). Kaelin argues that most “social contract theorists,” from Rousseau to Hobbes, from Locke to Nozick, see the social contract as one mainly between individuals, but that Hegel, “maintains a dissenting position with his theory that the family has a role in the foundation and structuring of the state” (Ibid., p. 2). This Hegelian view resonates quite well with the Filipino setting, where family has a central role, even in the country’s 1986 constitution.

⁶¹ I think Kaelin should have said “in the Western context of family.”

⁶² Famous despite of (or because of) his notorious opacity. Schopenhauer said Hegel’s writing was “a colossal piece of mystification, which will yet provide posterity with an inexhaustible theme for laughter at our times, that it is a pseudo-philosophy paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking, and, by the most outrageous misuse of language, putting in its place the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and, as is confirmed by its success, most stupefying verbiage” (Schopenhauer 1840, translated by Payne 1995, p. 15).

3. HAZARD PREPARATION

3.1. Appropriate legislation

Legislation is often the first step of disaster prevention. Laws are important for establishing building standards, as well as deciding the safe areas people can settle. Laws establish how the state apparatus should behave before and after disasters. Peeling and Holloway underline how legislation can empower agencies with risk reduction responsibilities: “The legislative process should be a constructive period for generating informed support for disaster risk reduction among the policy community and those who will be entrusted with implementation” (Peeling & Holloway 2006, p. 7). That last phrase is critical, as implementation can often be quite a different story from the laws themselves. In the Philippines, as in many other developing countries, even when a law has been passed, it is often difficult to enforce. That said, the archipelago’s laws themselves are in many regards at the forefront of how legislation should be approaching risk reduction.

The first meaningful disaster legislation was made by strongman Ferdinand Marcos in 1978. The dictator is mainly remembered today for his lavish bank accounts in Switzerland and his wife’s glamorous shoe collection;⁶³ nevertheless he also created the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), with presidential decree number PD1566. The title and content of the decree focused on reaction, not prevention. Fundamentally, the legislation outlined the institutional structure and established hierarchical relations between the different governmental bodies which should have, theoretically, gone into action to bring aid to victims of disasters, but all of this would come into action after a hazard had caused damage (Benson 2009, p. 23).

During the last 40 years there have been significant changes in the conceptualization of disasters, both in the Philippines and internationally. In the second decade of the 21st Century much greater emphasis is placed on preemptive risk management. However, these new approaches only led to institutional changes after vigorous battles against administrative red-tape. There had been several attempts to modify the Filipino legislation: during the 13th session

⁶³ Over three thousand pairs according to some sources (Oliver 2012, p. 1).

of the Filipino congress, from 2004 to 2007, there were 31 bills proposed to the senate with the objective of reducing risk from natural hazards (Ibid., p. 23). Not a single one of these was adopted, but this might have more to do with the fact that few bills get approved, regardless of what they are about. During that 13th session of congress, a total of 2,682 bills were proposed on various subjects, but only 179 of them were made into laws (Ibid., p. 24). In spite of these administrative challenges, in 2010 a new law was approved by Congress that significantly improved the Philippines's legislative approach to disaster risk reduction.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, also known as Republic Act (RA) 10121, was a dramatic improvement in the Philippines' legal and institutional approach to disasters, shifting the mindset from reactive to proactive. This paradigm shift provided a legal and institutional boost to mainstreaming DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction). The new legislation was approved in May 2010 after a series of particularly devastating disasters⁶⁴ in 2009 that cost the Filipino economy "around 2.7 percent of its GDP and increased the number of poor people by about 500,000" (World Bank 2011). It seems that when compared with the numerous previous catastrophes, a significant difference was that for once the rich and the powerful in Metro Manila were also flooded. It would be overly cynical to say that it was only because the elite were being affected that the country's laws finally made any significant progress in anticipating future natural hazards. International Organization (IOs)⁶⁵ as well as national NGOs⁶⁶ had been valiantly pushing the "risk-reduction agenda" for years.

Republic Act 10121 was adopted at the heel of a series of terrible disasters in Luzon, which may have contributed to jolting national decision-makers into being more receptive to risk-reduction approaches. This was combined with the fact that local and multinational organizations had long been pushing for a more preventive approach to disaster management. DRR had for a variety of reasons, started becoming the "fashionable" concept it is today. In 2005 the United Nations International Strategy of Disaster Reduction, UNISDR, proposed the

⁶⁴ Tropical storm Ondoy (known as Ketsana internationally) and Typhoon Pepeng (aka: Parma). The author of this thesis had actually just arrived for the first time in the Philippines a month before this series of devastating storms, and saw first-hand the extent of the damage.

⁶⁵ International Organizations (IOs) such as UN-ISDR, UNDP, the World Bank, amongst others.

⁶⁶ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP), for example.

Hyogo Framework for Action, HFA. Similarly to the national context in the Philippines, this international set of policy recommendations also came in the wake of a terrible catastrophe: the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami which startled international media consciousness and left over 200,000 people dead.⁶⁷ Back in 1994, before these dramatic disasters, the United Nations had already established the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World within the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, IDNDR, 1990-2000. It must be underlined, however, that the interest of international actors for prevention spiked dramatically after the 2004 Tsunami.

Following the passage of RA10121 in 2010, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) was transformed into the **National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC)** whose policy is to “uphold the people’s constitutional rights to life and property by addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities to disasters, strengthening the country’s institutional capacity for disaster risk reduction and management and building resilience of local communities to disasters including climate change impacts” (Congress of the Philippines 2010). The new approach has been aiming to be holistic and to “enhance disaster preparedness and response capabilities at all levels” (Ibid.). The general idea has been to mainstream DRR into all levels of the government’s planification. RA10121 came with what Filipino authorities call a “twin law” RA9729, also known as the Climate Change Act of 2009 (OCD & NDRRMC 2011). It is becoming increasingly obvious that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) are related in many ways (Begum et al., 2014), which explains why Filipino legislation attempts to grapple with both of these issues.⁶⁸

The National Progress Report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2009-2011) almost a year after the approval of RA10121 is critical of the absence of a

⁶⁷ Here again, cynics would argue that the international authorities only really became seriously concerned in “natural” disasters because the 2004 tsunami struck on December 25th when Southeast Asian beaches were crowded with Westerners spending their Christmas vacation in the sun, causing casualties amongst wealthy segments of the world population who are usually much less exposed to natural hazards. Who today remembers the Tangshan earthquake that rocked China in 1976, or the 1970 Bhola Cyclone that pummeled what is now Bangladesh? Both of these events each had higher casualties than the 2004 Tsunami.

⁶⁸ Also, there is international funding available for both themes. There is material for a few other theses on the subject of how third-world governments tailor their policies to fit the “flavor of the month” hot-issue of the international funding agencies.

specific budget allocation for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund. The progress report underlined that “there is a need to know where investments in DRR have been and/or are being made by various government agencies, including local governments, as well as the sources of funds” (OCD&NDRRMC 2011, p. 7). RA10121 also calls for the establishment of DRRM offices but, at the time of the progress report, only 45 of the 80 provinces had such units. Moreover, only 23 of the 80 provinces had permanent staff affected to DRRM (Ibid., p. 8).

RA10121 has a strong emphasis on decentralization, giving Local Government Units (LGUs) responsibility of integrating DRR into their development planning. Just like its ancestor the NDCC, National Disaster Coordination Council, the new and improved National (NDRRMC) has branches on all of the country’s levels of administration: Regional (RDRRMC), Provincial (PDRRMC), Municipal (MDRRMC),⁶⁹ and of course *Barangay* (BDRRMC). The 2011 progress report says that the “[i]mplementation of DRR activities are still highly influenced by local political agenda and interests” (OCD & NDRRMC 2011, p. 9). In concordance with the comments in the 2011 Progress Report, it seems that the coordination between the municipal and village levels is dependent on local political power dynamics.

There are **criticisms of decentralization**; one of them being that it gives national governments an excuse to shed their responsibilities to lower administrative levels. Although Local Government Units (LGUs) are legally responsible for land-use planning, it seems that, in 2011 at least, many of them did not have “sufficient capacities to prepare a comprehensive land use plan that integrates risk factors as bases for planning. Moreover, basic information on risk, such as hazard maps [is] most often not available or have not been prepared for lack of capacity, expertise, resources, or data” (Ibid., p. 26). It is important to again underline the inequalities built into the Filipino state, and point to the great heterogeneity of LGUs. Some city LGUs are very well funded and extremely competent, while other LGUs, often in poor rural areas, do not even have a basic DRRMC office.

⁶⁹ Sometimes also called Local DRRMC, or LDRRMC.

3.2. Community participation

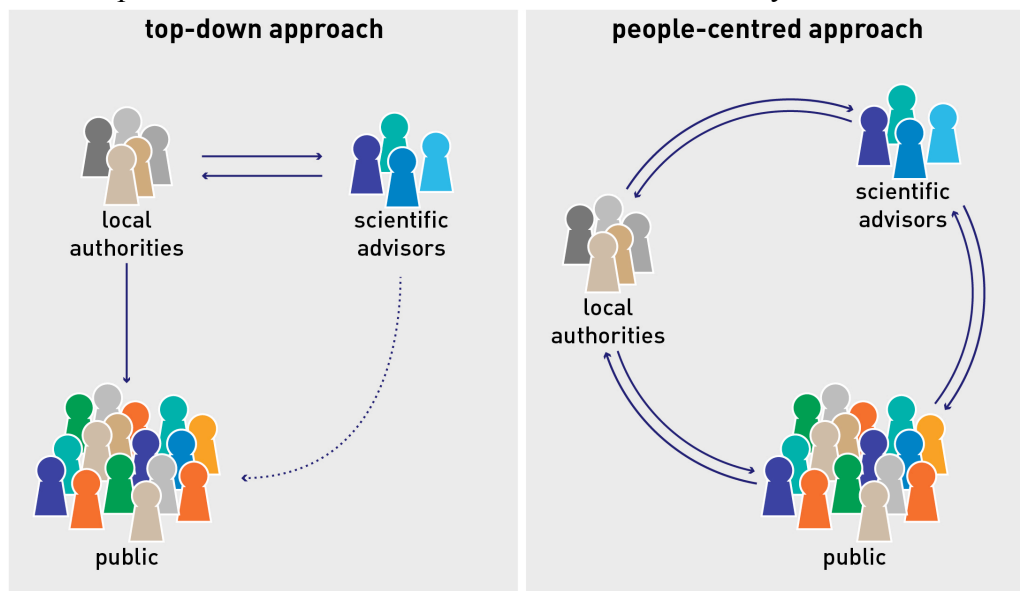
Community participation has become an almost ubiquitous part of most of today's disaster risk reduction programs. It was slow in starting, but in the 1980s it gradually gained ground over the then dominant "command-and-control approach to disaster management, whose limitations were already widely acknowledged" (Twigg 2005, p. 64). This approach gained significant credibility after the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction at Yokohama, to the point where today "virtually every agency working in the field of disaster risk reduction is either involved in community-based initiatives, supports them financially or technically, or endorses them in its policy statements" (Ibid.). Authors at the forefront of this discipline, such as John Twigg, argue that there is a lot of rhetoric over community participation but that a lot of it remains "public relations exercises" (Ibid., p. 65) and that much remains to be done in practice.

Cornwall and Brock go further and underline how the contemporary buzzwords of development policies, such as "community participation" or "social capital," can be manipulated to promote neo-liberal policies. They write that buzzwords are "keywords" that "evoke, and come to carry, the culturally and political values of their time" (2005, p. 1047) and can sometimes in fact just peddle consensus and justify the status quo. These feel-good words are argued to "speak the laudable aim of enabling poor people to have voice and choice," but have "now come to symbolize the legitimacy to pursue today's generation of development blueprints, under the rubric of poverty reduction" (Ibid., p. 1055).

In the Philippines today, most NGOs and governmental agencies use a "community-based approach pioneered by the Citizens' Disaster Response Network (CDRN) formed in 1987" (Bankoff & Hilhorst 2009, p. 692). This NGOs strategy "broke with the previous relief orientation by considering vulnerable people the main actors in disaster preparedness and management, rather than as merely victims" (Ibid.). At the heart of RA10121 is the intention to improve the resilience of local communities and with this comes the importance of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, CBDRRM. The new Filipino law defines this as the process where communities "are actively engaged in the identification,

analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities, and where people are at the heart of decision-making [...]” (Congress of the Philippines 2010, p. 3). Unsurprisingly this is very much in line with the international rhetoric. The legislation defines “capacity” as including “human knowledge, skills and collective attributes such as social relationships, leadership and management” (Ibid., p. 4). This harks back to the concept of social capital which is so central to this thesis.

Figure II.5. Simplified model of how interactions work between key stakeholders.



(Scolobig et al., 2015, p. 8)

For decades, disaster management had been top-down, interventionist, technology-centered, and dominated by outside experts (Allen 2006, p. 82). Over the last 20 years the field has moved toward a more preventive as well as a more community-centered approach (Figure II.5). There is still a significant amount of vibrant academic debate on this shift in policies. Authors like Scolobig et al. in 2015 examine the transition’s “teething problem” and underline the need for flexibility in finding the right mix in the distribution of responsibilities between authorities and the public (Scolobig et al. 2015, p. 9). There have been an increasing number of national and international organizations pushing – and paying – for “bottom-up” projects that seek to empower communities on the local level (Allen 2006, p. 82). In the Filipino

context, this is particularly pertinent because the “top,” i.e. the central state in Manila, has historically had precious little interest in the well-being of the “bottom” communities in the rural provinces.

CBDRRM projects, often funded directly or indirectly by international donors, also come with a variety of other names and acronyms. Each version having slight nuances, but these terms fundamentally refer to projects where local populations 1) become more aware of the hazards that could possibly affect them, and 2) help people organize themselves, collectively, to better prepare and anticipate for these potential hazards. The principle being that a “community” with good preparation can prevent a hazard from turning into a disaster.

Questioning the concept of “community.” The concept of “community” is complex and contested. The term almost always gobbles-up a great variety of potentially conflicting sub-groups. Another way to approach the concept of community is to mean a “population living within the territorial bounds of a town or village administrative unit” (Allen 2006, p. 84). In the Philippines this would be the *barangay*, equivalent to a village in rural areas. In some regards, the conceptual community unit does “provide firm foundation for [...] mobilization” (Ibid.) even if one must bear in mind its important limitations. Most communities are in fact not cohesive entities, and there are often long standing feuds between rival families, ethnic groups, or social classes.

Local communities are often highly heterogeneous, even if they can provide a high degree of mobilizing capacity. Certain sub-groups are entirely autonomous from what is being called the community: “in one Philippine case-study community, an ethnic minority enclave of indigenous people employed a largely autonomous decision-making structure of their own and had minimal input to barangay-level affairs” (Ibid.). Other potentially marginalized sub-groups include, but are not limited to: migrants, landless laborers, and the poor. Not all community members have the same access to the community’s institutions and resources; some have more “social capital provided by family networks” (Ibid.). Social capital can replicate already existing inequalities.

Organizations trying to promote DRR programs need to understand the current “distribution of power within the community” because these kinds of new programs that empower local people are “likely to lead to social change and hence confrontation with those accustomed to holding power and controlling resources” (Twigg 2005, p. 65). Disaster prevention programs can challenge long-established distributions of power by integrating new/different knowledge into official policies. Risk reduction can bring powerful actors⁷⁰ down into communities which are developing risk reduction projects. If these new – outside – actors give respect and trust to people who did not usually receive attention this can be a profoundly empowering process.

Community empowerment means that community institutions are able to act independently. The role of existing structures and institutions play a pivotal role for community empowerment in most countries; they certainly do in the Philippines, because of its profoundly entrenched and unequal power structure. These hurdles are often overlooked by funding agencies,⁷¹ even if in practice “effective self-reliance often entails enhancing the capacity of local institutions to access and maintain control of funds held by hierarchically higher authorities within the government system, or by non-governmental or private actors” (Allen 2006, p. 89). If the empowerment of local people is to be successful, not only do communities need to control their own budgets, they also need to make alliances with wider networks, because “community institutions do not operate at an appropriate scale to address issues concerned with, for example, provincial development planning or watershed management” (Ibid.). Being aware of the underlying power structures is essential for implementing successful DRR projects, but this can be challenging, “especially in hierarchical systems where there is a long history of antagonism between town and country, peasant and landlord, ‘high’ culture and ‘low’ culture” (Wisner et al. 2004, p. 366) like the Philippines.

⁷⁰ International agencies or their national implementing partners are inevitably perceived as powerful actors when they start interacting with people on the local level.

⁷¹ Regardless of whether they are international or if they come from far away Manila.

DRR projects can also be disempowering

The knowledge brought by outside experts can be presented as better than what local people know. “Disempowerment occurs where local knowledge, institutions and understandings are neglected” (Allen 2006, p. 89). CBDRRM oftentimes focuses only on physical hazards rather than people’s “experiences of vulnerability” (Ibid.). The disempowerment can be even more harmful when it concentrates only on isolated small-scale local projects but neglects the root causes of vulnerability that are often of a significantly wider scope. This depoliticizing of vulnerabilities can result in a situation where communities “collectively ask for help, [but] do not demand rights or attempt to influence policy concerning the allocation of resources” (Ibid., p. 90). Such programs attempt to treat the symptoms of vulnerability, but skirt around addressing the core – structural – social problems. These kinds of projects can build sea walls, plant mangroves, or do evacuation drills, all of which can be good and immediately helpful for local people, but at the same time these activities may draw attention away from a “meaningful debate of government responsibilities with regards to, for example, coastal protection and development” (Ibid.). CBDRRM has the unfortunate potential of becoming a local technical fix that leaves out any real discussion of the root causes of problems.

Conclusion

This second chapter painted the geographical and historical background necessary to better contextualize how social capital impacts preparations to natural hazards in the Philippines. The Asia Pacific region and Southeast Asia in particular are extremely exposed to natural hazards. This chapter reviewed how the Philippines is very vulnerable because of deep socio-historical inequalities rooted in its colonial past. The archipelago’s emaciated central state apparatus has evolved, but it still perpetuates a deeply unjust social system. This chapter underlined how this quasi feudal system contributes to the anemic generalized trust, while accentuating the inter-group bonding social capital, especially amongst the country’s powerful families.

Despite its continued control by the land-holding oligarchic elite, the Filipino state has in recent years followed a global trend to change its way of dealing with natural hazards. Moving away from a top-down technocratic system, new legislation is pushing a new paradigm that is

more people-centered. Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM) is far from a panacea as it potentially hauls many socio-political problems. On one hand, the new legislation does have the merit of shifting attention to preventive measures and encourages authorities to take action and prepare before natural hazards strike. On the other hand, the new approach strives to further decentralize responsibilities in an already fragmented country, and can potentially be used to distract attention away from the archipelago's deep structural problems.

CHAPTER III: UNCOHESIVE REIGNS OF GREED⁷²

Introduction

The geographical and historical contexts were outlined for Asia and the Philippines in the previous chapter. This provided background to the country's social tensions and lack of cohesion. The current chapter will continue exploring the fissiparous nature of Filipino national identity: first by addressing the divisive behaviors of elites, and then fleshing out the complex relations with the Chinese minority. This discussion of the Filipino elite as well as of the Chinese minorities sheds light on the paradox of the nationalist narrative and shows how some types of social capital are corrosive to national unity and help explain the dearth of solidarity across the country. Rather than being a mechanism that helps the poor, social capital in fact appears to be used by the wealthy to keep themselves in power.

1. WANTING NATIONALIST NARRATIVES

The standard nationalist narrative in the Philippines is replete with media declarations about love of country and sacrifice for the common good. However, there is a “fundamental irony” in Filipino nationalism: “It has engendered militant resistance and remarkable acts of sacrifice and courage, just as it has provided an alibi for self-serving collaboration with new regimes and the systematic repression of those opposed to them” (Rafael 2000 p. 13).

The first part of this chapter underlines how, despite⁷³ the nationalist rhetoric, a handful of ruling families have been successfully lining their pockets for generations. Around the world it is common for history textbooks to paint glorious age-old unified national projects (Anderson 2006); this is particularly the case in the Philippines. There are often grand claims to “bayanihan-type solidarity” and “noble heroes” of the past. This hypothetical, not to say “Andersonly imagined,” country-wide bond claims to connect people from across the archipelago into a unified community of trust and mutual good will. This manufacture of historical social solidarity for nationalist purposes resonates quite well with Hobsbawm's description of “inventing traditions.” *Bayanihan* like other forms of invented tradition “use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion” (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 12). In

⁷² The *Reign of Greed* is the English language title to José Rizal's second novel *El Filibusterismo* published in 1891.

⁷³ Some could argue *because* of it.

the case of the Philippines, the “imagined social capital” the once existed across the archipelago oozes from the nationalist storyline, but both the historical and contemporary “weighing” of the wretched living conditions of the country’s masses shows that the narrative is “found wanting.”

Mene Mene Thecel Phares
*Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*⁷⁴
 “Weighed [in the balance] and found wanting” (Daniel 5:27)

The Philippines seem(s) to suffer from an evasive collective sense of solidarity. Self-interest almost always seems to win over national-interest: “When a country with extreme geographic, tribal, and social-class differences, like the Philippines, has only a weak offsetting sense of national unity, its public life... become[s] the war of every man against every man. [...] Practically everything that is public in the Philippines seems neglected or abused” (Fallows 1987, pp. 56-57). A nuance that should be suggested to Fallows’s disturbing analysis is that it is not “every man against every man” but rather every *clan* against every *clan*: an endless squabble amongst families struggling against one another; *An Anarchy of Families à la McCoy*.

1.1. Languages and lobotomy

There were roughly 5,000 Spaniards in the Philippines at the zenith of their presence. Authorities were reluctant to teach Castilian,⁷⁵ so by the 1890s less than 5 percent of the population spoke the language of the initial colonialists (Anderson 2004, p. 227). Nevertheless, the educated mestizo elite minority spoke the Latin tongue and used it to organize their revolution. However, after a century of US influence, the language of the “founding fathers” has become inaccessible to most Filipinos. “Almost no one other than a few scholars understands the language in which the revolutionary heroes communicated among themselves and with the outside world—to say nothing of the written archive of pre-twentieth century Philippine history. A virtual lobotomy has been performed” (Ibid.). Anderson develops an interesting analysis of how this “lobotomy” has played into the hands of the elites’

⁷⁴ Also the title of a brilliant Tagalog-language film by Lino Broka (1974).

⁷⁵ Though this may have had more to do with the religious orders than the wishes in distant Madrid: “A law in 1857 mandated primary schools in Spanish towns, a law in 1863 mandated the same for every Filipino town” (Zialcita 2005, p. 67).

bowdlerization of history to camouflage both the consistency of their venality and the fickleness of their national solidarity (Ibid., p. 235).

Regional weathercocks

The turn-of-the-century Filipino nationalist project was very fragile, comparable to Bolivar's failed Gran Colombia experiment (Anderson 2004, p. 199). Aguinaldo's Tagalog-centric Republic had no control on the Muslim region of Mindanao, "parts of the Visayas seemed likely to go their own independent way; and even in Luzon mestizo leadership was contested by a variety of religious visionaries and peasant populists carrying on the tradition of Bonifacio's radicalism" (Anderson 2004, pp. 199-200). The Katipunan, a secret society that launched the August 1896 revolution against Spanish colonial authorities, was "an almost exclusively Tagalog organization; up to the outbreak of the uprising, its members and influence did not extend beyond the boundaries of the eight Tagalog-speaking provinces of central Luzon" (May 1996, p. 13). Nevertheless, there were revolutionary flickers in the Visayas. In early April 1898 the Philippine Revolution made a brief appearance in the center of the archipelago when Spanish authorities were confronted with a short lived – less than a week⁷⁶ – uprising in Cebu City (Mojares 1989, p. 11). In Cebu, as in the rest of the archipelago, local elites were agile in changing their allegiances.

A good illustration of the flexibility of regional elites' solidarity is Resil Mojares's highly informative, albeit hagiographic,⁷⁷ book about the Escaño family of Leyte. This mestizo business clan with distant Spanish heritage was based in the town of Malitbog in Sogod Bay, part of what was to become the Province of Southern Leyte. The head of the family, Fernando Escaño, had become extremely rich⁷⁸ in the abaca trade under Iberian rule. Mojares does not say it, but, in view of Escaño's quickly built fortunes, it can be assumed that the clever businessman was buying raw hemp dirt cheap from native farmers of Leyte and making a hearty profit reselling the products in Manila and Cebu.

⁷⁶ From the 2nd to 7th April 1898, according to Mojares 1989.

⁷⁷ The book was published in Cebu by Hijos de [children of] F. Escaño.

⁷⁸ By the 1880s, the "self-made" Spaniard owned several trading ships (Mojares 1989, p. 7).

Escaño seemed to have had an acute sense of which way the political wind was blowing. Mojares euphemistically wrote, “We can only surmise as to what the political loyalties of Fernando Escaño were at the time but it is clear that his support was sought by high officials in both the Spanish government and the Philippine Republic” (1989, p. 11). Despite Mojares’s decorum, he lets transpire that Escaño supplied goods to the Spanish authorities of Cebu in 1898 but was nevertheless appointed to the equivalent of Provincial Treasurer in 1899 by none other than the President of the newly founded Republic, Emilio Aguinaldo (Ibid.).⁷⁹ During the Filipino-American War, Escaño was again in a “delicate situation, suspected both by some of the insurgent elements as well as by the American authorities” (Ibid., p. 12). Mojares remained elusive, but it nevertheless seems that the Escaños continued doing business with all sides, which eventually led to Fernando being hacked to death by anti-American forces while sleeping on one of his ships anchored in Sogod Bay (Ibid., pp. 12-13).

America’s unifying imperialism

Benedict Anderson postulated that if it had not been for American imperialism, “the Philippines in the early twentieth century could have fractured into three weak, caudillo-ridden states with the internal politics of nineteenth century Venezuela or Ecuador” (Anderson 2004, p. 200). However, President McKinley sent US troops to wrestle control of the archipelago, and the local elites quickly discovered that the new colonial power was not such a bad thing for them after all. After five years of US occupation, “the overwhelming majority of revolutionary leaders had surrendered to the occasionally genocidal ferocity of the conquering force” (Rafael 2000, p. 10). Local quislings rapidly understood they had everything to gain from collaborating with American authorities. This second colonization “consolidated their [the elite’s] prominence, finding in the new regime the economic, military, and political means with which to ward off the demands for radical change from below and secure their privileged positions to speak for and of the nation through the patronage of those above” (Ibid., pp. 10-11). Vincente Rafael underlines how the local oligarch “enjoyed tariff-free access to markets in the United States and dominated national politics under U.S. sponsorship” (Ibid., pp. 11-12). Quoting Anderson, “[t]hose were the palmy days” (Anderson 2004 p. 203).

⁷⁹ A copy of the nationalist letter is proudly displayed in Mojares’ aforementioned family portrait book.

America's greatest contribution to consolidating the Filipino oligarchs could arguably have been establishing the new political system which protected their provincial powerbases and "proved perfectly adapted to the ambitions and social geography of the mestizo nouveaux riches" (Anderson 2004, p. 201). The lack of any real archipelago-wide language guarded the oligarch's power: the elites all spoke the real "'national' language (Spanish, later American), but they also spoke variously Tagalog, Ilocano, Pampango, Cebuano, Ilongo, and a dozen other tongues. In this way competition in any given electoral district was effectively limited, in a pre-television age, to a handful of rival local caciques" (Ibid.). Furthermore, the US supervised the Congress of the Philippines, providing a "civilized 'ring'" (Ibid.) where elite families from across the archipelago really met each other for the first time.

"They might dislike one another, but they went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other's wives, and arranged marriages between each other's children. They were for the first time forming a self-conscious ruling class" (Anderson 2004, p. 201.).

This "self-conscious ruling class" remained polyglot and proved to be most agile in the face of the many regime changes of the 20th century. Prominent Filipino intellectual Vincente Rafael wrote in 2000 that national elites had been trying to "institute a national language based on Tagalog in the face of the persistence of a linguistic hierarchy, where the last colonial language, English, continues to be hegemonic," but that in fact "the Philippines does not have a national language" (p. 9). This was in stark contrast to most other formerly colonized countries of Asia and America. In 1960, less than 45 percent of the Filipinos *understood* Tagalog which at the time had been promoted as the official national language for 30 years (Anderson 2004, p. 199), even though it was the native tongue to only approximately 20 percent of the population, located mainly around Manila (Lieban 1967, p. 8).⁸⁰ It is worthwhile to highlight that in 1960 Cebuanos were still more numerous, with 24 percent of the archipelago's population (Table III.1).

⁸⁰ Lieban (1967) bases his results from *Census of the Philippines: 1960 Population and Housing, Vol. 2 (Republic of the Philippines, Department of Commerce and Industry, Bureau of the Census, Manila, 1963)*, p. 15.

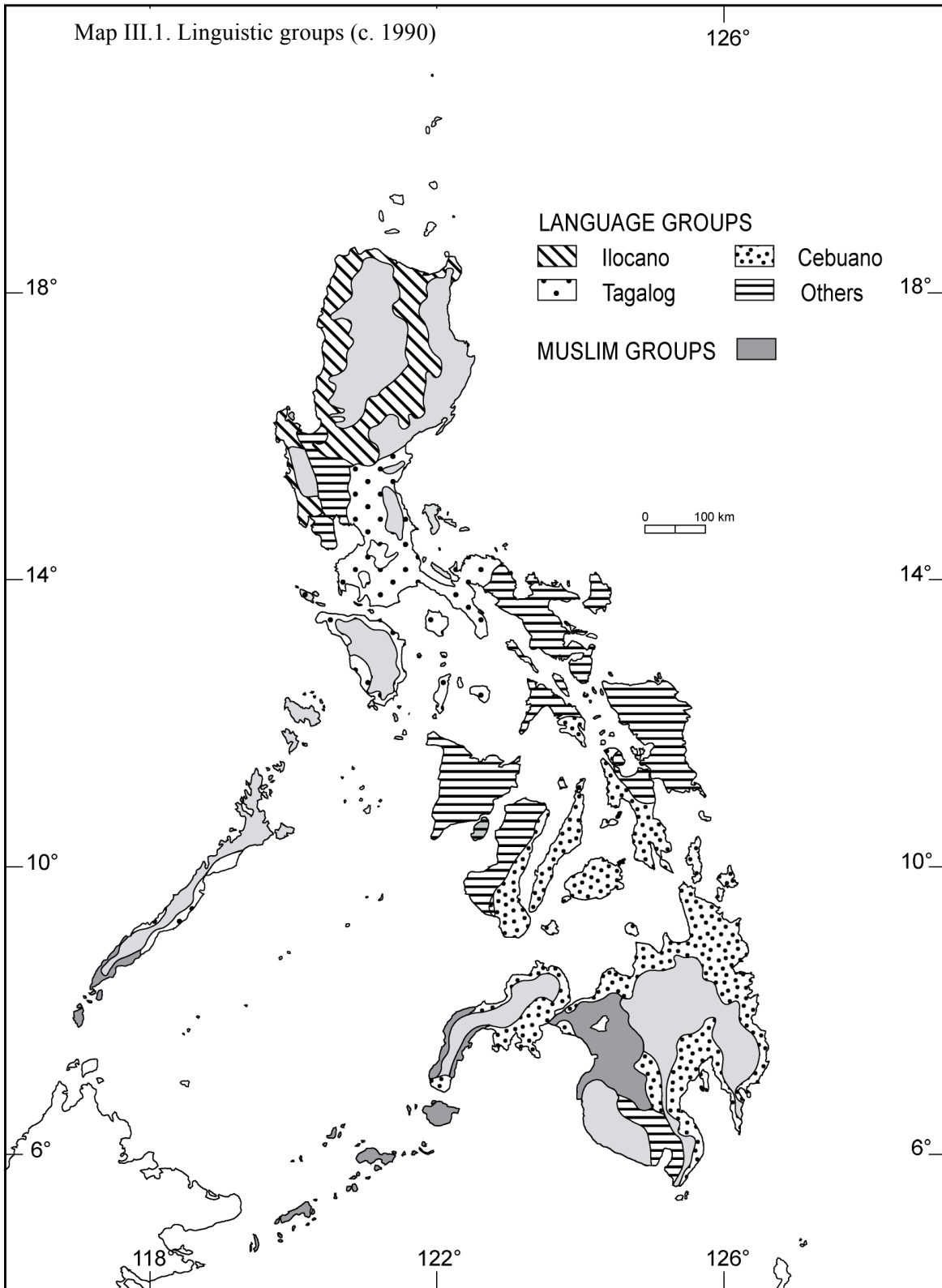
While Tagalog speakers tend to be condescending to non-Tagalog speakers, those who cannot speak English fluently are regarded as “inferior.” Nowadays, especially in Manila, Tagalog is viewed as the language of the poor, the “unrefined,” so much so that among middle and upper-class Filipinos (especially *Manileños*), speaking to others in Tagalog is an act of condescension.⁸¹

| Languages | 1960 ^a | 1985 ^b | 2000 ^c |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Cebuano | 24% | 24.2% | 23.7% |
| Tagalog (Filipino) | 20% | 29.7% | 35.1% |

^a Figures based on Lieban (1967), above; ^b Figures from De Koninck 2012, p. 115, from National Census and Statistic Office, 1985; ^c Figures from NSCB, 2013.

Nevertheless, in 2013 the official rhetoric remained that “our national language, Filipino, unites us toward achieving our collective aspirations such as ensuring good governance, promoting transparency, and working toward inclusive growth” (NSCB 2013). The *langue de bois* narrative of solidarity was mellifluous, but the poverty figures revealed neither good governance, nor inclusive growth. Not for the majority of people at least, regardless of what language(s) they spoke. But elites always managed to turn a profit because, as Imelda Marcos was quoted explaining, “Some are smarter than others” (as cited in Wurfel, 1988, p. 237).

⁸¹ This point comes from extensive discussions with young Filipino intellectuals. See for example: <http://opinion.inquirer.net/11649/language-learning-identity-privilege>



(Adapted from De Koninck 2012, p. 127, with the help of Pham Thanh Hai)

1.2. Different regimes, still making money hand over fist

Abinales and Amoroso argue that the concept of regime “can be used in two ways; one was the somewhat common use synonymous with ‘government of the day.’ In this sense, it carried a connotation of illegitimacy and was often used to disparage, as by opponents of ‘the Marcos regime’” (2005, p. 8). Another sense of the term “describes the kind of ‘institution arrangements’ that emerge out of a country’s history and the ‘dominant ideas’ that legitimize the arrangements” (Ibid.).⁸² The Filipino archipelago has seen several regime changes over the last century, but what remained constant was the profiteering of the same handful of oligarchic families.

During WWII, many mestizo businessmen did not take long to start collaborating with the Japanese: “[w]hile father Sergio Osmeña, Sr., was serving in Washington as vice-president in exile, [his] son Sergio, Jr., was making money hand over fist supplying the Japanese occupation regime in Manila” (Anderson 2004, p. 205).⁸³ When McArthur finally made his much trumpeted return, the lissome oligarchs deftly pirouetted, and “survived not only the Hukbalahap peasant rebellion that followed in the late 1940s and 1950s but also the Marcos dictatorship of the 1970s through the early 1980s; and have continued to dominate Philippine political and cultural life in the aftermath of the People Power uprising in 1986” (Rafael, 2000, pp. 11-12). Quite an acrobatic capacity, but in that regards the Filipino elites do not have a monopoly on the distinguished *Ordre de la Girouette*⁸⁴ and most countries, including France, have had their share of nimble political weathercocks.⁸⁵

Notwithstanding these numerous “regime changes” many things have remained the same throughout the period. Paul Hutchcroft wrote:

“the role of the state in the postwar Philippine political economy has perhaps displayed more fundamental continuity than discontinuity: the more things change, the more they

⁸² Abinales & Amoroso refer to Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 161-62.

⁸³ Anderson is basing these statements on a book from Resil B. Morales, *The Man Who Would be President: Sergio Osmeña and Philippine Politics* (Cebu: Maria Cacao, 1986).

⁸⁴ For more information on this medal of dubious distinction, as well as on the obscurantist “Grand Aumônier de l’ordre de l’Eteignoir” decried after various French revolutions, see Cauchois-Lemaire (1816) and Serna (2005).

⁸⁵ But in France, perhaps because there was not the Filipino linguistic lobotomy of history mentioned above, they still remember and ridicule their elites’ incongruous about-faces.

stay the same. Access to the state apparatus remains the major avenue to private accumulation, and the quest for ‘rent-seeking’ opportunities continues to bring a stampede of favored elites and would-be favored elites to the gates of the presidential palace” (Hutchcroft 1991, pp. 414-415).

Hutchcroft made this argument this in 1991, only five years after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship, but the argument could easily still be maintained today. Regimes have come and gone, but the fundamental corrupt workings of the Philippine state have stayed the same: it is still controlled by a small group of families who use it for their own enrichment.

Intra-elite competition

The elite are not a homogenous block. Wurfel (1988) explained how intra-elite competition is essential to understanding Filipino politics: with the rise of commerce and manufacturing, intra-elites conflicts intensified as certain groups expanded to more diversified economic interests. These intra-elite conflicts were interrupted, however, whenever the mobilization of agrarian discontent became threatening for elite interests:⁸⁶ “Factions of the ruling elite then tended to coalesce more tightly, subordinating or even abandoning intra-elite conflicts” (Wurfel 1988, p 21). During these periods of mass unrest and elite coalition, meek socio-economic reforms were attempted, the objective being to tweak slightly – but preserve – the system. As soon as the masses calmed down, competition was again “the theme of Filipino politics, with corollary concern for building support through patronage” (Ibid., p. 22). Wurfel reasoned that these token reforms stopped being enough to calm the masses in the late 1960s as export-oriented industrialization required the increase of low-wages.

Traditional landowning elite versus non-traditional landowning elite

The oligarchic families were more “plural than the landlord-dominated caricature allows” (Herring 1983, as cited in Borras 2007, p. 79). There has always been internal bickering between different factions. Aside from the constant struggle to gain rents from the state, there were the differences between landed and non-landed elite, and between different types of landed elites.

⁸⁶ In the 1930s it was the Sakdal movement, in the 1940-50s it was the Huks, in the late 60s student and leftist rural unrest.

Borras (2007, p. 100) made the distinction between two types of agricultural production systems; first, there were the *traditional* landlords of the agricultural sector that produced rice, corn, coconut, and sugar cane, which occupied about 90 percent of total farmlands. This type of landlord, prominent in the Eastern Visayas, has been around since colonization and produced high-volume low-value crops. Second, there were the *non-traditional* elites, including urban-based entrepreneurs and multinational corporations that grow banana, mango, pineapple, and other produce (high-value, low-volume crops). These non-traditional structures were more efficient in their management and often used modern technology. Unlike their traditional counterparts, the non-traditional landlord entrepreneurs did not derive most of their power from land rent, but had diversified their portfolios and were also involved in agricultural processing and trading, as well as non-agricultural sectors. In recent years, the increasing economic importance of non-traditional export crops has meant a growth of the political influence of these non-traditional landlords.

Land-tenure reform

Land reform has remained on the agenda of every administration and, on paper, the Philippines “has some of the most progressive laws on tenure reform in the region, if not the world” (Angoc 2009, p. 149). However, the archipelago has “one of the most skewed property regimes in the world” (Ibid.). Filipino governmental agencies have faced many challenges to enforcing legislation, not least of which has been that most implementing agencies (DENR,⁸⁷ DAR,⁸⁸ and others) lack basic resources, expertise, and – most importantly – political willingness to change land tenure structures. The Philippine state continues to be very much controlled by landed elites who have something to lose should real change happen (Ibid.).

Everyone agrees, at least in principle, that there should be some form of land reform, although there are differences in opinion about how serious this reform should be. In 1987, the revolutionary left was calling for “land to the tillers,” the Catholic church was suggesting “genuine” land reform, more traditional politicians proposed “meaningful” land reform, and even “those with most to lose, such as sugar plantation owners, [were] embrac[ing]

⁸⁷ Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

⁸⁸ Department of Agrarian Reform.

‘responsible land reform’ – on the understanding that the change may turn out to be no change at all” (Timberman 1991, p. 352).⁸⁹ True intentions aside, every national administration since decolonization has had official plans for land and tenancy reform (Borras 2007, p. 98). Borras has developed a sophisticated eight-point theory of why national governments pay lip service to land reform. Without going through every point in detail, the following are three explanations of how successive regimes “went through the motions” of land reform: First, they maintained a minimum amount of political legitimacy with rural constituency. Second, shaking the “boogeyman of real agrarian reform” was actually just the sparks resulting from internal jousting between competing elite factions. Third, the state needed rural political stability to continue accumulating capital (Ibid., p. 99).

Real versus “apparent-but-not-real” reforms

Borras (2007, p. 9) argued that there were two main types of redistributive land reform outcomes: either *real* or *apparent-but-not-real*. This distinction sheds light on the way the state was instrumental in structuring land reform. Real reform was only achieved when there was a real transfer of power and control over the land resource; otherwise there was only *apparent* structural change. Herring (1983, p. 269) writes:

“Land reforms produce important alterations in the observable structures of agrarian systems – land records are altered, census data collected, reports are made – all presenting a picture of the rural world that is more congruent with the needs of the landed elites, administrators, and ruling politicians than with reality on the ground. [...] The apparent change is important because it is this data-built facade which goes into planning documents, policy debates, reports of international agencies, and all too many scholarly treatments. The distortions become social facts, the primary sources for understanding the rural world for non-rural groups who are, after all, the primary movers of rural policy” (Herring 1983, p. 269; as cited in Borras 2007, p. 8).

The difference between *real* and *apparent-but-not-real* land reform was important because when “fake land reform” was registered it perpetuated and reinforced the unjust structure. Landlords and state officials could smugly herald change which in fact never happened. This enduring absence of meaningful structural change applies to land reform as well as to the archipelago’s general societal structures. This section has discussed the historic and

⁸⁹ Original source is *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 March 1987, p. 32, quoted from Timberman D., 1991, *A Changless land*, p. 352.

contemporary limitations of the nationalist narrative of solidarity and shown that, regardless of regime changes, a small group of families have always managed to enrich themselves and disregard the rest. In other words, the bonding social capital was very strong while the bridging and linking social capitals were anemic. Amongst the clash of clans, there were also ethnic lines of demarcation such as the age-old ambiguous relationship of the Chinese with the archipelago.

2. CHINESE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Today the “Chinese” are often seen in the Philippines as a wealthy elite, both in the national discourses as well as in the municipal context will be seen in forthcoming chapters. That said, Chinese identity is complex and full of ambiguities, in part because people of this self-described ethnicity have been part of the archipelago’s life since time immemorial. The discussion on the Chinese communities in the archipelago will help highlight how fractured social capital is within the Philippines, even within this particular ethnic minority. Furthermore, analyzing the historical evolution of this ethnic group across the country provides background for the power dynamics that are at play on the municipal level.

The historical relationships between Filipinos and Chinese

Chinese merchants were trading with the people of the Philippine islands for several centuries before Europeans set foot in the archipelago. During the 300 years of Spanish colonization, the Chinese continued doing business in the region, even if their communities were ostracized, discriminated against, and at times even slaughtered by the tens of thousands. They always remained indispensable in the management of the colony’s commercial and administrative affairs. During the American occupation, authorities attempted to make the Chinese illegal, but quickly backtracked when they realized no one else could run the dominion (Hau 2014).

2.1. Chinese communities in Southeast Asia

As early as the 1950s, sociologists were already studying the vast and complex phenomenon of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. At the time, the Chinese speaking community was estimated at approximately 10 million (Skinner 1959, p. 137). Skinner argued that there were

two main waves of Chinese immigrants. First, “the early junk trade of Chinese merchants from the southeastern maritime provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung” (Ibid.). And second, a more numerous “mass immigration” during the first half of the 20th century. More importantly, according to Skinner, is that in the first wave of immigration, “settled immigrants generally took indigenous wives” and “complete assimilation with the indigenous peoples was the rule within a few generations” (Ibid., p. 138), while more recently, it seemed that the assimilation of the newer waves of Chinese immigrants had slowed dramatically, in part due to the rise of Southeast Asian nationalism, and in part due to the increase of women amongst the Chinese immigrants, as well as the increased number of Chinese-language schools (Ibid.).

Throughout the region, and for that matter throughout the world, the Chinese were, and are, perceived to be good businessmen and economically successful. “Partly by governmental design and partly through the play of divergent cultural systems, the Chinese in Southeast Asia achieved a social and economic position always distinctive and usually superior to that of the indigenes” (Ibid.). Because of this perceived ethnic inequality there arose across Southeast Asia “an anti-Sinitic tradition which found more open expression as indigenous elites came to power” (Ibid.) when Western colonial powers withdrew.

2.2. Chinese community in the Philippines

Weightman (1967) argued that the Philippines was the country in Southeast Asia where there was the most antipathy towards the Chinese community: “While not so numerous as their compatriots in some other countries of Southeast Asia, the Philippine Chinese have occupied a crucial economic position in the Philippines since the early Spanish colonial period [...]. Fearful and resentful of their dominant economic position, the Filipinos have long sought through legislative actions and judicial interpretations to eliminate or at least restrict Chinese economic activities” (Weightman 1967, p. 316). Both Spanish and American colonial administrations actively sought to marginalize Chinese traders, often with very limited success. The Chinese in the Philippines were traditionally concentrated mainly in commerce, with occasional key position in industry.

The Chinese community historically stayed away from the sensitive sectors of agriculture and land ownership, and instead were found to “dominate or control major segments of the nonagricultural [sic] economy” (Skinner 1959, p. 138). The US colonial application of the Chinese Exclusion Act “drove the Chinese even more deeply into the mercantile niche (in 1930, Chinese controlled 90% of the retail trade) while creating the legal fiction that ‘all’ Chinese immigrants were merchants” (Hau 2014, p. 149). Hodder (2007) attempted to question the supposed domination of the “Chinese” (whatever the definition) in the Filipino economy. He was nevertheless obliged to acknowledge that “there is little doubt that the economic significance of the Chinese in the Philippines is greater than the figure commonly given for the proportion of the Chinese in the population as a whole” (Hodder 2007, p. 104). Importantly for this thesis, this ethnic minority was perceived as wealthy: “It is commonly said that, although they constitute only 1 percent to 2 percent of the population, their share of market capital is between 50 percent and 55 percent” (Hodder 2007, p. 89). During the interviews at the municipal level, a majority of the interviewees perceived the “Chinese” to be better off than other Filipinos.

A tragic repercussion of this image of the wealthy Chinese businessman was that in the 1990s they became the prime targets of a wave of kidnappings. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s over 2,300 people were kidnaped in the Philippines.⁹⁰ Hau (2014) argued that the Chinese were the “‘perfect victims’ because of the (by definition) criminal nature of their capitalist activities” (p. 139). She reasons that the “Chinese are objects of class resentment because, ‘rich’ people who benefited economically from the status quo, they come to stand in for the evils and abuses of the present social system” (p. 147). She underlined the irony⁹¹ of how kidnappers did to capitalists what they themselves did to laborers:

“If capitalism institutes a circuit in which the capitalist buys the labor power that the laborer sells for a price, the wage, kidnapping institutes a circuit in which the capitalist buys himself back for a price, a fraction of his total net worth. Kidnapping makes the capitalist an almost literal personification of capital, in the same sense that capitalism makes the laborer the personification of his own labor power. Perhaps the real irony lies in the facts that, by making the capitalist its primary source of extraction, kidnapping trains the lens of inequality inherent in the capitalist relation onto those

⁹⁰ Ranking the country 4th behind Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil in number of victims (Hau 2014, p. 138).

⁹¹ Which she writes was first discerned by Vincente Rafael.

who are seen as playing a role in perpetuating this inequality” (Hau 2014, pp. 145-146).

For centuries, authorities⁹² had been making use of anti-Chinese feelings with a violence that might today seem staggering. “Filipino anti-Chinese feeling, of long historic development, is largely but not entirely the result of both Spanish and American colonial policies” (Weightman 1967, p. 316). This animosity has – at times – gone as far as violent purges and riots against the Chinese community. “During the Spanish era there were systematic government-sponsored massacres in 1603, 1639, 1662, 1686, and 1762. A non-governmental-inspired massacre took place in 1819. Filipino rebel leaders planned another during the Filipino War of Independence. Severe communal struggles during the American period occurred in Manila (1924) and San Pablo (1931)” (Weightman 1967, footnotes p. 316). During Spanish rule, the Chinese were frequently expelled by colonial authorities. In “1755, most of the Chinese were removed (Wickberg 1965:22). In 1603 an entire Chinese colony of 20,000 in Manila was massacred by the Spaniards following a Chinese revolt (Wickberg 1965:10)” (Krutz 1971, p. 331). In the case of the Visayas, following the brief Cebu insurrection of 1896, mentioned above, the Chinese community of the city was exterminated:

“The Cebu ethnic Chinese suffered a great tragedy. The Spanish Governor General ordered the soldiers to torch all the native houses. The Chinese stores were completely gutted. However, all the other merchants of other nationalities were protected by their consuls with the exception of the Chinese who had no protection at all. They ran hither and thither, each one trying his own escape. Some died in the fire, some died from the enemies’ fire power, and some were killed outright by the soldiers. The whole town’s Chinese residents numbering almost 900 people perished, with only two able to escape” (Qi Jian Seng 1896; Translated from Chinese).⁹³

Intsik versus huanna

An indicator of the kind of animosity that still exists today toward the Chinese community is one of the derogatory terms Filipinos currently use to refer to the Chinese minority: *Intsik*. It is a word full of negative connotations like “dirty, slimy, gross, haggard and unkempt; especially when it is used in a phrase ‘*Intsik beho tulo laway*’ (which means word for word ‘Chinese old saliva dripping’)” (Baytan 2000, p. 396). Those are pretty graphic and insulting terms, but

⁹² Colonial or not.

⁹³ In his *Historical Record of Big Events Outside China* (in Chinese) Qi Jian Seng refers to the May 1896 edition of the *Star Paper* from Ang See T., *Chinese in the Philippines. Problems and Perspectives. Volume 3*. 2004, pp. 74-75.

Baytan was quick to underline that the Chinese also had their own insulting term to refer to the Filipinos: “*huanna*” (meaning barbarians). It seems that the Chinese return the favor and sometimes view their Filipino neighbors in rather unfavorable light, characterizing them as lazy, unfocused, and corrupt.

Multiplicity of Chinese identities

As is often the case, when one starts to scratch beyond the surface, what might have initially seemed like a homogenous community is actually composed of a great variety of different Chinese identities. Mentioned in the historical overview above was the significant difference between the different chronological waves of Chinese immigrants:

“In the Philippines...the *sangleys* of the Spanish colonial period are different from the Chinese immigrants (the *hua quiao*) who came to the country at the turn of the century, and from the Chinese now living in Binondo and other cities across the islands. Though these groups of people may share a common Chinese heritage, their Chinese identity has been subjected to the forces of history—to the inevitable rituals of negotiation, assimilation, de-sinicization, integration, miscegenation, and even annihilation. Ultimately, ‘Chineseness’ is a malleable, unstable, ever-changing entity subject to the socio-political and historical forces present wherever it manifests itself” (Baytan 2000, p. 391).

There are many different versions of Chinese identity. The concept of “Chineseness” has been abundantly kicked around in the literature, and with reason, as some people who consider themselves Chinese have never spoken the language and were born in the Philippines. “The very definition of a Chinese becomes intricate in the overseas context, for neither ancestry nor legal citizenship status is a realistic criterion of Chineseness in Southeast Asia” (Skinner 1959, p. 137). And inversely, some people who consider themselves Filipino might be seen by others as being Chinese. “There are numerous complaints that even after completing the long and arduous naturalization process the Chinese is still considered a ‘second class citizen,’ and eyed with suspicion if not contempt. According to a number of Chinese informants, Philippino [sic] businessmen have been unwilling to hire even naturalized Philippino [sic] Chinese, citing government regulations for their refusal” (Van Der Kroef 1967, p. 126). One way to look at this question of “Chineseness” is to see it as a matter of self-identification. “Overseas Chinese, then, comprise China-born Chinese residing abroad together with those patrilineal descendants

of Chinese immigrants who still regard themselves personally and socially as Chinese” (Skinner 1959, p. 137). But then, this still does not resolve the multiplicity of possible Chinese identities. Once a person is identified as Chinese, is he or she affiliated and associated with the People’s Republic of China, or Taiwan? Or as a *Tsinoy* (Filipino Chinese)?

The difference between affiliation to the PRC or Taiwan is fairly significant. In the interviews for this thesis I spoke with Chinese businesspeople in the Visayas, and it became clear that there were certain Chinese family names that were associated with Taiwan and others with mainland China, and that these two communities did not do businesses with each other. This means that to some extent, *Tsinoy*s who wanted to identify with their Chinese roots were either assigned a particular identity because of their families, or had to choose one for themselves. These same businesspeople also pointed out that even if they were born in the Philippines and considered themselves Filipino, and used Tagalog (or other Filipino languages), it was when it came to negotiating prices that they switched into one of the many Chinese languages. It may be interesting, in another thesis or paper, to investigate further these nuances in the *Tsinoy* affiliation with different versions of “Chineseness.”

Mestizos

Finally, after these discussions concerning the traditional animosity of the Filipinos for the Chinese, as well as amongst the Chinese communities themselves, it is important to highlight that these lines often cross. People fall in love, marry, and have children. Many “Chinese” in the Philippines have parents of mixed origins; they are often referred to by the Spanish term *mestizo*. It would be wrong to think that *mestizo* is a derogatory term in the Philippines. In the archipelago,

“the term carries no derogatory connotation and sets no group apart. Many of those classified as Chinese *mestizo*, Spanish *mestizo*, or American *mestizo* are politically Filipino citizens and ethnically Filipino (...). In the Philippines an individual’s relatively recent Chinese ancestry is no guarantee that his sympathies will be with the Chinese community. Indeed, the greatest enemies and the strongest allies of the Chinese community are both drawn from the *mestizo* component of the society” (Weightman 1967, p. 320).

Perhaps because of the Philippines's great internal diversity, it comes quite naturally for Filipino society to mix with other cultures. That said, even if the Chinese identity can be blurry, it remains clear that the Chinese communities in the Philippines have a complicated history. In short, the relationship between the Filipino and Chinese peoples has been both long and complex. Over the centuries the Chinese of the archipelago have been the target of abuse, sometimes terrible massacres, but they are nevertheless seen today as vital and successful members of Filipino society. Furthermore, there is a multiplicity of Chinese identities, with different waves of immigration, different political allegiances, and different levels of assimilation in the archipelago.

Picture III.1. Tacloban's Chinese business community have their own volunteer fire brigade



(Source: Veuthey April 2013)

3. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IPs) IN THE PHILIPPINES

Indigenous peoples (IPs) in the Philippines are not faring well. This thesis will not address their fate in very much detail, but the next few pages will make a brief overview of their situation in the archipelago, since their marginalization from mainstream Filipino society illustrates the fractured nature of social capital on the national level. IPs compose between 13 and 16 percent of the country's total population, meaning somewhere between 14 and 17

million people (UNDP 2013).⁹⁴ A third of them are in Northern Luzon's Cordillera Administrative Region, about 60 percent are on the Southern Island of Mindanao, and only about 5 percent are spread across the Visayas (UNDP 2013). The country is home to more than 110 "indigenous" ethnolinguistic groups but most of them are "amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged social groups" (Angoc 2009, p. 133). Their "settlements are remote, without access to basic services, and are characterized by high incidences of morbidity, mortality and malnutrition" (Ibid.). IPs of the Philippines face a tremendous overlap of inequalities: economic, racial, and geographic. My personal meeting with IPs of the Eastern Visayas revealed that they were extremely neglected by authorities and were portrayed in shocking stereotypes by many people from the majority ethnic group. Several of my interviewees told me about the way school textbooks still portrayed IPs in an extremely negative light, showing them as slightly more than cavemen, or that "they still had tails." Many of these same sources also told me of the many super-natural powers and skills of the IPs, ranging from magical spells to secret iron-smelting techniques to make the best machetes. This thesis will only skim the subject of IPs, because although there was a *Mamanua* community living in the studied municipality during the time of the research, they seemed extremely reluctant to be interviewed, so much so that after several attempts, I decided they preferred not being bothered.⁹⁵ That said, to describe the way the mainstream Filipino society seems to see IPs, or "Black Filipinos," I defer to Lobel's superb 2013 PhD thesis:

"Many people in the Philippines talk about and treat Black Filipinos as if they were subhuman at best—not hateful as in the racial tensions in places like America, but simply as if it's a natural fact that Black Filipinos represent a lower form of life. It helps little that Black Filipinos have no voice in the government or society, and that their only representation in the media is when Filipino actors don black makeup to caricature them in folk performances. Even in the school system, most Filipinos learn that their Black countrymen are loincloth-wearing, spear-carrying primitives, without realizing that in the not-too-distant past, their own ancestors were similarly-dressed "primitives" that simply had a lighter skin color than the average Black Filipino" (Lobel 2013, pp. 57-58).

Indigenous peoples across Southeast Asia are often marginalized economically, culturally, and geographically. This is also the case in the Philippines, particularly in the south of the

⁹⁴ The vagueness of the available figures is telling in itself.

⁹⁵ Perhaps they had been overly solicited by NGOs, some of which seemed avid to work with IPs.

archipelago, where they often end up living in squalid conditions and in zones particularly exposed to natural hazards. That said, it is important to bear in mind that IPs are not alone in their unfortunate marginalization, as large swaths of Filipino society are often neglected by the state and left to fend for themselves against the hardships of finding a daily meal, but also to look after themselves when natural hazards strike their area. This brief overview of the marginalization of IP groups gave yet another example of the fractured nature of Filipino society, with these minority groups having very few bridging (or linking) social capital links with the other ethnic groups.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how divided the archipelago was and continues to be. The shameless opportunism of national elites was discussed with a historical perspective, and analyzed in light of the different oppressive incarnations of Western colonialism. The contemporary self-serving nationalist narrative was juxtaposed with the country's direly wanting national solidarity and complex language politics. The objective here was to underline how disjointed social capital is on the national level, and explain the dismal level of generalized trust across the country. The particular and multifaceted case of the Chinese minority was analyzed, trying to give nuances to the common reductionist stereotype in the Philippines that the *Tchinoy*s are a rich business class of carpetbaggers. These discussions showed how social capital on the national level is very weak indeed, with low levels of trust between social groups, while the bonding social capital within groups has remained very strong throughout history. The analysis of the Chinese community on the national level also provides a background for the forthcoming discussion of the Chinese community in the Municipality of Saint Bernard.

CHAPTER IV: THE EASTERN VISAYAS

Introduction

This chapter provides the socioeconomic and historical background for the Eastern Visayas, Leyte Island, and as much as possible the Province of Southern Leyte. These parts of the archipelago have long been neglected by both the central state in Manila and academic researchers. Because there continues to be a dearth of data on the provincial and municipal levels, this current chapter provides a socioeconomic statistical grounding of the Eastern Visayas to better understand the analysis of the Municipality of Saint Bernard in the next chapter.

The “reign of greed” described by José Rizal at the end of Iberian colonization, still applies quite well today to both the national and regional levels. The next section reviews the dire economic situation in the Eastern Visayas and attempts to point at some of the roots of the region’s deeply unequal social structure. Administrative Region VIII is undoubtedly one of the most neglected ones in the Filipino archipelago. Most Filipinos have never been there, and many people born in the region have migrated to other parts of the archipelago (Map IV.2). Most foreign tourists until recently did not even know it exists.⁹⁶ It bears the brunt of the country’s typhoons and is highly seismically unstable (Map II.3). Its anemic economy remains mainly based on minimally productive agriculture, and poverty is widespread. It has the Philippines’s highest level of economic inequality, which may explain its being a stronghold of the Maoist insurgency. That said, the Eastern Visayas has several times played an important role in Filipino history.

1.1. Historical importance of the Eastern Visayas

Ferdinand Magellan’s first contact with “Asia” was in what is now the Eastern Visayas, and his onboard savant, Antonio Pigafetta, noted abundant detailed descriptions of the Islands of Leyte and Samar as well as their inhabitants in 1521.⁹⁷ Again in 1543, when Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos arrived from across the Pacific Ocean, he landed in the Eastern

⁹⁶ But Super Typhoon Haiyan changed that in 2013.

⁹⁷ Notably, the Venetian scholar had begun making a Visayan language dictionary. Interestingly the two main island of Region VIII, Samar and Leyte were first believed to be a single entity because of the anfractuosity of the San Juanico Strait.

Visayas. Unbeknownst to most, the Islands of Leyte and Samar were the original bearers of the name of the heir to the Hapsburg throne, Felipe II.

“Like Columbus confronting the islands of the New World, Villalobos took conceptual possession of these, naming them *las islas Filipinas*. The boundaries of this Spanish invention, however, were far from settled. Originally, it referred to those two islands where Villalobos’s men were able to secure provisions. By 1565, with the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and the establishment of the first permanent colonial settlement on the island of Cebu, the term encompassed those parts of the archipelago that had come under Spanish control, including most of the lowlands of Luzon” (Rafael 2000, p. 5).

Legazpi founded the first settlement of the colony in the Central Visayas on what is now the City of Cebu (Ango 2010, p. 156). This was also the location of a Brobdingnagian bishopric “that extended from Palawan to the Marianas” (Ibid.). Father Pedro Chirino arrived in Cebu in 1595 and wrote that the town was multicultural and bustling “Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Bisayans, and many other nations who come to this city for trade and commerce” (Ibid., p. 157). The Chinese in particular seem to have been numerous and highly active in the interisland trade. When the Jesuits settled in Leyte they became the first permanent religious mission in the Eastern Visayas. In 1595 they began the systematic Christianisation of the area, until their expulsion from the country in 1768 (Bernad 1979, p. 9). When the followers of Ignatius of Loyola arrived on Leyte Island it already had 18 Spanish *encomenderos*. It was believed that 70,000 natives lived on the island at the time, 30,000 of whom were already forced to pay tributes (Ibid.). In a letter written in 1603 to Rome, Father Mateo Sanchez decried the brutal venality of local colonial authority: “These justices of the peace are in reality injustices. That is why today the land is full of killings and robberies” (Ibid., p. 13). Around 1588 “a greedy *encomendero* of Leyte was hunted by the Leyteños (natives of the island) whom he deceived by collecting the tribute twice. He managed to escape with his life by dressing up as a Chinese and hiding in their junk that was about to sail for Cebu” (Ango 2010, p. 157).

There is more information about sixteenth-century Visayan culture than about any other part of the Philippines. “The Spaniards were in the Visayas fifty years before they reached Luzon, and they recorded their observations with the enthusiasm of new discoveries. [...] Visayan culture

and languages are the most widely dispersed in the archipelago, and Leyte and Samar are the islands farthest removed from direct Asian contact” (Scott 1994, p. 4). Francisco Alcina’s 1668 four-volume *Historia de las islas e Indios de Bisayas*, is partially available today thanks to the epic endeavor of translation, editing, and annotation of C. J. Kobak and L. Gutiérrez, and published at the University of Santo Tomas. I will not delve too extensively into this fascinating historical material that describes tooth-filing, head-flattening, penis-pins, and intricate gold jewellery. Nevertheless it must be underlined that Alcina thought that the Visayan language was most elegant:

“For their abundance in vocabulary, expressions, modes and metaphors is so complex that even though he learned and spoke the language for over 40 years, he has not mastered it yet entirely. He considers it more complete and better than Latin and Greek and more engaging and expressive than Spanish. He also indicates that this language has a certain liveliness and richness of expressions relative to sex or nature since they are in permanent contact with it” (Alcina 1668, translated by Kobak & Gutiérrez 2004, p. xxxii).

For various reasons, including (cash-strapped) Spain’s recent loss of its American colonies, cash-crops were developed across the archipelago during the 19th century. These included tobacco in Luzon and sugar in the Western Visayas; in the Eastern Visayas the cash-crop was abaca, also known as “Manila hemp.” An enormous demand for ropes to supply US and British ships jostled the expansion of abaca plantations (Mojares 1989, p. 5). “From 1820 until the second half of the twentieth century (when it was eclipsed by the improved artificial fibers such as nylon), abaca or ‘Manila Hemp’ was a principal item in coastwise and export trade, accounting for close to 50 percent of total Philippine exports from 1850 to 1920” (Ibid.). The Eastern Visayas had the right topography and rainfall patterns for the plant. Leyte Island is near Cebu City⁹⁸ and benefited when this central Visayan port was opened to world trade in 1860. “Chinese merchants and agents of the foreign firms Peele & Hubell and Russell and Sturgis had already started to make inroads in Leyte. Moreover, there was in Leyte at the time a network of Spanish and Spanish-mestizo planters and traders at strategic points of the island” (Ibid.).

⁹⁸ The two islands are 30 kilometers apart. The distance between the main city of Western Leyte, Ormoc, and Cebu City is 100 kilometers.

Cullinane underlines how the “rugged coastal areas of western and southern Leyte” developed into “a major abaca-growing region” (Cullinane 2001, p. 273). Abaca production skyrocketed in Leyte. From 1858 to 1880 the production of hemp on the island was multiplied by seven, and then tripled again by 1898 (Mojares 1989, p. 7). The vast majority of this hemp was sent to Cebu, which sold it directly to foreign business houses, thus cutting out Manila from that lucrative trade (Cullinane 2001, p. 271-273). The mestizos of Cebu “did not monopolize” this hemp bonanza and shared the market with “many newcomers who emerged as wealthy and influential residents of the provinces” (Ibid., p. 273).

The Eastern Visayas occupies a critical geographical position in the archipelago, capped on both ends by the two main passages between the central islands and the Pacific Ocean: The *San Bernardino Strait* to the North of the Island of Samar is the 20-kilometer connection to Luzon, the large island of the North; and the *Surigao Strait* which separates by 20 kilometers Southern Leyte and Mindanao, the large island of the South (Map IV.1). Because of this geostrategic importance, during WWII Surigao Strait⁹⁹ was the scene of the largest naval battle in history as the American armed forces clashed with their Japanese adversaries.¹⁰⁰

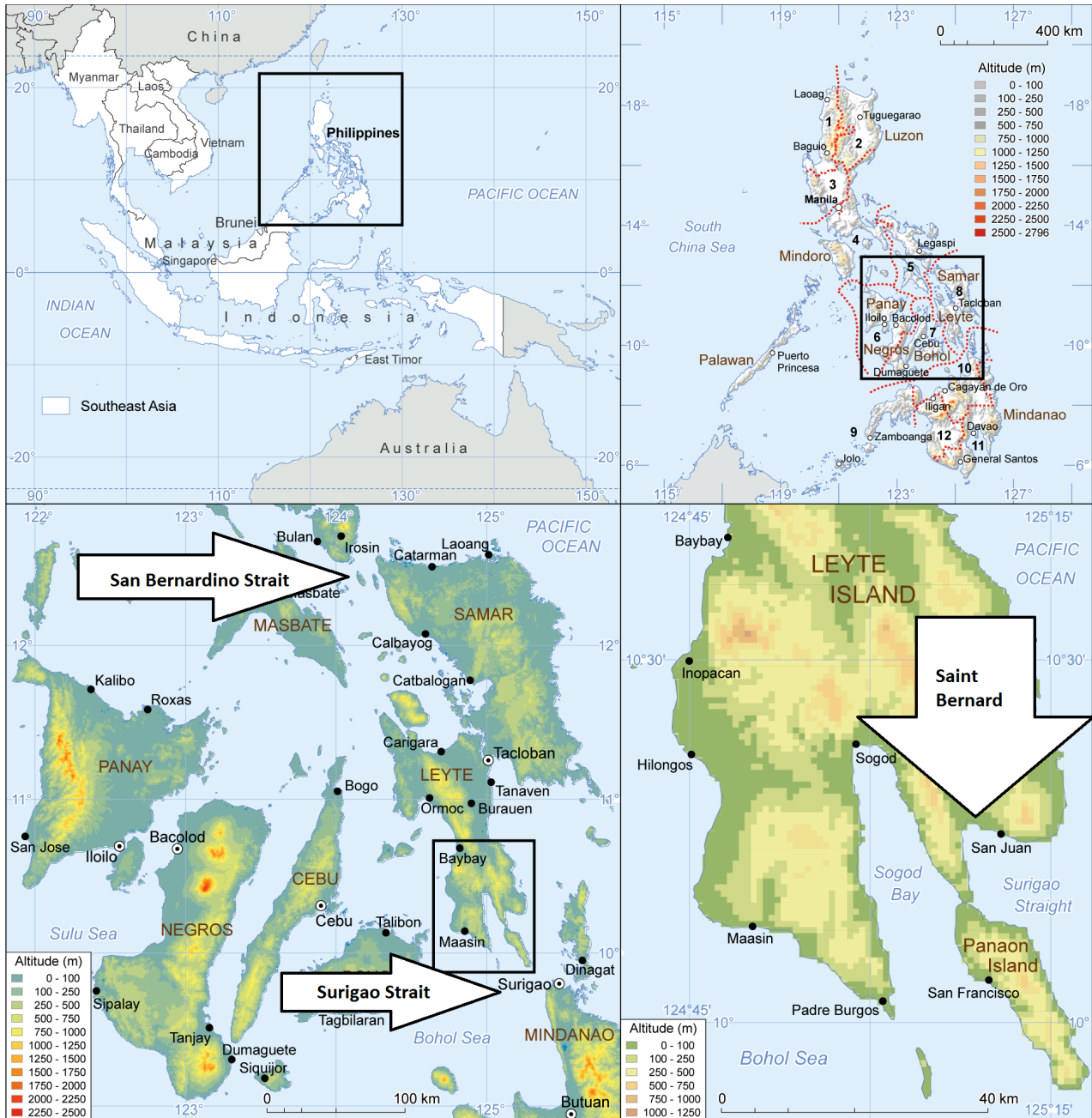
1.2. Geography of the Eastern Visayas

The Eastern Visayas Region is today composed of six provinces spread over three main islands: two larger ones, Samar and Leyte, as well as smaller Biliran. There are 136 municipalities, themselves composed of a total of 4,390 *barangays*. The Eastern Visayas has a land area of 2,143,169 hectares (Table IV.1), which corresponds to about 7.14 percent of the Philippines’s total (NEDA 2013, p. 23).

⁹⁹ The battle also spread out to Leyte Gulf on the Pacific side of Leyte Island.

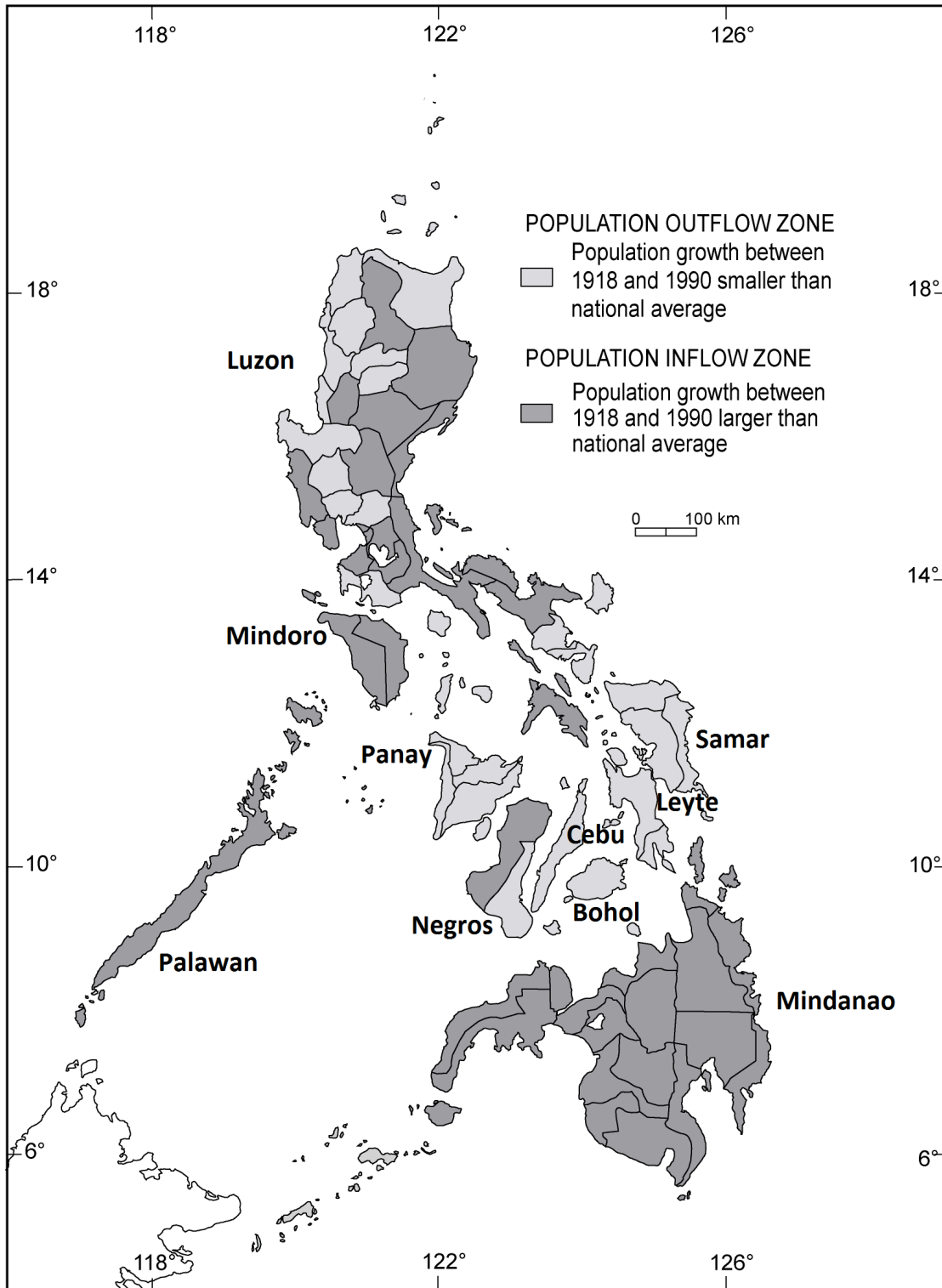
¹⁰⁰ For a more detailed account consult Cutler’s (2014) *The Battle of Leyte Gulf 23-26 October 1944*.

Map IV.1. Location and topographic map



(Source: M. Girard 2015)

Map IV.2. Population Transfers 1918 to 1990



(Adapted from R. De Koninck 2012, p. 127, thanks to Pham Than Hai)

Population

The Eastern Visayas has a current population of approximately four million (NEDA 2013, p. 23).¹⁰¹ The region's population growth rate is 1.2 percent, which is lower than the national average of 1.9 percent (Ibid.). There are 104 men for every 100 women and the population is relatively young (Table IV.2). The regional population density has been increasing, albeit slowly (Table IV.2), from 168 persons per square kilometer in 2007 to 177 in 2010 (NEDA 2013, p. 23). Net migration from 1995 to 2007 was a negative seven percent; in other words, people have been leaving the region (Map IV.2) and the "lack of economic opportunity is seen as the main cause of this situation" (NEDA 2009, Technical notes, p. 1).

Table IV.2. Demographic Trends: 2007 and 2010

| Region/Province | Population | | Annual Population Growth Rate | Population Density (per sq. km) | |
|-----------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| | 2007 | 2010 | 2007 - 2010 | 2007 | 2010 |
| Philippines | 88,574,614 | 92,337,852 | 1.90 | - | - |
| Region VIII | 3,912,936 | 4,101,322 | 1.28 | 168 | 177 |
| Leyte | 1,722,036 | 1,567,984 | 1.04 | 264 | 248 |
| Biliran | 150,031 | 161,760 | 1.43 | 280 | 302 |
| Southern Leyte | 390,847 | 399,137 | 1.03 | 217 | 222 |
| Samar | 695,149 | 733,377 | 1.35 | 115 | 121 |
| Eastern Samar | 405,114 | 428,877 | 1.33 | 87 | 92 |
| Northern Samar | 549,759 | 589,013 | 1.64 | 149 | 159 |

(Source: RSET 2012, from NEDA 2013, p. 25)

Land Classification

The region is mainly agricultural with 45 percent of its land area being used for agriculture. 52.59 percent of the region is considered alienable and disposable (A&D) thus potentially agricultural, while what is left is called forest land (FL), mainly in mountainous areas (Table IV.1; Map IV.3). In the Province of Southern Leyte, 63 percent of the land is being used for agriculture (NEDA 2013, p. 26). Bauxite is the main valuable mineral in the Eastern Visayas. It is believed that there is a total reserve of 116,230,220 metric tons, mainly on the Island of Samar (Ibid).

¹⁰¹ The 2010 Census of Population and Housing (CPH) registered a total population of 4,101,322 (NEDA 2013, p. 23).

Table IV.1. Land Area and Classification by Province, Eastern Visayas: 2010

| Province | Total Land Area (in hectares) | % to Regional Land Area | A&D (in hectares) | A&D % to Total Land Area | Area of Forest Land (in hectares) | Forest Land % to Total Land Area |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Biliran | 55,550 | 2.6 | 29,376 | 52.88 | 26,174 | 47.12 |
| Leyte | 571,276 | 26.6 | 409,833 | 71.74 | 161,443 | 28.26 |
| Southern Leyte | 173,480 | 8.1 | 105,567 | 60.85 | 67,913 | 39.15 |
| Eastern Samar | 433,965 | 20.2 | 157,643 | 36.33 | 276,322 | 63.67 |
| Northern Samar | 349,798 | 16.3 | 185,807 | 53.12 | 163,991 | 46.88 |
| Samar | 559,100 | 26.1 | 238,797 | 42.71 | 320,303 | 57.29 |
| Region VIII | 2,143,169 | 100.0 | 1,127,023 | 52.59 | 1,016,146 | 47.41 |

(Source: DENR VIII 2013, from NEDA 2013, p. 25)

Macro-Economy

The Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) shrunk by 6.2 percent in 2012, and the growth rate dropped by 8.3 percentage points, giving Region VIII the lowest growth rate of the Central Philippines (NEDA 2013, p. 37). That year it had the third lowest growth rate in the entire country (Ibid.). The Eastern Visayas's growth rate was lower than the national average from 1975 to 2005, with the exception of 2004 (Lange 2010, p. 57). When the GDRP is looked at per capita, the situation was even worse, with a 7.3 percent decline in 2012, ranking the Eastern Visayas as the 4th from lowest region in the Philippines (NEDA 2013, p. 39). The reader must bear in mind that all this data was gathered *before* Super Typhoon Yolanda, internationally known as Haiyan, eviscerated the region in 2013.

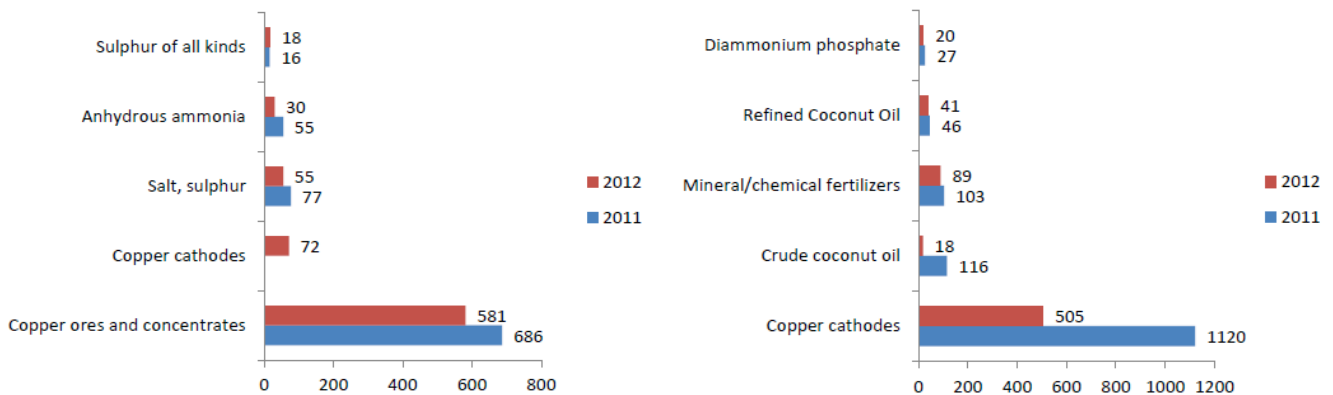
External Trade for the region

Regional export data has only been kept since 1996, but even over such a short period the picture of trade performance for Region VIII since has been grim (Lange 2010, p. 57), especially when compared to the neighboring region, the Central Visayas, which has been exporting high value goods,¹⁰² and in 2004 sold products valued at some US\$ 4.15 billion (DTI 2005, cited in Lange 2010, p. 58). During the same period the Eastern Visayas only exported goods worth US\$ 501.5 million (NSCB 2004, also cited in Lange 2010). In 2012, the Eastern Visayas exports were lower than the year before and only worth US\$730 million; thus only contributing about 0.01percent of the total exports for the entire country. PASAR, a

¹⁰² Such as electronics, consumer goods, and furniture.

privately owned smelting plant located near Ormoc in Leyte Province,¹⁰³ buys copper ore and transforms it into copper cathodes, and this private company alone produced about 73 percent of all the total value exported out of the Eastern Visayas (Figure IV.1).¹⁰⁴

Figure IV.1. Top 5 Imports (L) and Exports (R) for R8: 2011-2012 (in Millions of US\$)



(Source: NSOVIII, 2013, quoted from NEDA 2013, p. 43)

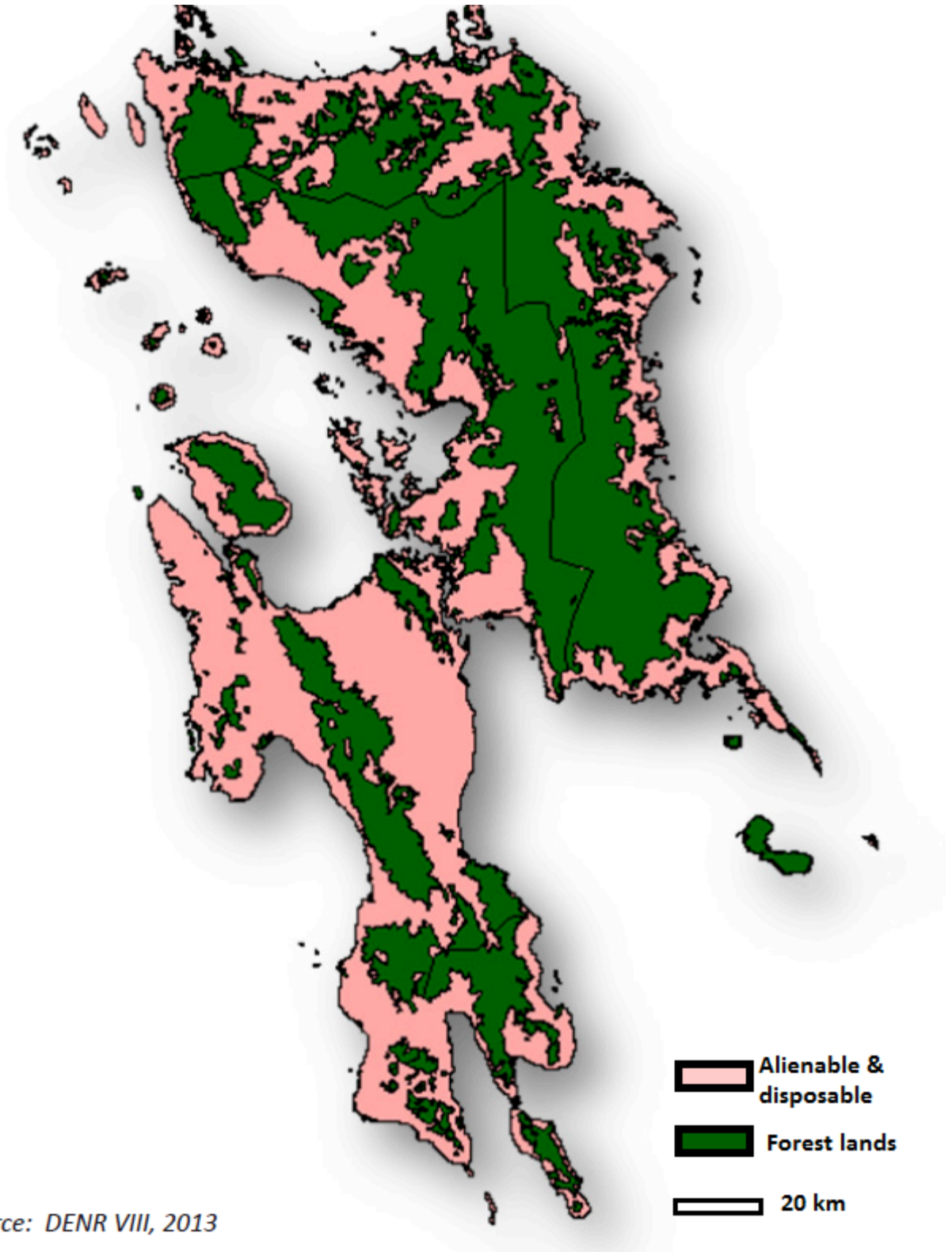
NEDA's Economic development hopes are based on tourism and agriculture

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), wanted to promote Region VIII as a tourist destination, even if in 2006 the region only got 6.2 percent of the total number of tourists visiting the Central Philippines, *id est* the Visayas (NEDA 2009, p. 9). In addition to the frequent typhoons and earthquakes, the ongoing civil war with the Maoist insurrection might have had something to do with the hesitancy of international tour operators. In terms of agriculture, the national development agency claims that Samar Island could potentially offer some 40,000 hectares for agricultural production, which represents 72 percent “of the remaining potential area for development in the region” (Ibid.).

¹⁰³ The smelting plant is probably located here because of the proximity (30 km) with the Tongonan Geothermal power plant, also known as the Leyte Geothermal Power Field (LGPf). This is said to be the second geothermal power producer in the world. From http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ru8/Profiles/Regional_Provincial_City_Profiles.htm [accessed 19 June 2014]

¹⁰⁴ From NEDA 2013, p. 42. One of the reasons for the decreasing exports is that there was an accident at PASAR: “Production decelerated because the plant’s operation stopped when its anti-pollution control system was damaged by a fire in early 2012.” Interestingly, PASAR is owned by the Swiss Multinational *Glencore*, whose Chairman is Anthony is “Tony” Hayward who became infamous in 2010 as BP’s CEO during the Gulf Coast oil spill at BP’s *Deepwater Horizon* rig. Mr. Hayward is currently a member of Glencore’s “Health, Safety, Environment, and Communities Committee” [sic]. Source: <http://www.glencore.com/who-we-are/corporate-governance/board-of-directors/>; <http://www.pasar.com.ph/content/our-story/our-history/>; Kollwe 2014.

Map IV.3. Land Classification of Eastern Visayas



Source: DENR VIII, 2013

Agriculture

In 2012, the region had not reached its own unambitious growth objective for Gross Value Added (GVA) for what NEDA terms AHFF (Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishery). The GVA in 2012 reached PhP 31,130,113 [US\$ 778,250],¹⁰⁵ a 0.7 percent growth, far below the 5.10 percent targeted growth. This measly improvement was “primarily caused by weather-related factors” (NEDA 2013, p. 52).¹⁰⁶ The total production of major crops *declined* in 2012 by 2.9 percent (Figure IV.2).

Rice production in the region is frequently disturbed by typhoons, and the region was not self-sufficient in this fundamental cereal. The Province of Southern Leyte produced less than 90 percent of the rice it consumes, but that was nevertheless much better than the Province of Eastern Samar that barely produced half of what it needed (Table IV.3). Rice productivity for the region was about 3.4 metric tons per hectare in the years 2011 and 2012. This ranged from the measly 2.5 metric tons per hectare in Samar Province to almost 4.5 tons per hectare in Biliran province. The Province of Southern Leyte had a relatively high productivity for the period, with approximately 4.3 metric tons per hectare (NEDA 2013, p. 54). One of the explanations for this general low productivity is Region VIII’s low irrigation rate: in 2012 only about 55.7 percent of potentially irrigable land was being irrigated (Ibid., p. 101).

Table IV.3. Rice Sufficiency Index (in percentages), 2011 and 2012

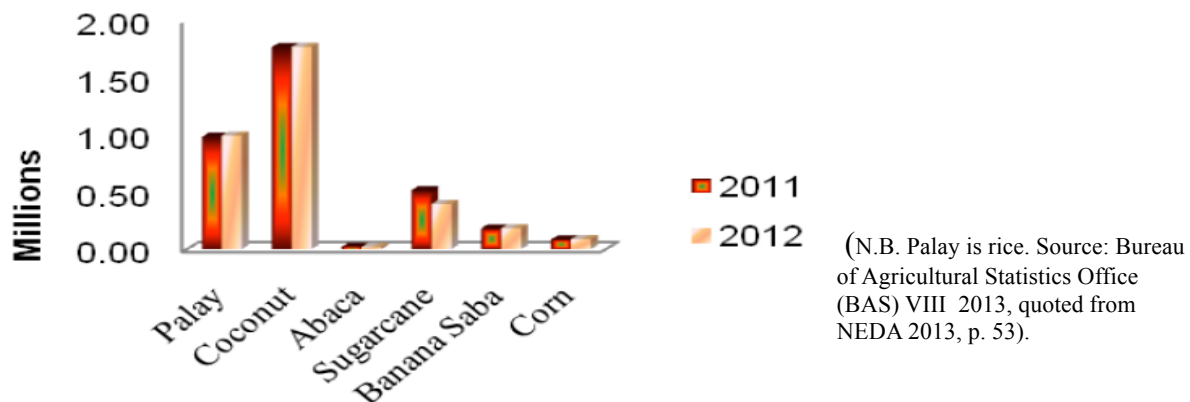
| Region/Province | Sufficiency Index | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------|
| | 2011 | 2012 |
| Eastern Visayas | 97.36 | 96.56 |
| Leyte | 130.13 | 126.36 |
| Southern Leyte | 87.67 | 89.53 |
| Biliran | 148.21 | 144.91 |
| Samar | 73.82 | 73.42 |
| Eastern Samar | 50.77 | 55.34 |
| Northern Samar | 64.63 | 66.44 |

(Source: DA VIII 2013, quoted from NEDA 2013, p. 54)

¹⁰⁵ Throughout this thesis, the approximate value in US\$ will be given. The exchange rate chosen is that one US\$ equals 40 Filipino pesos, PhP. This is not the exact exchange rate over the research period, but the objective is to give the reader a general idea of the values being discussed.

¹⁰⁶ All of these figures were BEFORE the region was ravaged by Typhoon Yolanda.

Figure IV.2. Major Crop Production, R8: 2011 and 2012 (in metric tons)



Coconuts were the second most important sector in terms of dependants and share of agricultural exports for the country as a whole (OCHA 2014, p. 13). The coconut industry, copra, and its derivatives such as coconut oil were important for the Eastern Visayas (Figure IV.2) but like in the rest of the country the region suffered from competition on the global marketplace with American soya lobbies (De Koninck 2012, p. 138). What's more, two thirds of the industries that processed Filipino coconut products in the Philippines were in fact owned by American multinationals (Ibid.). The region's approximately 368,500 coconut farmers were devastated when the average farm gate price of *copra corriente* declined by over 40 percent from 2011 to 2012, from about PhP 29.78 [US\$ 0.75] per kilo to PhP 17.55 [US\$ 0.40] per kilo (NEDA 2013, p. 55).¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, in Region VIII there was a growing problem of the *Brontispa Longissima* parasite, which is spreading across the country and is killing coconut trees. This lurking biological hazard will be discussed in forthcoming chapter IV about the Municipality of Saint Bernard.

Abaca, also known as Manila hemp, played a crucial historical role in the Eastern Visayas, especially on the Island of Leyte. Today, unfortunately for many farming families, it is no longer the precious cash crop it used to be. From 2011 to 2012 abaca production decreased by 4.2 percent down to 19,190.87 metric tons (NEDA 2013, p. 55). In many parts of the Philippines abaca farms have been plagued by viral diseases for about a decade and the crop is almost wiped out. Compounding this, end-users of the product have changed and now require

¹⁰⁷ More about this in the next chapter.

higher grade abaca fibers. For the few farmers who were able to grow the crop, the farm-gate price dropped by 5.5 percent to PhP 35.18 [US\$ 0.90] per kilo (Ibid., p. 56). In forthcoming Chapter V, however, we will see how the spread of disease has decimated this once fundamental cash crop of the Visayas.

In 2012 the production of **poultry and hogs** declined because of the high prices of feeds. Out on the seas, both commercial and municipal **fisheries** also saw their production go down during the same period. For fishermen, the cause has been attributed to depleted fishing grounds, high fuel costs,¹⁰⁸ and the frequency of typhoons (NEDA 2013, p. 59).

High underemployment, poverty, and inequality

The official unemployment figure for the Eastern Visayas in 2011 was 5.7 percent, which was better than the national target of 6.8 to 7.2 percent (Ibid., p. 40). However, the underemployment rate was 22.7 percent, much higher than the country's levels, making it the region with the fourth highest level of underemployment in 2011 (Ibid.). This trend continued growing, meaning that “more workers are found in the sector that offers low-paying and seasonal jobs” (Ibid.). The minimum daily wage in the region was PhP 260 for non-agricultural work, PhP 241 for agricultural work, down to PhP 238 for the cottage/handicraft industry (Ibid.), oscillating somewhere between approximately US\$ 6.5 and 5.95 per day.

In 2006, the Eastern Visayas had a higher percentage of poverty incidences¹⁰⁹ than the rest of the Philippines (Map IV.4), with 41.4 percent (Table IV.4) compared to the national 32.9 percent (NEDA, 2009, p. 2). At that time, it was the seventh poorest region in the country (NEDA 2013, p. 23). Since then, poverty became even more widespread, reaching 43.8 percent incidence in 2009, making it the fifth poorest region. The distressing trend continued

¹⁰⁸ Compared to Manila or Cebu City, fuel was more expensive in Region 8, during 2012. PhP 8 [US\$ 0.20] more per liter of gasoline; and PhP 4 [US\$ 0.10] more per liter of diesel (NEDA 2013, p. 88).

¹⁰⁹ The “poverty incidence” is the percentage of the population living below the poverty threshold. In 2009 this threshold was of PhP13,974 [US\$350] per capita per year (NEDA 2009, p. 5). This would be living under about a dollar a day. In 2012 it was decided that the six-month poverty threshold should be of PhP 8,989. This would mean PhP 17,978 a year [US\$450]. This “rising” of the poverty threshold could imply that the number of people living in poverty in the region is probably significantly higher than the official figures.

and the figure for 2012 was 45.4 percent, thus ranking the Eastern Visayas the third poorest region in the country (Ibid.).¹¹⁰

Income inequality is measured with the Gini coefficient, and the Eastern Visayas had the highest income disparity of all 17 Philippine regions. The coefficient was 0.4828 in 2006 and rose to 0.4841 in 2009. These figures were staggering, especially when bearing in mind that the Philippines was already one of the most unequal countries in the world; in 2009 the national Gini coefficient was 0.4484 (Ibid., p. 46).

Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program

In chapter two, it was mentioned that the national government had recently implemented its “4Ps” program to help the poorest families in the country. 4Ps stands for *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*, which loosely translates to “subsistence for Filipino families.” The program provides conditional cash transfers to families with the following criteria: (1) extremely poor families, (2) no land holdings, (3) pregnant women at the time of survey, (4) children 0 to 14-year old who are in school (extended to 17-year olds). The families can withdraw cash from ATMs if they agree to regular medical check-ups, vaccinations, and if the children attend school. The 4Ps program “operated in 79 provinces covering 1484 municipalities and 143 key cities in all 17 regions nationwide. The program had 4,090,667 registered households as of 25 June 2014” (DSWD 2015). In view of the catastrophic socio-economic situation of the Eastern Visayas presented up to now, it will come as no surprise that there was a 27.2 percent increase in 4Ps beneficiaries in 2012. In the Province of Southern Leyte there was a confounding 465 percent increase of beneficiaries over that period (Table IV.5).

¹¹⁰ Again, as mentioned above, the post-Super Typhoon Haiyan statistics are still unclear but suggest that Region VIII is now the poorest in the country.

Table IV.4. Poverty Incidence: First Semester of 2006, 2009, & 2012 (in percent)

| | 2006 | 2009 | 2012 |
|----------------|------|------|------|
| Philippines | 28.8 | 28.6 | 27.9 |
| Region VIII | 41.4 | 43.8 | 45.4 |
| Biliran | 34.8 | 41.4 | 28.1 |
| Eastern Samar | 51.8 | 54.4 | 67.1 |
| Leyte | 39.4 | 39.3 | 40.2 |
| Northern Samar | 54.4 | 52.4 | 53.1 |
| Southern Leyte | 30.0 | 38.9 | 42.8 |
| Samar | 37.1 | 45.2 | 44.0 |

(Source: 2013 NSCB VIII, cited from NEDA 2013, p. 45)

Table IV.5. Number of 4Ps beneficiaries in 2011 and 2012

| Province | Number of Households Covered and Beneficiaries Served | | | | | | % Increase/ Decrease in Beneficiaries Served |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| | 2011 | | | 2012 | | | |
| | Identified Poor Households | Households Covered | Beneficiaries Served | Identified Poor Households | Households Covered | Beneficiaries Served | |
| Biliran | - | | 3,324 | - | | 7,030 | 111.5 |
| Leyte | 1,741 | | 74,457 | - | | 79,484 | 6.8 |
| Southern Leyte | 82 | | 2,163 | - | | 12,234 | 465.6 |
| Samar | 9 | | 46,779 | - | | 42,913 | (8.3) |
| Eastern Samar | 236 | | 5,519 | - | | 24,601 | 345.8 |
| Northern Samar | - | | 29,756 | - | | 34,798 | 16.9 |
| Total | 2,068 | 86,988 | 161,998 | - | 58,427 | 206,063 | 27.2 |

(Source: DSWD VIII 2013, cited from NEDA 2013, p. 127)

New People's Army (NPA)

In view of the rampant poverty and inequality in the Eastern Visayas, many have recently flocked to the government's "4Ps" program but it should come as no surprise that many of the dispossessed may also have been tempted by armed rebellion. Dominique Caouette explains in his 2004 thesis "[p]eople engage in violent collective action because it makes 'sense' given everything else" (p. 696). And indeed, the Maoist insurgency group, the New People's Army

(NPA),¹¹¹ is still active in the Eastern Visayas, particularly on the Island of Samar where they find recruits amongst the vast swaths of landless and disenfranchised peasants.

If the government's official figure for 2012 can be believed, there were about 600 NPA members in Region VIII. The mountainous area of central Samar was the scene of most clashes between the NPA and the Armed Forces of the Philippines's (AFP) Eighth Infantry Division. The government claims that the province of Biliran has been "insurgency-free" since 2009 and Southern Leyte since 2011 (NEDA 2013, p. 168). Nevertheless, "violent incidents" are still common throughout the region (Table IV.6). According to the human rights organization *Karapatan* (2010), under Arroyo's presidency (2001-2010), the Eastern Visayas was the scene of 126 extrajudicial killings and 27 enforced disappearances (p. 40).

Holden argues that the extrajudicial killings perpetrated by government forces "have been deliberate attempts to eradicate the political infrastructure of the NPA" (2013, p. 40). Nevertheless, in view of the region's endemic poverty, deep structural imbalances, and the government's heavy handed counterinsurgency, it would be difficult not to agree with Dominique Caouette:

"Given the CPP's current strategy that prioritizes the mobilization of peasants in rural areas and in the absence of the successful implementation of land reform in the foreseeable future, I would suggest that the CPP activists are likely to be able to continue mobilizing support for a number of years to come" (Caouette 2004, p. 698).

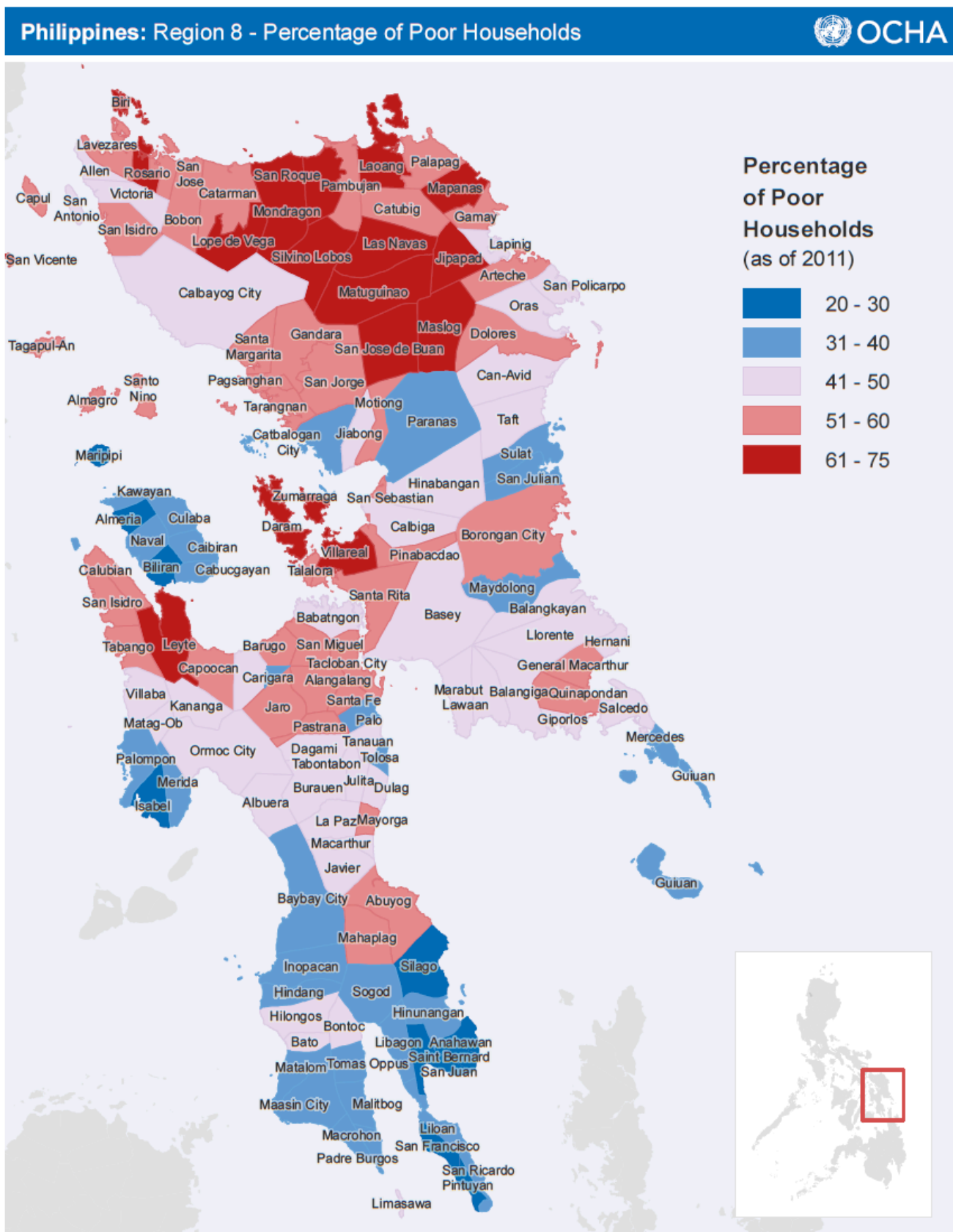
Table IV.6. Insurgency-Related Violent Incidents: 2011-2012

| Violent Incidences | 2011 | 2012 |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Encounters | 33 | 32 |
| Ambuscade | 4 | 3 |
| Harassments | 8 | 9 |
| Liquidation | 7 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 52 | 47 |

(Source: PRO VIII 2013, cited from NEDA 2013, p. 127)

¹¹¹ The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and has been waging one of the world's oldest communist insurgencies. According to Quimpo (2008), since 1969 there have been over 43,000 people killed.

Map IV.4. Poverty in Eastern Visayas, 2011 figures, Courtesy of OCHA



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
 Creation date: 12 Dec 2014 Sources: DSWD NHTS-PR 2011 Feedback: victorino@un.org www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int

1.3. All that was pre-Yolanda/Haiyan

The socio-economic review of the Eastern Visayas presented so far has been disheartening, to say the least. Regrettably the situation got considerably worse after Super Typhoon Yolanda¹¹² shredded the region. This was the largest storm ever recorded and it ripped through the Visayas, causing immense loss of infrastructure and crops, as well as leaving over 6,000 people dead.

A full analysis of this disaster is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it requires a minimal review, because of the magnitude of the disaster that ravaged the Eastern Visayas in general and the Island of Leyte in particular. Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan made land fall in the Eastern Visayas on 8 November 2013. It had sustained winds of 315 kilometers per hour with gusts up to 379 kilometers per hour. It is believed to be the strongest typhoon to make landfall anywhere in recorded history. The disaster displaced four million people across the Visayas and affected the lives of 16 million people (Neussner 2014, p. 10). Some authors claimed that it was the “deadliest typhoon ever to hit the Philippines in recent history leaving 6,300 dead, 1,061 missing and 28,689 injured” (Lagmay et al., 2015, p. 9).¹¹³ The brunt of the deaths and injuries were due to the storm surge that caught many people unprepared despite two days advance warning (Neussner 2014).¹¹⁴ Many people refused to evacuate because they did not trust their authorities or their neighbors and feared their homes would be looted (Ibid.) but more troubling still is that “68% of evacuation centers were overwhelmed by storm surges” (Lagmay et al., 2015, p.11), despite the pre-existence for several years of hazard maps, including for storm surge risks.

In several parts of Region VIII, the storm surge made the sea level rise by approximately five meters in 20 minutes, sweeping away human constructions. The storm surge flooded 98 square kilometers of land in Leyte and 93 square kilometers of land in Samar, “two of the most devastated islands in the Philippines” (Ibid., p. 7). As mentioned above, coconut farming was

¹¹² International name Haiyan.

¹¹³ This same article later mentions a 1912 storm surge that killed 15,000 in the City of Tacloban alone, so I do believe it is a bit historically myopic to claim that the Region had never seen this kind of storm surge devastation.

¹¹⁴ According to the German International Cooperation agency, GIZ, who has been working in the area for decades, 94% of the casualties in and around Tacloban were due to the storm surge. Neussner O., 2014.

the livelihood of many poor farmers in the region; nearly one million farmers were affected by the typhoon that destroyed nearly 34 million coco trees. In 2014 almost 60 percent of these farmers worked small farms (OCHA 2014, p. 9). The UN reported in 2014 that there were over 21,000 fishing families in the Eastern Visayas who were still reeling from the passage of the typhoon (Ibid., p. 15). These families continue to suffer from the loss of their fishing boats and damage to aquaculture and seaweed farming. The number of people affected was certainly significantly higher because of the multiplier effect: “as per each person involved in fishery production there are usually five people involved in indirect activities” (Ibid.).

The latest figures, still to be made fully official, suggested – not surprisingly – that poverty had worsened in the Eastern Visayas since the passage of Super Typhoon Haiyan. In an interview with *BusinessWorld Online* (Meniano 2015), the regional NEDA director, Bonifacio Uy, explained that “the Eastern Visayas has moved two notches up and dislodged the ARMM from the top of the list of poorest regions” of the Philippines. ARMM is the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao which for years had been the region with the highest level of poverty, partially because of a century old civil war between Muslim separatists and different incarnations of the national government (whether colonial or not). According to the source above, in the first half of 2014, almost 55% of Region VIII residents were below the poverty threshold. The Province of Southern Leyte was not directly in the path of Super Typhoon Yolanda, but it did suffer significant damage. The focus of this thesis is a poor municipality of Southern Leyte. It is indicative that the province did not have a web-site until most recently. There now exists such an online platform, but official data about the province remains elusive and of questionable accuracy.

2. THE PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE

Southern Leyte separated from Leyte Province proper in 1960, but already in Spanish times there had been a de facto “sub-province” in the southwestern part of Leyte consisting of the municipalities from Palompon to Hinunangan, with Maasin as the center” (Municipality of San Juan 2010, p. 32). Maasin was the legal and administrative hub for the Southwest part of the Island of Leyte: it was where the *cedula* taxes were gathered, and the location of the court

where all minor cases were dealt with. The American authorities centralized these responsibilities to Tacloban. However, there were communication problems from the Waray-Waray/Cebuano language differences as well as logistical issues because of the poor quality of roads on Leyte Island. After various attempts and political intrigues, Republic Act 2227 was signed into law in 1959, taking what had been the third district of Leyte and transforming it into the Province of Southern Leyte in 1960.

According to the 2010 census the province had almost 400,000 inhabitants and an annual growth rate of 1.03 percent. It has one city, the capital Maasin, and 18 municipalities. With a land area of 1,797.2 square kilometers, Southern Leyte has a population density of approximately 222 per square kilometer. The mother tongue of the majority of the population is Cebuano. Over half of the province is composed of “steep to very steep slopes” (Province of Southern Leyte 2015) and 84 percent is “not developable” and “falls under protection slope range.”

Southern Leyte has no “great landholdings” and is the second smallest province in the region (Liss 2012, p. xviii). In 2011, 27.4 percent of Southern Leyte was forest lands, leaving 72.6 percent as “alienable & disposable” land (Ibid.). It was one of the rare provinces in the region to devote more than 50 percent of its alienable and disposable land to agriculture. The average annual income in the province was PhP 141,641 [US\$ 3,540] in 2011 (Ibid.). The province’s roads were often blocked by landslides, and many municipalities have never had landline telephones, skipping instead directly to cellular phones. There are currently 48 cell towers¹¹⁵ across the province (Province of Southern Leyte 2015), but it is not uncommon to be “out of signal.”

Mining in Southern Leyte

According to Southern Leyte’s recently created web site,¹¹⁶ the only minerals being mined in the province were sand, gravel, and red burning clay. The same source also underlines the

¹¹⁵ SMART has 19 sites, Globe has 23, Sun Cellular has 6. <http://www.southernleyte.gov.ph/general-information/facilities/135-communications>

¹¹⁶ During the first several years of research for this PhD, the Province of Southern Leyte did not have an official web site at

presence of reserves of gold, copper, magnesite and serpentine but claims they are not being extracted and that a mining company called *Benguet Exploration* “used to operate in Pinut-an, San Ricardo but did not renew its permit when it expired in the early 1990s” (Province of Southern Leyte 2015). Small-scale illegal mining for gold was common in the province in general, and was certainly happening in the particular case of the Municipality of Saint Bernard.

Conclusion

This brief chapter’s objective was to provide the historical and socioeconomic context for the Eastern Visayas and, to the extent possible, for the Province Southern Leyte. Region VIII has long been one of the poorest regions in the country, with rampant poverty, endemic underemployment, and festering civil strife. The situation was already very dire before the region was pummeled by Super Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, it is worse now. In view of the scarcity of material on the provincial and municipal levels, the socio-statistical grounding for Region VIII provides some background for the subsequent presentation and analysis of the Municipality of Saint Bernard in the next chapter.

all. The current web page remains minimalist other than hagiographic descriptions of the province’s congressman and governor: the Mercado brothers. One of their sons is also an elected official in the province.

CHAPTER V: THE FULCRUMIC MUNICIPAL SCALE

Introduction

Chapters III and IV underlined how the Philippines in general and the Eastern Visayas in particular are plagued by a historical legacy of rampant poverty and deeply unjust social structures. In this chapter the analysis focuses on the municipal level and it shall be argued that, like at the higher scalar levels, an exploitative system leaves most people with precious few options. However, in the midst of this systemic abuse and ubiquitous poverty, there are various arrangements where, at the local level, groups of people cooperate with each other, often in relatively informal ways. Beyond the much publicized fundamental importance of the Filipino family, this chapter will review a palette of cooperative organizations that provided an array of services and attested to the vitality of a certain type of social capital. At the local scale, interpersonal trust can be vibrant, even beyond the family circle. An analysis of institutional trust suggests that the political developments of the municipality over recent years may have led many respondents to believe that not all elected officials were corrupt politicians.

This chapter begins with a municipal-level contextualization focusing on the direness of the socio-economic predicament of the majority of the local population. Saint Bernard is a microcosm for the rest of the archipelago: a highly unequal agrarian society continuously threatened by natural hazards. The chapter then proceeds to review the survival strategies available to the poor majority: mainly agriculture, but also the rare salaried employment, and the ever increasing lure to become an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW). Another essential component to survival for the poor in this rural setting was the array of micro-scale groups and associations where people come to each other's succor. By way of descriptive analyses of the research's statistical results, the chapter sheds new light on the importance of scale to detect and discuss the issues of different facets of contextualized local social capital.

1. WHY THIS MUNICIPALITY?

The Municipality of Saint Bernard (MSB) was the site of a massive landslide on 17 February 2006 that smothered an entire village called Guinsaugon (Map V.1). Over a thousand people were killed. Before the landslide the municipality was an extremely remote part of the Eastern Visayas, few people outside the area had ever heard of Saint Bernard, but within days of the tragedy, newscasters and “humanitarian” organizations from across the country and around the world had swarmed to the municipality (Pictures V.1 & V.2). Dramatic images of the disaster were being broadcast on CNN and the BBC. Because of the spectacular visual magnitude of the landslide, Saint Bernard received a lot of national and international attention, funneling in new resources and fresh ideas to what had been a sleepy agricultural town with many of the political power dynamics typical of the Philippines. The disaster’s aftermath led to profound and accelerated changes in the Municipality: politically, economically, geographically, etc. Nevertheless, despite these substantial social changes, Saint Bernard remained very rural and its citizens continued to be highly exposed to a wide range of natural hazards.

There were a variety of reasons why Saint Bernard was an interesting research site to analyze how social capital impacts preparation to natural hazards. Not least of which was that the municipality continued to be highly exposed to a number of different natural hazards. Citizens had a heightened awareness to threats of disasters because of the relatively recent Guinsaugon tragedy. Many people were eager to prepare for the next natural hazard. Almost everyone had a relative or a friend killed in the catastrophic landslide. Also, because of NGO involvement in the region, there were several Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects under way in the municipality. Last but not least, the mayor and many officials at the time of fieldwork were welcoming to risk reduction projects as well as to being the subject of academic research.

Map V.1. Distribution of the Guinsaigon Landslide



(Image courtesy of Catane et al. 2006 “Yellowish brown area represents the landslide-affected area. [...] Blue outline is the upper limit of the landslide scarp. [...]. Red lines indicate major lineaments along the PFZ [Philippines Fault Zones].” From Catane et al. 2006 using UNOSAT SPOT baseline image taken June 2003).

Picture V.1. Aerial view two days after the landslide (Looking westwards)



Photo from 19 February 2006 from US Navy by Photographer, Mate 1st Class, Michael D. Kennedy
Tag: 060219-N-5067K-109 http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=32073

Picture V.2. View from the landslide scar (Looking eastwards)



(Picture courtesy of Catane et al. 2006)

1.1. A remote municipality

It was illustrated earlier that the Eastern Visayas are a remote region within the archipelago; Saint Bernard is a remote place within this remote region. Saint Bernard was a four to five hour bumpy bus ride south from Tacloban, the capital of the Eastern Visayas.¹¹⁷ The municipality is nestled in a deep valley which opens on the south into Cabalian Bay, which itself becomes the Surigao Strait. The municipality covers a land area of almost exactly one hundred square kilometers;¹¹⁸ on its western border is a spectacular mountain range, which rises some seven hundred meters above sea level and straddles the Philippine Fault Zone (PFZ) (Map V.1). The region is highly seismically unstable and earthquakes are a very frequent occurrence (Camit et al., 2000). This seismic activity, combined with very steep-sloped mountainsides,¹¹⁹ and heavy typhoon rains make landslides common, and they have regularly cut off the municipality from the rest of the world. Furthermore, telephone cables never existed on this part of Leyte Island, and cellular communication relay towers¹²⁰ were only built in 2004, so the municipality was quite isolated until recently (Municipality of Saint Bernard, MSB, 2009 & interviews). This isolation was all the more sociocultural because it was only in 2001 that television became available in the municipality; initially in the small urbanized area, then slowly spreading out to the villages. This influx of information “changed the lifestyle of people” (MSB 2009). In 2013 many of the villages still did not receive any signal from radio stations and had finicky cellphone connection.

*Taas sa kinatas-an
Ubos sa kinaubsan.
(dalan)*

Longer than the longest,
Lower than the lowest.
(road)

(P. Go-Saga, p. 20)

In the early days of Leyte’s colonization there were no roads, just foot trails in the dirt: “*Cuatro meses de lodo, cuatro meses de polvo, cuatro meses de todo*”¹²¹ (Bernad 1979, p. 9). According to Saint Bernard’s municipal engineer (2013 interview), the road heading north to

¹¹⁷ The distance, “as the crow flies,” between Tacloban and St. Bernard is just about 100 km, but is over 160km by (often irregular) road and across a mountain range. It takes four to five hours by bus because the vehicle stops in every little town. Also the vehicles slow down significantly when going through inhabited areas.

¹¹⁸ The exact surface is of 100.2 square km.

¹¹⁹ Sometimes up to 45 degree slopes at the higher altitudes.

¹²⁰ First SMART Telecommunication, followed a few months later by Globe Telecom.

¹²¹ Four months of mud, four months of dirt, and four months of everything.

Abuyog (and Tacloban) only started being “concreted” in 2004. The road is still known among locals as “China Road” because it was built by the “China Road and Bridge Corporation.”¹²² Japanese funds paid for the road and it was only fully finished in 2007.

Picture V.3. End of the day in the *Poblacion*. (View looking northwest)



(Source: Veuthey 2010)

If websites can be taken as indicators of connectedness to the world, then the small Municipality of Saint Bernard was for a while significantly more in the 21st century than the Province of Southern Leyte. In 2009 the municipality’s website was highly informative, regularly updated and generally very professional looking.¹²³ This came in stark contrast with

¹²² <http://www.crbc.com/site/crbcEN/Introduction/index.html> [consulted 2 June 2015] “[O]ne of the four large state-owned companies in China that earliest entered the international projects contracting market.”

¹²³ This is written in the past tense because during most of the years of research for this thesis, in and about Saint Bernard, the municipality did have an elaborate and well furnished web site (<http://www.saintbernard.gov.ph/>) This is however no longer the case. The link has gone offline, and the municipality no longer has a website other than the extremely limited

east of the town¹²⁶], exploded with fire from six mouths.” There are descriptions of not seeing the sun for days because of the volcanic ash. The friar also wrote that “[i]n the years of forty-three and forty-four [i.e., 1743-44] [sic], there were strong earthquakes that ruined many towns and a mountain collapsed about a hundred fathoms” (approximately 180 meters). Borrinaga argued that it is probable that the steep cliff that Father De Castro described collapsing in the 1700s may in fact be the same as the one mentioned in the Legazpi chronicles in the mid-1500s. Borrinaga reasoned that the 2006 collapse of a large section of Mt. Kan-abag on the Western edge of Saint Bernard (the Guinsaugon landslide) could have been “just the reprise of the total collapse of a nearby mountain more than 260 years ago” (Borrinaga 2010, pp. 23-24).

There was a powerful earthquake in 1907 which is said to have had aftershocks for a week and is believed to have been magnitude 7 on the Richter scale. In 1917, the area was plagued by a cholera epidemic: “Old folks recall of families mourning five deaths in a week’s time. Others spoke of pallbearers who bury their dead in the morning then got their turn to be buried the morning after” (Municipality of San Juan, MSJ, 2010, p. 13). Typhoon Amy hit in mid-December 1951. The south of Leyte Island was reported to have been hardest hit by the storm. Abuyog, 40 km to the north, reported 176 dead, while Sogod (5 km west if a crow flew over the Mount Kan-Abag mountain range) reported 135 dead. An approximate 150,000 people were left homeless across the region (*Rome News Tribune*, 13 Dec 1951).

All of these violent natural hazards are bound to have profoundly marked individuals and local communities. Bankoff argued (2007) that Northern Luzon was exposed to the recurrence of various natural hazards and that the inhabitants of those areas developed strong social coping mechanisms, what Bankoff defines as high levels of local social capital. Bankoff’s thesis was that people, especially those who were regularly battered by the forces of nature, felt a strong social incentive to help each other out. In Saint Bernard people have been enduring storms and earthquakes since time immemorial, but there can be no doubt that the magnitude of the 2006 landslide shook, unsettled, but perhaps also sometimes reaffirmed, social capital dynamics. Saint Bernard’s population has a long history of dealing with natural hazards. To the furies of

¹²⁶ Mount Cantoctoc, aka Cantodoc, is just a couple kilometers away and pretty much the same mountain as Mount Cabalian. For more geologic information on the sub-region, see Camit et al. 2000 as well as Apra & Bornas n.d.

nature were compounded the furies of men, as the area was the scene of much violent bloodshed.

Local history of social strife

As if recurrent natural hazards were not enough, the area that was later called Saint Bernard was also the scene of frequent violence, often homicidal. Jesuits recorded many attacks from Muslim raiders from the neighboring Island of Mindanao: 1603, 1608, 1632, and 1634. Several times the town of Cabalian and its surroundings were burnt down and many of its inhabitants killed or taken captive to be sold as slaves (MSJ 2010, p. 13). For a long time Cabalian was administratively controlled by the neighboring town of Malitbog in Sogod Bay, mentioned in the previous chapter, as the center of the Escaño family's abaca business. In September of 1860 Cabalian gained its administrative independence (MSJ 2010, p. 19).

The municipalities on the Pacific Coast, Saint Bernard included, had “front-row seats” to the Battle of Surigao Strait, arguably one of the largest naval battles of human history. I had the opportunity to interview people from the area that lived through and sometimes fought in World War II. One old lady remembered the sea filled with naval ships and seeing the Japanese kamikaze¹²⁷ planes crash into some of them. An elderly gentleman in his nineties explained how he had first been a member of the Philippine Constabulary Rifles but then became part of the Filipino-American Army where he was a field sergeant. He had fought in Batanes for the US army and then came to fight in Leyte where he was originally from. The interviewee said he still received a pension of PhP 5,000 [US\$ 125] per month from the US Army. This veteran explained that the commander of the Philippine-American Forces in Leyte was named Colonel Canelon and that their equipment was delivered to them by submarine. Their weapons were “Thompson submachine guns, bazookas, carbines, and automatic machine rifles.” There had been a Japanese garrison in Cabalian, which according to the same source had a whole battalion.¹²⁸ This large number of Japanese soldiers is plausible in view of Surigao Strait's geostrategic position in the archipelago. Several people interviewed mentioned

¹²⁷ The first time that the Japanese used Kamikaze suicide planes was during the Battle of Leyte Gulf on 25 October 1944 (History.com 2009).

¹²⁸ Which is usually somewhere between 500 and 800 soldiers.

the brutality of the Japanese occupying forces. Many spoke of the Japanese “throwing [Filipino] children.” Japanese were also supposedly hiding in what is now Saint Bernard. The elderly people I interviewed claimed that locals did not work with the Japanese during the war because “they had very bad customs, they did not respect our girls.” That said, one great-grandmother did reminisce with glee how she had been courted by a Japanese officer at the time. The overall experience of the Japanese occupation, however, seems to have been rather violent¹²⁹ and is likely to have left scars in the way people relate to each other. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, generalized trust levels are often lower in places that have seen civil strife.

A decade after the end of WWII, a large segment of Cabalian decided to gain its own administrative independence and created the Municipality of Saint Bernard, around the town of Himatagon. Rolando Borrinaga cites local political commentators who claim that Saint Bernard was “gerrymandered from Cabalian” in 1954. Not long afterwards, in 1961, Cabalian changed its name to San Juan “citing the negative connotation of its name, with the key word *bali*, which in Bisayan means “to break or to cut”” (Borrinaga 2006, p. A14), but “Cabalian” remains in the history books, as well as the name of the bay and local volcano. Many locals still use the term.

The authorities’ version was that the separation of the large *barangay* called Himatagon from the Municipality of Cabalian was the work of Leyte Governor Bernardo Torres, and was signed into law by President Ramon Magsaysay in 1954 (NSCB 2011, p. 1). From the creation of Saint Bernard until 1979, the mayor was Gregorio Garcias.¹³⁰ One older interviewee, who had inside knowledge on those early years of local politics, explained how Garcias had strong links to Yñiguez,¹³¹ who was First Speaker of the House at the national level but originally from Maasin, today the capital of Southern Leyte. Yñiguez was supposedly a “very powerful man.” During the Martial Law era Gregorio Garcias was succeeded by his daughter, Brenda

¹²⁹ Though I cannot help but suspect that its legacy has been shaped to some extent by the history written by the Americans.

¹³⁰ The names of most local politicians and public figures have been changed to pseudonyms.

¹³¹ Nicanor Espina Yñiguez is NOT a pseudonym. (6 November 1915 – 13 April 2007) was 15th Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives. He is said to be the “Father of Southern Leyte” and authored the law that created the Province of Southern Leyte.

Garcias. The daughter's tenure was short-lived but witnessed a powerful typhoon destroy Saint Bernard's municipal hall in 1984.¹³² *Mayora Brenda* began the construction of the new buildings in 1985 but did not finish her term (MSB 2001). She was shot dead by the New People's Army (NPA) during the election season, allegedly for being corrupt and violent with townspeople. There were rumors that it may have been a political rival who had hired the NPA for a hit-job, "but then a captured NPA said it was not so." One person told me "she was a very good friend of mine, but it's true she slapped people. She was not a good leader, but she was a good friend anyway." Different interviewees claimed that this founding family, the Garcias, had been involved in land-grabbing.¹³³

Local history of New People's Army¹³⁴ (NPA)

The point here is to underline the instability and ambient violence. Even people currently (2010-2015) in their early 40s still remember witnessing deadly shootings by the NPA of various officials (politicians, police or army) in the *Poblacion* that took place when they were children. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to interview people who had been members of the NPA in the area. They came from poor families in Leyte, often tenants on less than a hectare. The interviewees explained how they joined the movement after witnessing the military abusing and torturing civilians.

These sources explained how in 1987 there were some 2,000 NPA soldiers in Southern Leyte,¹³⁵ which combined with people's organizations (POs) amounted to about 3,000 people. About a quarter of them were women. In Saint Bernard, there were about 100, especially in the mountainous hinterland. After 1988-1991, things became peaceful in the area and many people "voluntarily surrendered." But many former-NPAs joined the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU). Civilian life was not possible because without a gun,¹³⁶ they

¹³² Possibly Typhoon Ike which struck the Visayan Islands, as well as parts of Mindanao, leaving over 1,300 people dead (BBC 1984).

¹³³ I was not able to speak to the Garcias family themselves nor was I able to verify these allegations. One of the reasons why I have chosen to use pseudonyms.

¹³⁴ The New People's Army is a Maoist insurgency group that has been trying to take power since the 1950s.

¹³⁵ This number of 2,000 NPA fighters on Leyte Island given to me by my local sources is deemed exaggerated by the preminent expert on this subject, Dominique Caouette, who in private discussion explained to me that there were in fact only 10,000 fighters on the whole archipelago in 1987.

¹³⁶ They had M16 (shorter range), M14 (longer range), and .45 caliber pistols.

would have been unable to defend themselves and their former NPA comrades knew that they had left them, and that they knew information about them, so they would not have been safe. “Civilian life was not an option. No gun. No safety.” Former NPAs also complained that the government had failed to implement promises to give jobs, housing, and money to the returnees.

The people I was interviewing said that the doctrine of the NPA was that farmers were the ones paying taxes but that they were only getting abuse from soldiers. The NPA was organized to protect the rights of farmers. They all believed that at the time, “but today that is no longer the case, no longer applicable.” The former guerrilleros I spoke with felt things had changed, “the government is different now; there is less injustice now. Southern Leyte is peaceful now.” There was no more NPA on the island, officially. My sources confirmed that, “they are gone from here. They cannot penetrate here anymore because the people are already convinced of the government here now. If there are strange activities, people in the villages will text the military.”

Post-EDSA

There was a short transitional period with different municipal elected officials that corresponded to the country-wide ripples of the EDSA-I revolution which in February 1986 overthrew Ferdinand Marcos from power in Manila. Starting in 1988 the municipality started being strongly influenced by Fernando Yang, who was either mayor or vice-mayor until 2007. Fernando Yang had been a school teacher and was a member of the town’s small but stereotypically prosperous Chinese community. When I first heard of him in 2009 he was described to me as “tall, rich, and Chinese.” He had been running the municipality’s gravel quarry for many years. His daughter was elected vice-mayor in 2013. There is another, unrelated,¹³⁷ Yang family in the Municipality, also Chinese, and, starting in 1998, also involved in politics. Several sources explained that the Monica Yang family was a more prosperous family that had been trading in the area since the early 1900s.

¹³⁷ It took some time to establish they were not related because Fernando Yang seemed to say that they were, while the Monica Yang side said they just had the same last name, like many Chinese families but that they were not in fact related.

Chinese in municipal history: a quick family portrait

Monica Yang¹³⁸ was a prominent local Chinese businesswoman and former politician. She told me about her family history during an extended interview in 2012. Monica explained how she was born in the *Poblacion* but that during World War II she was still a child and was evacuated to one of the municipality's mountain villages where she was raised by her grandmother. Her own father, Yang Chang,¹³⁹ was born in the year 1900 in Fukien Southern China, and came to the Philippines at the age of nine to work for an uncle. He had been one of the first Chinese traders to settle in the area.

Mrs. Monica speaks Fukien but her two children “just a little.” She has a son who is a medical doctor in Cebu, and a daughter who is a nurse in the US. When Monica started fifth grade she was sent to the Cebu Chinese High-School, a private school. She was ten years old. Half the classes were in Fukien Chinese, the other half in English. She had 7 siblings, all of whom studied in Cebu until they finished college. They would only come home to Saint Bernard for vacation, “it was good to come home” she said. While in Cebu, she stayed at first with relatives and then later her father rented a house and hired a maid. When she was about 20 years old, she graduated with a bachelor in commerce, specialized in management. She helped her father at the retail-goods store in the *Poblacion*, but in fact she would have wanted to study nursing. Her son was first a medical technologist before furthering his studies to become a medical doctor. All of Monica's siblings came back to help their father. He was a very strict man; they were not allowed to go to dances if young people of the opposite sex were present, but in Cebu, away from their father's supervision, they could go to proms. In the end, Mrs. Monica got married to a man from the Chinese community in Cebu. They are separated now, but when still together they would communicate in a mix of Visayan and Fukien.

She says that before, the Chinese were very much a minority in the municipality but that she never felt discriminated against: “the Filipinos were good to us; they were all friendly.” But almost in the same breath, she explained how one of their business warehouses had been burnt down in the 1970s by an arson attack. “Someone put gasoline on drying copra and lit the place

¹³⁸ Fictitious name

¹³⁹ The family name comes first for the Chinese.

up.” They had lots of goods that were destroyed: rice, sardines, and textiles. The culprit was never caught, but they had a suspicion of who it might have been. Their property was attacked by arson a second time after the end of martial law. They had six stores back then; “if they see you are getting richer, they want to bring you down.”

During her father’s time, “it was only the Chinese who knew how to do business; few Pinoys were involved.” It seems the business started by Yang Chang in the beginning of the 20th century, and perpetuated by his descendants today is two-fold: partly selling retail goods and farming equipment to the locals, and buying locally produced agricultural products (copra, rice, and abaca), stocking them, and reselling them to bulk buyers. The economy of Saint Bernard was, and remains, fundamentally agricultural, even if the population has grown significantly in the last decades.

1.3. Demography of the Municipality of Saint Bernard

According to the 2007 census, Saint Bernard has a population of 25,252, spread out over 30 *barangays*: 28 rural and two urban. Only about ten percent of the municipality’s citizens live in town, also known under the generic Spanish term *Poblacion*. The size of the municipality’s population has more than doubled since 1960, when it was first recognized as a Local Government Unit (LGU). Growth has been nearly continuous across all *barangays*, except during the height of martial law, when some upland villages were deserted because of intense fighting between NPAs and governmental troops (MSB 2009).

The municipal population density is 252 people per square kilometer (NSCB 2011, p. 1). Province of Southern Leyte, and more specifically the Municipality of Saint Bernard, have relatively high population densities. These high population densities mean that more people are potentially exposed to natural hazards, as well as more pressure on already fragile natural resources (Map V.2. & Table V.1). The annual population growth rate was 1.24% and the average household had about 5 people (NCSB 2011, p. 2), suggesting there should be an average of three children per couple. Analyzing my sample of interviews, the average number of children is 3.7. One way to interpret this slight difference is that many families are headed

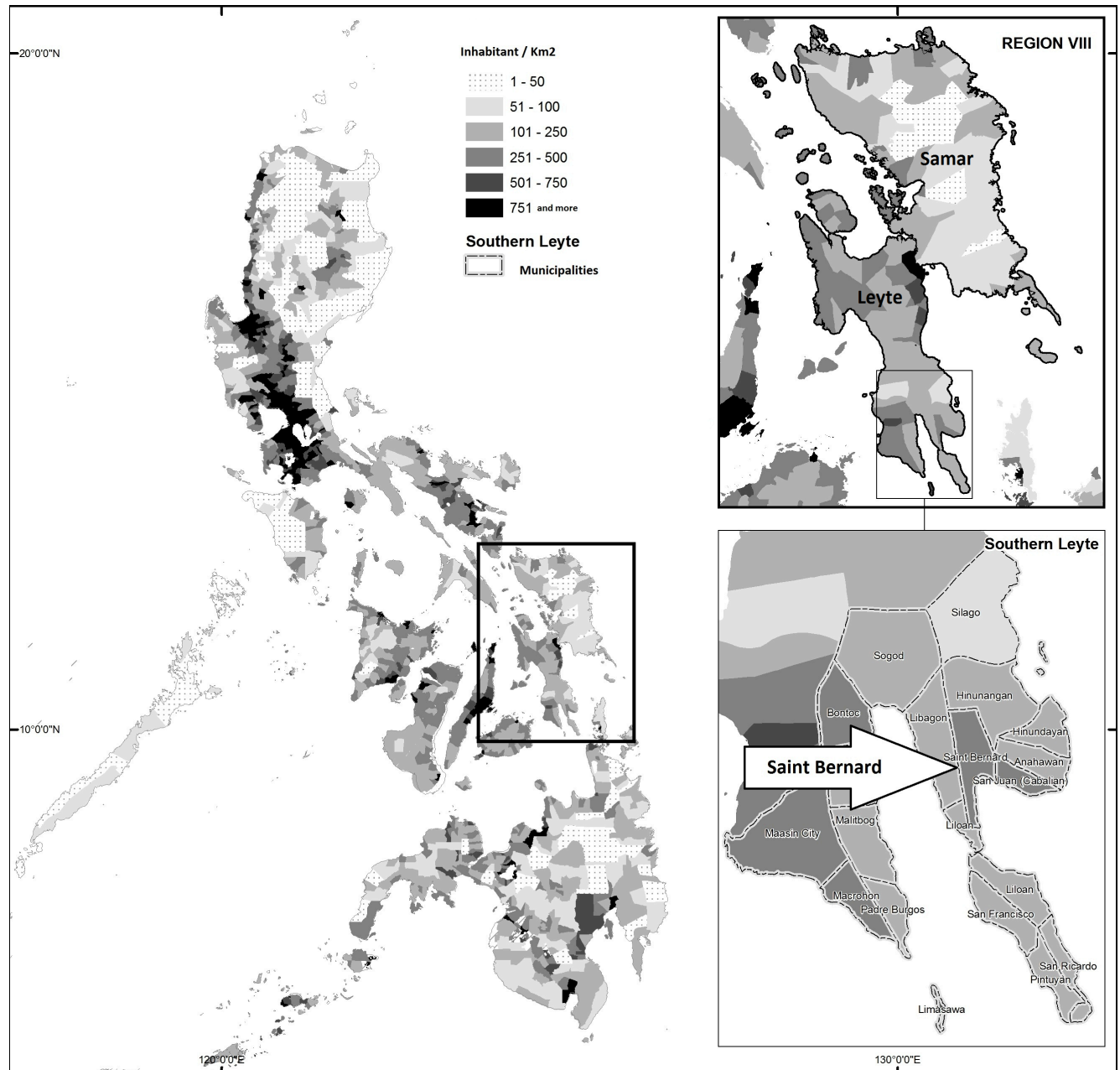
by a single adult, or that people in my sample just had more children than the real average. Regardless, when the interviewees were asked “what would you consider to be the optimal number of children?” most people answered two or three, and my statistical mean average for what was considered the “optimal number of children” is 2.5. One cachinnating fisherman explained to me, “of course the optimal number of children is three: President – Senator – Congressman!”

Table V.1. Population densities

| | Population | Population Density (hab./km ²) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Southeast Asia | 600 million ^a | 133 ^a |
| Philippines | 107 million ^b | 357 ^c |
| Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) | 4 million ^d | 177 ^{d*} |
| Province of So. Leyte | 400,000 ^e | 222 ^f |
| Municipality of Saint Bernard | 25,252 ^g | 252 ^g |

^a De Koninck 2012, p. 9; ^b CIA 2014 estimate; ^c Using the 2014 CIA population data and De Koninck’s area data 2012, p. 111; ^d NSCB 2012; ^{d*} This figure is relatively low by Filipino standards, and is due to the fact that Region VIII has been a major source of out-migration during the last century. There were strong governmental policies to encourage people to move to Mindanao and Luzon. For a more detailed account on these changes cf. De Koninck 2012; ^e NSCB 2008; ^f NSCB 2014; ^g NSCB 2010.

Map V.2. Municipal densities circa 2000 at three scales (National, Regional, and Provincial)



(Adapted from De Koninck 2012 by Pham Thanh Hai)

Religions in Saint Bernard

It would be unimaginable to write anything about a locality in the Philippines and not discuss, even in passing, the importance of religion. In *Saint Bernard*, 95 percent of the population was Roman Catholic in 2001. The next largest denomination was the United Church of Christ in

the Philippines (UCCP) with 3.4 percent. Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) had 157 members, equivalent to 0.7 percent of the municipal population, while Muslims were only 0.13 percent. The rest is composed of “other sects”¹⁴⁰ (MSB 2001). The Catholic Church remains extremely influential throughout the archipelago. The Philippines’s galloping population growth is often attributed to the Catholic Church’s vehement campaigning against any form of contraception, or sexual education, because it is feared these would promote “promiscuity.” According to the 2013 *National Demographic and Health Survey*, one out of ten Filipina women aged 15 to 19 “have begun childbearing.” Eight percent are already mothers, and two percent are pregnant with their first child (PSA 2013).

The Catholic Church remains particularly influential in small rural municipalities like Saint Bernard. A telling anecdote is that on Easter Monday 2013, an acquaintance told me he would not dare garden because he feared there would be social condemnation of him working on a holiday. Organizing an interview with the local priest was difficult. He could be seen zipping by in a shiny new black 4x4 truck with tinted windows, but it took some time to arrange a meeting with him. When I finally met him in mid-May 2013, he first admonished me for not attending Church on Sundays, then lamented the attrition of his flock to other denominations. He decried the Catholics who were leaving “the true church because the others were giving money. The Mormons for example, they will help send kids to school, give food, and sometimes even give house and lot, even land to till. But we don’t do that because we emphasize in giving oneself to the church” (Interview May 2013).

All in all, however, he said he was happy with his six-year assignment to Saint Bernard because it was “a big parish where most of the people are Catholics.” During several decades the Municipality hosted a mission of Canadian Catholic missionaries from Scarborough, Ontario. They had helped set up the local credit cooperative bank and were remembered fondly by the old-timers. They first arrived in the 1950s but had all left by 2009 when I started my fieldwork.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ There is an immense variety of religious groups in the Philippines in general and that bore out in the Municipality of Saint Bernard. Notably, the municipality is one of the regional centers for the “Rizalians who worship the national hero José Rizal, try to be sexually abstinent, and are waiting for World War III.

¹⁴¹ Though I did correspond with them during my years of research about Saint Bernard.

2. POVERTY IN SAINT BERNARD

According to the Filipino government's economic ranking of municipalities, Saint Bernard is considered fourth class, with an Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) in 2011 of PhP 46.9 million [US\$ 1.1 million] , which is one of the humblest of the 18 municipalities that compose Southern Leyte (NSCB 2011, p. 2). Saint Bernard was considered the second poorest municipality in the province, with an estimated 36.3 percent poverty incidence in 2003, more than one out of three (NSCB 2011, p. 2). By 2009 the situation had worsened and Saint Bernard had 42.7 percent poverty incidence, but since neighboring municipalities were also sinking deeper into misery, it kept its title as the second poorest municipality in Southern Leyte (NSCB 2009).¹⁴² Nevertheless, electricity was available to about 80 percent of rural households and almost all of the "urban" households (MSB 2009). Another indicator of the people's economic situation is to look at the fuel they use to cook their food: 77 percent use firewood, 15 percent use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and 8 percent use charcoal (Ibid.).

2.1. *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)*

In Chapter IV, the new governmental program called 4Ps was discussed briefly; its effects were felt in Saint Bernard. A municipal health official explained how the program contributes to the health and education of the municipality's indigent. The program provided approximately PhP 2,400 per month [US\$ 60], per child that qualified. As mentioned in the previous chapter, to be eligible, households need to have children 0-14 years old and/or have a pregnant woman at the time of assessment. The families get the cash grant if they agree to follow medical check-ups and vaccinations for their children, as well as send them to school. Since early January 2011, the local poor can get cash grants of up to PhP 15,000 [US\$ 365]. Each child in school can get PhP 300 [US\$ 7.5], plus an additional PhP 500 [US\$ 12.5] for their mothers if they go to the "family development session." Before, the cash came from Tacloban and was distributed at the municipal gym. At the time of fieldwork, beneficiaries had a "Cash Card" with which they could withdraw anywhere there was an ATM; and since 2012 there was an ATM in the *Poblacion*.

¹⁴² The disputed title of poorest municipality of the province was shared by both Bontoc and Pintuyan, both of which had poverty incidences of 43.2% for 2009.

Many officials as well as many of the villagers interviewed spoke very positively of the 4Ps program. People in Saint Bernard felt that, for once, the national government was doing something for them. Nevertheless, there seemed to remain some significant shortcomings to the program. The most striking one was the selection of beneficiaries. The guidelines sounded good, and the municipal officials in charge of the selection seemed competent and well-meaning, but during my stays in remote villages I sometimes encountered people who would likely qualify for the 4Ps program but had not been selected (yet?). Some indigents seemed to have slipped through the cracks, either because they were absent at the time of survey, or for other, more obscure reasons. Conversely, I interviewed a couple of people who did not strike me as particularly needy, but who were nevertheless receiving government money. For example, I interviewed a 55-year-old tenant of one hectare of rice and one hectare of coconut. He said he was part of the 4Ps program, but I did not exactly understand why, because both his children were older, 25 to 35 years old, and he himself identified economically as somewhere in the village “middle.” One of his siblings was an OFW who had been living in Europe for several decades. These rare exceptions asides, most of the 4Ps did seem to be very appreciative of the program. One example was a 52-year-old mother of 12 children whose husband was a tenant on rice land. They had no OFWs in the family and she identified herself as “poor”; she explained that they received 4Ps which she said “is a very big help to put the kids through school.”

Criticism of the 4Ps

A conceptual critic of the 4Ps program is that it does not address the roots of poverty, but only applies a partial Band-Aid to the problem. The brilliant work of Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) highlights the problems with what they call “means tested programs,” programs that are not universal and target only a section of the population, the “poor” usually. Analyzing abundant statistical data across different countries, they show how this type of non-universal program may certainly help those who receive the aid, but also

“exacerbate class and often racial divisions within a society – and thus lead to less generalized trust and more in-group trust. By contrast, universalistic programs enhance social solidarity and the perception of a shared fate among citizens. [...] The reason why countries with high (or rising) levels of inequality are less likely to establish universal programs is that such programs are usually based on the idea that all groups

in society, regardless of their social and economic status, have a shared fate. People will place their trust only in their own group or class, and those with fewer resources will believe that they do not have the same opportunities as people with greater resources. People reason that the rich got that way by unfair advantage. Thus, people with less will demand radical redistribution from the rich to the poor and will seek to exclude those with greater resources from receiving from the state or society” (Rothstein & Uslaner 2005, p. 43).

It has been underlined in the previous chapter that the absence of a sense of “shared fate” across the Filipino archipelago is striking, and I find the argument presented by Rothstein and Uslaner to be most fitting to the context of the Municipality of Saint Bernard. They make the compelling case that “inequality stands at the beginning of the causal chain” and they advance the idea of “the distribution of resources and opportunities in a society as the key to the other parts of [the] story – honest government, generalized trust, and social welfare regimes” (Ibid., p. 44).

2.2. Health in Saint Bernard

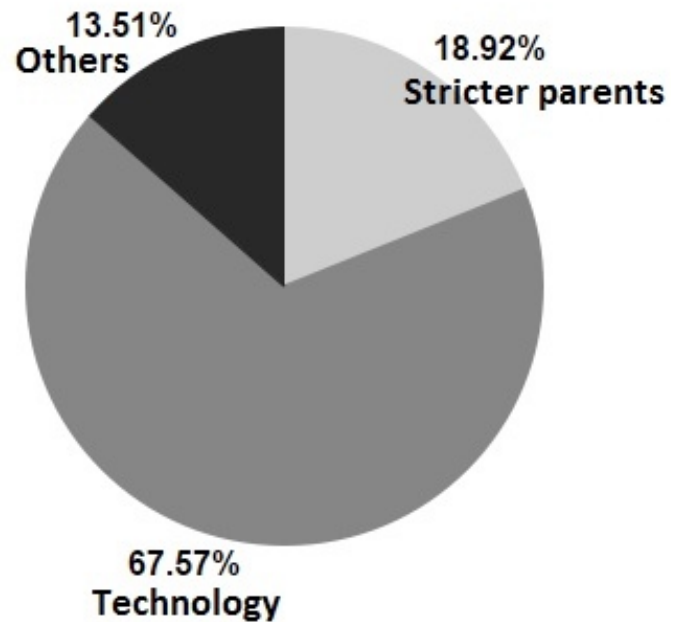
Health problems are both a source and a result of poverty. Municipal medical authorities explained (February 2013) that the three main problems in the municipality were: (1) malnutrition, (2) infant health, and (3) teenage pregnancies. That last issue has a substantial impact on the lives of people in general and of women in particular. Becoming a teenage mother can be a momentous setback for any prospects of gaining education or accessing work. With this in mind, and surprised by the number of teenage mothers I encountered in the villages, during the interviews I started asking interviewees: “What do you think is the age of first sexual contact for young people in the villages today?”

The responses varied between 9 and 19 years old, but the average was just over 14 years old (n=111). My follow-up question was: “Before, 20 years ago, what do you think was the age of first sexual contact of young people in the village then?” These responses varied between 12 to 30 years old, but the mean was 20 years old. So, in general the people I interviewed had the impression that young people today were starting to have sex six years earlier than in the past. My final question on this sensitive issue was *why*, in their opinion, had things changed? Many

people blamed cellphones, others talked about “bold” films,¹⁴³ and some said that parents simply were not as strict as they use to be. In my analysis of these responses I sorted them into three categories: (1) Technology such as cellphones, TV, videos, internet, etc.; (2) Stricter parents, also sometimes called stricter morals and importance of religion; and finally (3) “Others” which include all sorts of other suggestions from my interviewees (e.g. the spread of fast-food).

Figure V.1. Reasons for earlier sex amongst youth today

(Source: Interviews 2012-13)



A majority of respondents, over 67 percent, said they thought that young people today were starting to have sex earlier because of technology (Figure V.1.). Cellphones in particular were said to enable a much more discrete form of flirting or even of “sexting.” The Philippines is the country with the highest number of text messages sent per capita, and mobile phones are ubiquitous throughout the archipelago. As mentioned previously, in many rural areas such as Saint Bernard, there never were any landlines at all, so people went straight from *no phone* to *cellphone*.

In the municipality’s main clinic in the *Poblacion*, family planning was promoted. There were free permanent “ligations” during the month of March, where women who wanted to

¹⁴³ The Filipino term for pornographic films.

participate could be picked up from the villages with a free bus. Also, less permanent, and perhaps more enticing for younger women, there was a battery of other free family planning available: injections every three months, condoms,¹⁴⁴ and IUDs, “the placement is free; they only need to pay for the gloves.” The medical professional also underlined that they provided these services to married and unmarried women, even if “there will be staring during [the Catholic] mass.” Other health problems in the municipality were that the cemetery was overcrowded and the issue of sanitation from all of the piggeries. Officials were thankful that the municipality was spared from dengue or malaria.

2.3. Contemporary natural hazards in Saint Bernard

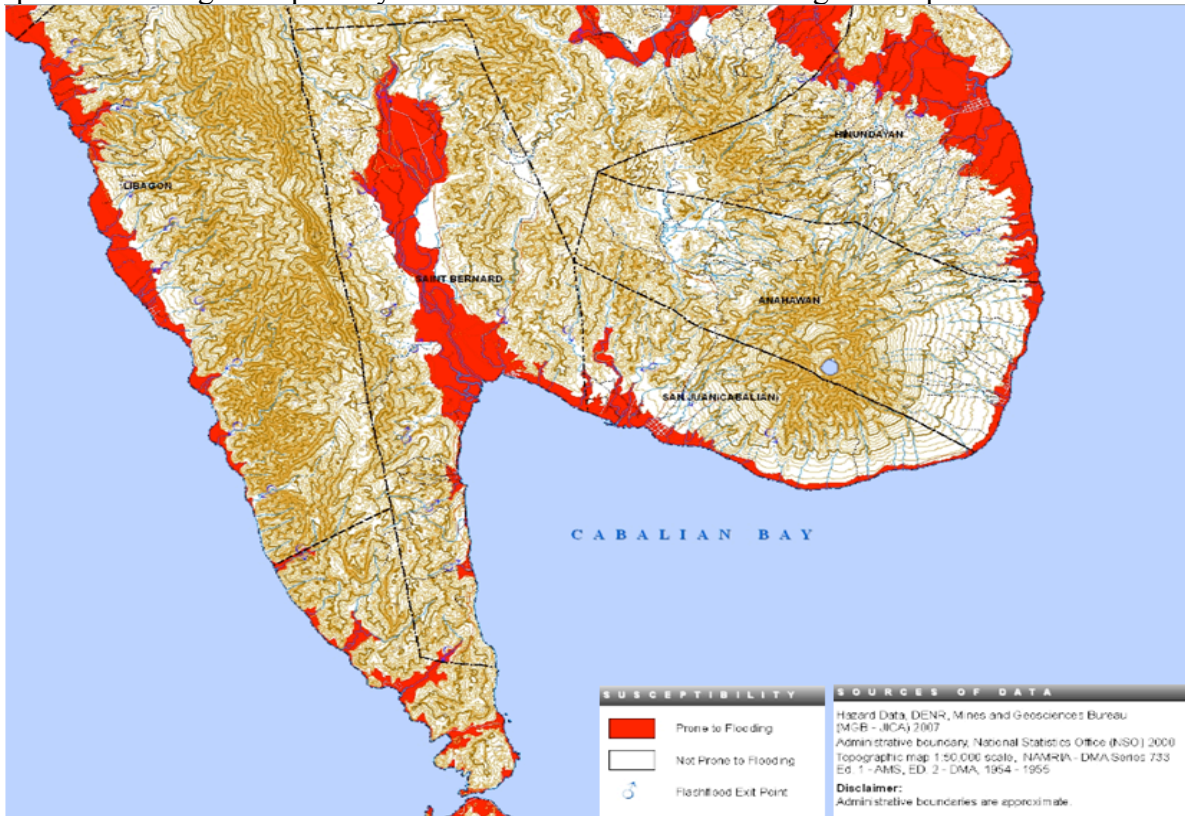
One of the reasons for the poverty in the municipality was that it was continuously pummeled by natural hazards, which regularly destroy precious crops and constructions, and often injure or kill. The Municipality’s main waterway is called the Himbangao River but is locally known as the Lawigan River. It is heavily silted and prone to floods, so much so that residents of most flood-prone areas of the municipality “evacuate at least 10 times a year” (NSCB 2011, p. 2; Map V.3). The climate in the municipality ranges from wet to very wet¹⁴⁵ (MSB 2001, pp. 15-16). Temperatures range from 21°C to 32°C. The western border of the municipality has very steep mountainsides, crisscrossed by fault lines, which, combined with the heavy rains, has led 24 out of the 30 barangays to be classified as “at-risk areas” for landslides by the national Mines and Geoscience Bureau (Map V.4). Several of the barangays that were adjacent to Guinsaugon have been classified as “permanent high-risk areas” and have been permanently evacuated¹⁴⁶ because of the threat of new potential landslides from Mount Kan-abag (NSCB 2011, p. 2). Finally, Mount Cabalian, in the neighboring municipality of San Juan, is considered a “potentially active” volcano and is only 6 km away (Camit et al., 2000).

¹⁴⁴ Interestingly the main brand of condoms in the Philippines is called “Trust” [...].

¹⁴⁵ The less-wet season, or *summer*, is in April and May. The wettest months are from November to January. It is what authorities call a type II weather which means amongst other things that there is no dry season.

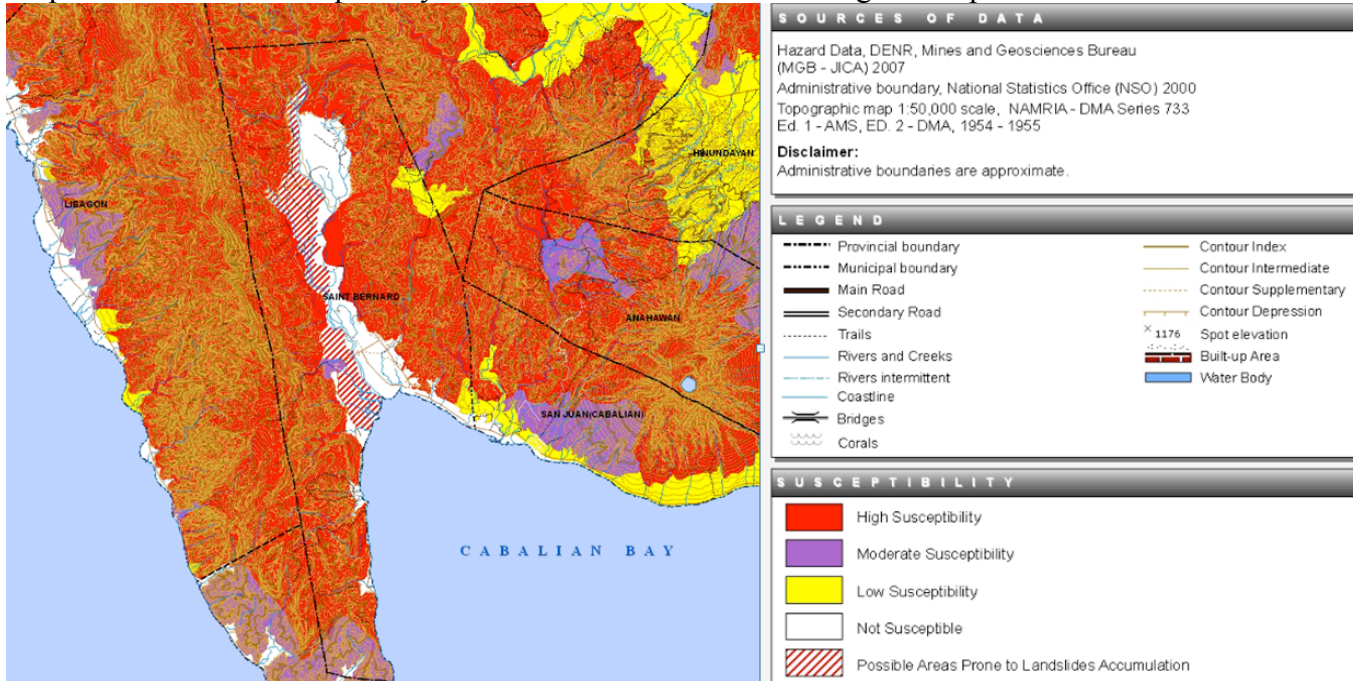
¹⁴⁶ There is a lot to be said about these massive relocations of villages. Much of the relocated population may live in another safer location, but continues to come to farm in the old hazardous locations. For more information on this see Gutton 2009, Luna 2010, as well as Goda and Veuthey (forthcoming).

Map V.3. Flooding susceptibility of Saint Bernard and surrounding municipalities



(Adapted from READY Project 2009)

Map V.4. Landslide susceptibility of Saint Bernard and surrounding municipalities



(Adapted from READY Project 2009)

The whole region is so seismically active that there has been some prospective testing for creating a geothermal electricity generating station in the area, similar to the one on the northern end of the island;¹⁴⁷ the endeavor is called the Southern Leyte Geothermal Project, SLGP (Camit et al., 2000). Earthquakes are felt every couple of months. It is disturbing to notice that in the Municipality of Saint Bernard, the exact areas that are safe from landslides are in fact prone to flooding, and vice-a-versa (Maps V.3 and V.4). In a sense, there is no really safe place in the municipality, and this is not even taking into account the various other hazards that threaten the area (such as tsunamis, ground liquefaction, and earthquake risks, to name just a few).

3. AGRICULTURE IN SAINT BERNARD

For most people in Saint Bernard agriculture did not provide wealth. The vast majority of residents toiled on rice paddies and coconut groves but barely eked out a living. In the previous chapters the socio-economic context was given for the country in general and the region in particular, and it was illustrated over and over again how an elite minority enrich themselves while the masses toil in misery. At this micro-scale municipal analysis the systemic abuse and inequality continues. Franklin may have been correct about the honesty of farmers but he seems to have forgotten that they are forced to interact with businesspeople.

Perhaps because of the American business-school legacy of national elites, most municipalities in the Philippines were encouraged to formulate a *vision* for themselves. In Saint Bernard their vision was “to become an agriculturally productive, progressive, healthy resilient community with committed, united, honest public servants and environmentally conscious and God-loving citizenry” (NSCB 2011, p. 3). The livelihood of most people in the municipality was either directly agricultural, or related to it. In the next section the different kinds of agricultural practices in Saint Bernard will be analyzed. This is cogent for this thesis because these activities have an undeniable impact on social dynamics. There is an intimate and complex relationship between agriculture and disasters (Gibb & Veuthey 2010).

¹⁴⁷ Tanauan Geothermal plant near Ormoc, Leyte Province, mentioned in the previous chapter.

Table V.2. Land usage of main crops in the Municipality (Interviews with MSB 2012-2013)

| Coconut | Rice | Abaca* | Other | Municipality |
|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 3,800 ha. | 1,117 ha. | 300 ha. | 4,803 ha. | 10,020 ha. |
| 38% | 11% | Less than 3% | 48% | 100% |

*The figures for abaca are possibly even lower due to abaca disease.

3.1. Coconuts in Saint Bernard

Coconut is the primary crop in the municipality, covering 3,800 hectares, or 38 percent of Saint Bernard's total land area of 10,020 hectares (Municipal Agricultural Office of MSB, interview 2012). It is one of the main cash crops, usually semi-processed on site: farmers husk (Picture V.4) and partially sun or smoke-dry the coconut meat (Picture V.5) to create "copra." The coconut milk is also used for household consumption. The provincial Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) in Maasin had an office that was literally falling apart during my interview in late May 2013, which might have been an indicator of how much the provincial authorities actually cared about the livelihood of so many of its constituents. Nevertheless, PCA officials were very welcoming and kindly explained with stacks of worn-out photocopies how there are 12 different varieties of coconut trees. The main distinction is between the *Dwarf* varieties and *Tall* varieties. The smaller ones were easier to climb and produce more sap for *tuba* (or sugar), and have a 50-year life span for bearing fruit; usually every 4 to 5 year (sometimes even every 3 years). The taller trees have a 70-year bearing life and bear every 7-10 years. Usually farmers harvested every 3 months to decrease the expenses of harvesting. It then took approximately four nuts to produce one kilo of copra dried meat.

Their estimate (Interview with PCA officer in 2013) was that there were over 230,000 coconut trees in the Municipality of Saint Bernard, with over 180,000 of them bearing fruits. The official estimate was that there were 2,059 coconut farmers in 2011, but the actual number of people employed for related activities such as harvesting, husking, transporting, and drying, was probably significantly higher. A municipal official claimed that about 95 percent of the municipality was involved in some way or another with coconuts.

Coconut is “the tree of life” claimed one of the municipal agriculturalists. He said everything can be used: “From top to roots.” Roots make good medicine for stomach aches; trunk is the lumber for most of the municipality’s constructions; fruits of course have many uses (food, beverage, and according to municipal authorities “very trendy now in the hip parts of the US. Good for athletes and also against kidney stones, because it has many electrolytes”). Finally, there was the beginning of a market for coco-sugar, made from coconut sap, and which was said to be good for diabetics. The municipal agriculturalist explained that 0.25 kg of coco-sugar was worth PhP 75 [just under US\$ 2], which was a lot more than farmers were then getting for their copra. What was more, it was very easy to make: farmers only needed to harvest the coconut-sap and cook it for 5 hours to prevent it from fermenting (if it ferments you cannot get the sugar). This high value production of coco-sugar could potentially be an important boon for local farmers. However, if they decide to make coco-sugar then they cannot make palm wine, called *tuba* in Visaya.

The last, but not least, of the wonderful usages of the coconut tree is its ability to produce palm wine, called *tuba* in the Visayas. The *tuba* from Leyte was famous across the country. The sap was harvested by men who were jocularly called “pilots” because they spend their time “flying around up above.” The pilots had a dangerous job when they climbed up to the tops of the trees to place bottles to harvest the sap from the flowers of the coco trees. Serious accidents were not uncommon. The coco sap was processed locally, fermented, and there was an elaborate procedure of regularly changing containers for the *tuba* to mature but not spoil.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Dili tubig sa langit</i> | Not water from heaven, | |
| <i>Dili tubig sa yuta</i> | Not water from earth. | |
| <i>Tubig sa tunga-tunga</i> | Water from midair | |
| <i>Makalibog sa huna-huna.</i> | It baffles the mind. | |
| <i>(Tuba)</i> | (Palm wine) | (P. Go-Saga, 2010, p. 41) |

There has been a tradition of palm wine concocting in the region for several centuries, at the very least. The Spaniards quickly noticed that the Visayans “were good drinkers” (Scott 1994, p. 49). “Magellan had no sooner landed on Homonhon,¹⁴⁸ when people from nearby Suluan

¹⁴⁸ Homonhon is a small island just 30 km south of Guiuan on Samar Island. Homonhon is 80 km northeast of Saint Bernard. It is said to be Magellan’s first landing in what is called now the Philippines.

presented him with a jarful of what Pigafetta recorded as *uraca* – that is, *arak*, the Malay-Arabic word for distilled liquors” (Ibid.). When that early motley crew of explorers landed on the small Island of Limasawa, barely 30 km Southwest of Saint Bernard, Magellan’s Venetian savant “drank from the same cup as Rajah Kolambu, and his translator, Enrique de Malacca, got so drunk he was not much use; a few days later, the local harvest was delayed while Kolambu and his brother Awi slept off a hangover” (Ibid., p. 50).

Municipal authorities explained that although coconut occupies the most land, it was still only the second main source of income in the municipality, after rice. The main problem for copra was that farmers were getting paid very low prices. Authorities explained that was because of the competition from international palm oil, which also had very low prices. Furthermore, “Chinese merchants’ negotiate low prices at the mill-gate,” said a municipal official. Sources explained that there were only two main merchants for copra in the area. In an interview, one of these merchants explained how they buy from the farmers, then store the copra until the price is right for reselling to regional purchasers. These purchasers came with ships to neighboring San Juan and loaded the copra up to mills in either Tacloban or Iligan¹⁴⁹ (CDO Granex) or Cebu (Ludo Oil Mill). If copra was going to Tacloban then sometimes it was transported by truck.

The regional bulk buyers sell their cargo to the highest bidders. One of the main regional buyers was related to some of the Chinese merchants in Saint Bernard and owned “a few mid-sized cargo boats to bring the copra up to the oil mills up in Tacloban” as well as a very large warehouse just outside of the municipality in neighboring San Juan (Cabalian). I tried various times and through various connections to arrange an interview with this regional buyer, but to no avail. All I know is from what his relatives and people in the town told me. He is from Saint Bernard’s small Chinese community and went to Chinese school in Cebu. He was in his mid-sixties at the time of fieldwork (in 2012-2013). In the 1970s his house in Saint Bernard was firebombed, which might be indicative of resentments from some of the areas less successful residents.

¹⁴⁹ Near Cagayan de Oro on Mindanao Island.

Picture V.4. Coconut farmers husking the nuts



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

Picture V.5. Coconut dryer: the coconut meat is spread out on trellis and dried with smoke



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

Coconut disease: a lurking hitchhiking disaster

Municipal agricultural officials were very worried about the archipelago-wide spread of “coconut disease.” At the time of the final fieldwork for this research, in late May 2013, the disease had not infested the municipality, *yet*. Authorities were quick to point out that “technically it is a *pest* not a disease, because it can be seen. Diseases cannot be seen and are virus, fungi, or bacteria.” The problem was actually the spread of a type of beetle called *Brontispa* that feeds on young coconut leaves. The infected trees were noticeable because the young leaves turn brown, instead of the normal green color. The infamous beetle was first seen in the Philippines in the heart of Manila, on Roxas Boulevard in 2005. It reached the Eastern Visayas Region via Northern Samar in 2007. By late 2009, it had made it down to Maasin, the capital of Southern Leyte. “*Brontispa* was rampant from Liloan to San Ricardo, many trees were affected” said a municipal official. In Saint Bernard, the first sightings were a month before the interview (in April 2013) when two infected trees were discovered in two different barangays. The municipal response was prompt. In the first case a one-year-old tree was burnt to the ground. In the second case, they sprayed the infested tree with insecticide in the hope of killing the beetles.

The government was trying to deal with the spread of *Brontispa* by attacking the beetles themselves either with insecticide, or, as it was being tried in Maasin, with biological control. There was some sort of small wasp, invisible to the naked eye, which attacked the beetles. This biological control took six months to a year to take effect. In October 2010, Philippine Coconut Authority and the Department of Agriculture had a seminar in Saint Bernard’s *Poblacion* to raise awareness about the outbreak. The municipal agriculturist underlined that 95 percent of people in Saint Bernard were involved in coconut farming: “The pest could become a very big issue.” However, he believed that it was different than the abaca disease because that was a virus and that was more difficult to control. Also, “coco pests can be seen [with the naked eye] and are easier to handle than abaca virus.”

There were also other potential problems for the coconut industry: “Lip-spot” bacterial disease as well as “Rhinceros Beetle,” but it was the *Brontispa* which the municipal authorities were really concerned about, because they were “hitchhikers” who caught rides on long distance buses that crisscrossed the country. Also, they reproduced rapidly, hatching eggs every three to seven days. Part of the problem was that the *Brontispa* cannot be seen unless you opened the lip of the coco leaf. Farmers needed to climb to the top of the trees with small orchid sprayer.

SAVE OUR COCONUT
Join The War Against *Brontispa*

Be an **INFORMER**



The *Brontispa* Victim
Ang lubi mamatay sulod lamang sa usa ka tuig kon dili masumpo dayon. Pinakadali mokaylap ang *Brontispa*!

- Dali mailhan
- Ang mga bag-ong dahon nga naa sa tunga sa punoan, laya o “brown” ang kolor, apan ang mga gulang na dahon berde ug maayo pa
- Ang kasagaran nato nga nailhan sa lubi mao nga ang mga bag-ong dahon mao untay berde ang kolor samtang ang gawas ug gulang na dahon may pagka “yellow” or “brown” ang kolor

PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY

Help SAVE our Coconut Industry:

Palihug **PAGPADANGAT** sa pinakaduol na buhatan sa PCA o sa inyong Lokal na Pangagamhanan kon adunay moy makit-an na lubi na gi-atake ug *Brontispa*. Ang PCA na ang mohatag sa ensaktong aksyon.

An urgent call from:

Secretary **ARTHUR C. YAP**
Department of Agriculture

and

Administrator **OSCAR G. GARIN**
Philippine Coconut Authority

The municipal agriculturalist feared that almost all of the coco trees along the highway in Southern Leyte were already infected by the hitchhiking *Brontispa*.

Picture V.6. Anti-*Brontispa* billboard from PCA written in a mix of English and Visaya

(Source: Veuthey 2013)

3.2. Rice

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Ang ulo kabaw</i> | The head is a carabao, | |
| <i>Ang lawas kahoy</i> | The body is wood, | |
| <i>Ang ikog tawo.</i> | The tail is a man. | |
| <i>(nagdaro)</i> | (man plowing) | (P. Go-Saga, 2010, p. 45) |

Rice was the second most abundant crop in the municipality, with 1,117 hectares, or 11.1 percent of the land (MSB interview 2012). Irrigation canals (Picture V.7) were installed in Saint Bernard after Martial Law. Up until the 1970s there was little rice, and only during the rainy season; instead people grew corn. At the time of this thesis' fieldwork, there was virtually no more corn grown in the municipality. Rice was the main cash crop. Municipal agricultural officials explained that most of the municipality's farmers "are not owners, they are poor and they will pay after the harvest." In other words, they were tenants.

The Province of Southern Leyte had relatively high rice productivity with approximately 4.3 metric tons per hectare (NEDA 2013, p. 54). Thanks to irrigation many farmers were able to make three harvests per every two years. The municipal authorities I interviewed who were specialized in rice production were keen on telling me about the promotion of new hybrid varieties and fertilizers. There was at the time (2012) a 50 percent subsidy from the provincial government. The type of hybrid rice promoted by the government was called "F1" and, as was often the case with hybrids, it could not be replanted, so farmers would have needed to buy seeds every season. The municipal agriculturalist ardently pointed out that the hybrid, which they innocently called "inbred," had a much higher production "sometimes 20 or 30 bags more for each hectare."

Picture V.7. Irrigation in Saint Bernard (Source: Veuthey 2013)



Picture V.8. Tilling a rice paddy with a carabao in Saint Bernard (Source: Veuthey 2009)



(The mountain in the background bares the scar of the 2006 landslide. View looking due west)

The municipal agriculturalist explained that the government's "hybrid commercialization program" started in 2005. The official bemoaned there had been mixed responses: "those who are innovative and adapt easily and those who take a 'wait and see' attitude." My own analysis is that many farmers could not afford either the investment or the risk of such experimentation. Many of them were in the precarious situation of the man standing in water up to his neck, praying that no unexpected ripple will drown him, *à la* Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, mentioned in a previous chapter. Already in 2003, the government started the program "Fertilize now, pay later" that had a PhP 1.2 million [US\$ 30,000] budget in the municipality. One million PhP from the national government and PhP 200,000 from the municipal government. This was a program that made loans without interest. "At first it was working well but then after the 2006 disaster farmers stopped paying because their crops were ruined from the heavy rains that damaged the hybrid seeds and gave a low harvest. In 2003, the year they started, there was a 100 percent payback. But by 2006, farmers were only making 30 percent paybacks. The program stopped completely in 2010. I asked if anyone was doing organic farming in the municipality and was told that they only knew of one farmer doing it on two hectares in an upland village.

3.3. Abaca: The crash of a cash crop

The municipality was once considered to be "one of the abaca producing towns in the region" with a production of 150 metric tons for 1998 (MSB 2001). "In the 1980-90s there were some 300 hectares in Saint Bernard alone" (May 2013 interview with representative from Fiber Industry Development Authority, FIDA). The plant thrives in the mountainous hinterland because it grows best above 100 meters of altitude. Production in Saint Bernard had been very significant: about 800-1000kg per hectare. Abaca was once present in 20 of the 30 barangays. The plant takes 18 months to two years to mature before it can be harvested. My impression of the rare surviving plants that I saw was that it sort of looks like a banana plant but with purplish colors. After the flowering stage comes the fruiting stage when the whole plant needs to be chopped down.

*Sa gamay pa gipangga,
Sa daku na giluba.
(abaca)*

It is cared for when small
It is butchered when mature.
(abaca) (P. Go-Saga, 2010, p. 46)

The FIDA official explained that, back in the pre-disease days, people who had 5 hectares of abaca could count on a weekly harvest. The plants were then “stripped” by machines in the area. Abaca farmers would sell their plants to middlemen, General Baling Establishments (GBEs) who had “pressing machines” in Sogod. Different grades got different prices. The GBEs were the ones with the contacts in the US, in Germany, and other countries, where the fiber was processed into paper, egg-trays, meat-cases, wall decorations, bags, or included into fiberglass components, “supposedly for Volkswagen automobiles” said the official.

Abaca disease began in the mid-1990s. The “abaca bunchy-top virus” was called *ugpong* in the Visayan language. The virus was carried by an insect called the *Brown Plant Aphid*. Abaca was for a long time one of the main cash crops in the area but most people had been doing “multi-cropping” where a farmer would intersperse root crops, abaca and copra. In Sogod, however, some farmers focused only on abaca because it brought higher income. Most other regions were not solely dependent on this single crop, but in Sogod when the disease hit, many farmers were so devastated that they “were forced to migrate to Manila” explained a municipal official.

The disease spread from one plant to another in six days with aphids and ants as the vector. *Umback* was the Visayan term for the abaca plant’s outer lip. There was about 10-12 kg of it per plant and it was usually waste, but could also be sold and used for beautification. The local official said that the “*umback* gatherers” were unknowingly spreading the disease. At the worst period, in the late 1990s, there was an incidence of 100 percent of dead abaca plants in the municipality. One of the interviewees from an upland barangay decried that his life “is much harder than before because of the abaca disease. Back in 2004, abaca was still 50 percent of my income, now all that is gone.” To compound the problem, for the few people still able to grow the crop, the farm-gate price had been dropping.

The government had a two-pronged strategy to fight the abaca disease, said the FIDA official: Abaca Disease Management Project (ADMP). First kill the insect vector with insecticide, and second kill the infected plant with herbicide. The latter was done with a bamboo stick soaked

in herbicide. In Saint Bernard there were 300 hectares targeted for treatment from April to October 2013. The government gave an incentive of 1,500 PhP/hectare [under US\$ 40/hectare] to participate in the project. Each concerned barangay had 10 ADMP implementers: nine laborers and one land owner.

3.4. Agrarian reform within Saint Bernard

The provincial head-office for the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is in Sogod.¹⁵⁰ The Saint Bernard office also covers neighboring San Juan. Most of the local DAR staff either grew up in Saint Bernard or married into the town. They seemed to be quite comfortable talking about the local power dynamics, especially surrounding land-issues, an arena of politics where the DAR has front-row seats. Officials explained that “since the beginning of the program, in 1972, there have been a total of 1,574 ARBs (Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries)” in the municipality. A total of about 951 hectares had been redistributed. The vast majority, 892 hectares, were government lands, which were already being used as agricultural lands, and the remaining approximately 60 hectares were “private agricultural lands.”

Farmer selection for the program required that “beneficiaries” must have been tilling the land for at least three years, and that they were “landless” according to Republic Act 6657 (i.e. that they be tilling less than three hectares). The DAR staff in Saint Bernard said they could not compare what was going on in their area with what may be happening in other provinces of the Eastern Visayas. Land acquisition had been minimal in Southern Leyte when compared to the Province of Leyte with which it shares the island. In Southern Leyte, the land acquisition was almost done, while this was still ongoing in Leyte, at the time of this thesis’ interviews in 2012. One of the reasons for these differences, according to the DAR staff, was that landholdings were generally much smaller in Southern Leyte. “Here in Southern Leyte, the Municipality of Anahawan¹⁵¹ is the only place where a piece of land that could be considered a *hacienda*. It has 101 hectares, some of which have already been redistributed.” The redistribution of that particular piece of land began in 2012.

¹⁵⁰ 45km, an hour away by bus.

¹⁵¹ 12 km east of Saint Bernard.

What had been the greatest challenges for the DAR office in Saint Bernard? The DAR agents said some older families, such as the Escaños¹⁵² or the Garcias, were “afraid of the law” and were pleasant to work with, but there were other “big landowners who did not want to cooperate.” Officials said there were certain local families that felt they were “above the law.” These patrician families would keep passing the blame to another sibling saying that “it is our eldest brother’s responsibility.” It seemed certain large landowners kept thinking that the DAR “will take their land.” The DAR staff appeared amazingly comprehensive: “We can’t blame them. They lack information about our programs.” The officials cited that one such example of tension was in September 2011, in an upland village, “it had been a hard place; the landowning family, the children especially, they were antagonistic to us. But now they have started cooperating with us. It is because the information dissemination was lacking.” The tensions had eased and DAR managed to redistribute 26 hectares of coco and rice farmland. The poor farmers benefiting from these redistributions were delighted, according to DAR staff. Officials felt most of the land transfers in Saint Bernard had been successful because “only 20 percent of the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs) needed support *after* getting their land titles.”

4. THE STABILITY OF A SALARY

*Ang tawong hingatulong
dali ang kamatayon.*

One who is fond of sleeping
dies early.

(Go-Saga, 2010, p. 51)

Over and over in the interviews, people mentioned how they would like someone in their household to have a stable income. The vast majority of the people in the municipality suffered from irregular income. This dearth of stable livelihoods often made it difficult to evaluate a person’s economic status. In fact it was a question I quickly realized I needed to remove from my questionnaire. For many people some time periods would be significantly more lucrative than others, if there was a big harvest, for example. The absence of stable livelihood resulted in lots of moving around, following jobs. In an earlier part of this chapter it was underlined that Saint Bernard had been for many years quite isolated, but it must be emphasized that this did not mean people were statically rooted in one geographical place. Instead, residents were highly mobile and it was very common for people to work in other

¹⁵² Mentioned in the previous chapter, they still owned land in Saint Bernard at the time of the interview.

parts of the archipelago. Higher wages were in the bigger cities, but so were the higher living expenses. Many of my interviewees had done stints in Cebu City or the National Capital Region (NCR), but many felt that they were better off returning to a rural area where food and housing was more affordable.

| Job description | Location | Wage in PhP | Comments |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Saleslady in <i>carinderia</i> ^a | <i>Poblacion</i> | 50-60/day housed&fed | Work was seven days a week. Housed in the employer's home |
| Farm work | Villages | 200-250/day ^b | Backbreaking work in the scorching sun. Highly irregular. Dawn till dusk, or until the job was done |
| Saleslady promoting new product | Different towns of So. Leyte | 260/day | Housing and food was <i>not</i> included. Worker was moved around a lot, depending on where she was needed. 8hr workday. Highly irregular |
| Salesman in Gaisano ^c | Sogod | 5,000/mth | This young man had spent a year in a factory in the NCR before deciding to come back to So. Leyte |
| Municipal GIS officer | <i>Poblacion</i> | 8,000/mth | College graduate. Technical specialist. No job security (depends on elected official) |
| Factory worker | Manila area | 12,000/mth | Complained about the high expenses for housing and food. Decided to come back to the province |
| Police officer | Base pay ^d | 14,832/mth | Job security & possibility of wage increase with time |
| University Instructor (UP) | Manila | 20,000/mth | College graduate. Social prestige. Relative job security (for a couple of years) |
| Captain AFP ^e | NA | 35,312/mth | Will be moved around but job has stability |

^a Small local cafeteria; ^b *Meriendas* (snacks) are expected by the workers; ^c Chain of Chinese-owned shopping malls; ^d It is not unimaginable that this base wage might perhaps occasionally be supplemented by other "collateral benefits"; ^e Armed Forces of the Philippines. (Source: Interviews 2012-13).

For example, in one of the smaller upland villages I met a 35-year-old mother of two, who had some college education, and who had worked in a garment factory in the NCR. Controlling the quality of stitches, she had earned 4,000 PhP [US\$ 100] per month, working five days a week, eight hours a day. Her husband was with her in the capital region, earning 12,000 PhP [US\$ 300] per month working as a maintenance person. Those were relatively decent wages, but

they nevertheless had decided to move back to Saint Bernard where they farmed a plot of land that she owns.

Others came to Saint Bernard from even poorer parts of the archipelago. For example, one young man who worked as a daily farm laborer explained how his parents were tenants on two hectares in Mindanao growing coco, lanzones, and other fruits. “Life was difficult. Because we got very low prices for the fruits.” He said that, “until now, over there the laborers are only paid PhP 80 [US\$ 2] per day. Much less than the 200-230 per day here [in Saint Bernard].” He felt “it was a good decision to move.” Another man from Mindanao migrated away from that island because of fear of violence between the AFP and the NPA. He worked as a lumberjack in Samar, which seemed safer to him, during a couple of years before moving to Southern Leyte.

Even with “salaried employment,” it became quickly apparent that most people had no real financial stability and that there was there is no *real money* to be earned if one did not start off in life with some private capital. This explained in part why such a large proportion of Filipinos are working overseas. According to the official figure, over 10 percent of the entire population is an Overseas Filipino Worker, also known as OFW (CFO 2013).

4.1. Migrant Filipino Workers (MFW)

“Pati pas di ou rivé pou ça.

Partir ne veut pas dire que vous êtes arrivé pour autant.” (Dany Laferrière 2006, p. 53).

In view of the absence of job stability and the incredibly low wages available to most people in the municipality it came as no surprise that many residents went looking for work overseas. In late 2013 the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) estimated that there were officially over 10 million Filipinos working overseas, about half of them permanently (CFO 2013). The actual figure is probably higher, with many OFW working illegally.¹⁵³ The proportion of the working-age population overseas must also have been significantly higher than these aggregated official statistics. In Canada alone it is believed that there are over 721,000 OFWs, and about five times that number in the United States (CFO 2013).

¹⁵³ Or as the Pinoys say: *Tago nang Tago* (TNT), which loosely translates to “always hiding.”

Like in many Filipino municipalities, there is a *Public Employment Service Office* (PESO) in Saint Bernard. The person in charge explained how the municipality had only opened this office in 2011 but that similar ones existed in other parts of the country since 1991. He described his work mainly as making sure that the private placement agencies did not abuse the local citizenry looking to become Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs): “our applicants are vulnerable to ‘crazy people’ and to agencies that promise good salaries but don’t give them.” Since his appointment in 2011, he said that the office “has been one of the most visited of the whole municipio... It is like giving food and water.” Since he began his work, he had helped to deploy 42 people from the municipality: Five men, mainly electricians, and 37 women, most of them domestic helpers (DH). The average contract was for two years, which they often extend to three. The PESO official explained that many more of Saint Bernard’s residents would have liked to expatriate themselves, but “they don’t have the PhP 1,000 [US\$ 25] necessary to travel to Tacloban and secure a passport. People asked the municipality but it could not afford [to help them finance their passports]. I’m sad to say that many of the applications will go to the trash because they don’t have passports.”

The official also explained that applicants preferred going to Asia, mainly Hong Kong and Singapore; “the Middle-East was the second option.” Notice that getting to North America was not even within the realm of possibilities for many OFWs-to-be in Saint Bernard at the time. There was a clear gradient of desirability of places to be an OFW. The West (US, Canada, Australia, and Europe) was the most expensive to get to but was believed, probably correctly, to have been the safest and most lucrative destination. Then came “Asia” (mainly Hong Kong and Singapore, but also Japan and South Korea, and increasingly Malaysia), closer to home, mid-range in both expenses and wages (Table V.4). Last on the list was the Middle East. It was the least expensive place to get to, and supposedly the least selective, but many people I spoke with in Saint Bernard, especially the women, said they were afraid of the working conditions there.

Table V.4. Examples of migrants and their wages (all these examples are women)

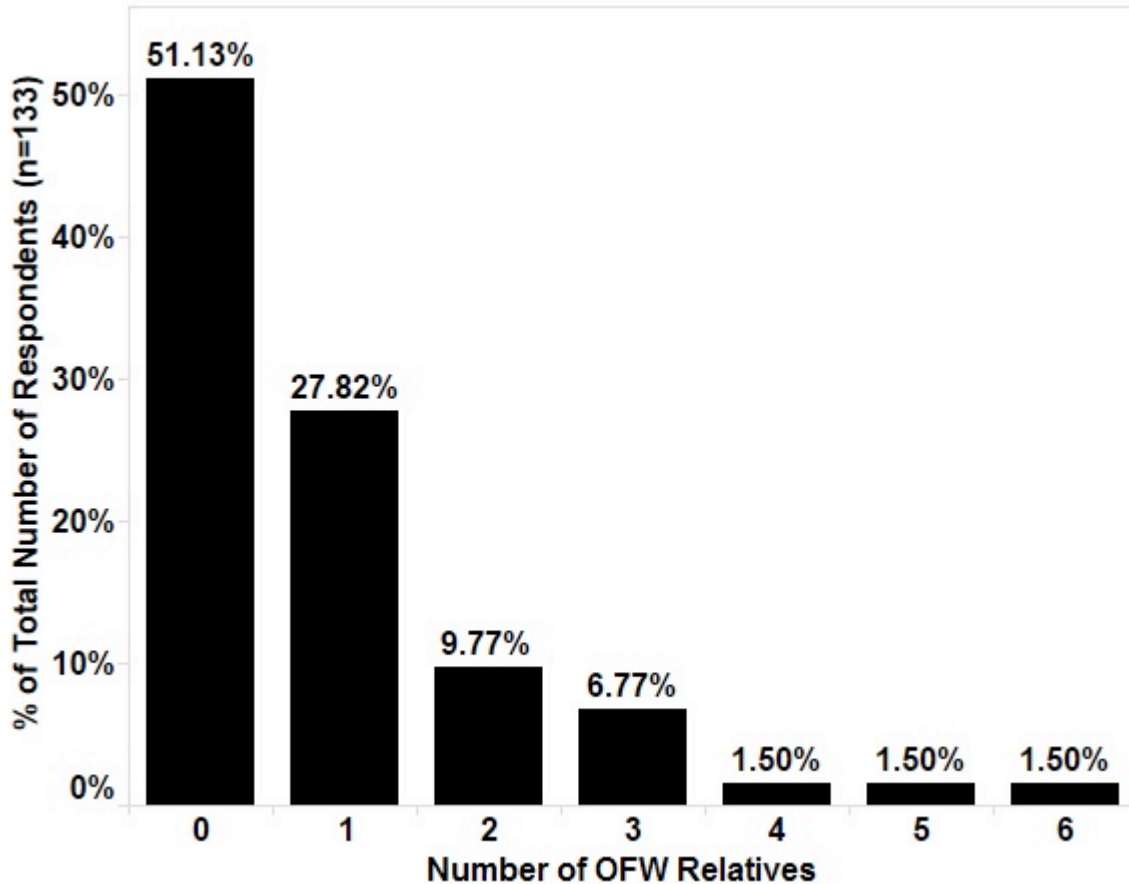
| Age | Location | Wage (in PhP) | Job | Comments |
|-----|-----------|---------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 28 | Manila | 15-20k/mth | Factory | High living expenses. Difficult to save money |
| 35 | Kuwait | 9.6-11k/mth | DH | Ran away and hid at embassy |
| 28 | Abu Dhabi | 11k/mth | Manager | Agency's placement fee was of PhP33k [\$ 825] |
| 32 | Hong Kong | 20k/mth | DH | Agency's placement fee was of PhP90k [\$ 2,250] |

(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

In 2012 I met with an agent from a private placement agency recruiting in Saint Bernard. The agency was based in Manila but the agent underlined that he preferred working in rural areas because in cities there was “better economic status, like in first class municipalities in Davao or Manila; there, people are contented with what they have, and don’t look for opportunities overseas.” He mentioned how a lot of people were really afraid that the agency was a fake, and that was why he was collaborating closely with the PESO office. Most applicants are women: “out of every 100 women sent, there are about three men deployed.” The day I interviewed him, this agent was recruiting for an employer who was in such an urgent need for domestic helpers (DH) that he would pay the “processing fees”: passport, complete medical check-up, and training. Working conditions were one day off per week, eight hours of work a day, housing and food included. The promised salary was US\$ 400 per month. This was approximately the equivalent of the base monthly salary for a corporal in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Several of the former OFWs that I interviewed in the municipality had started by going to the Middle East, worked out there for a couple of years, then “graduated” to working as an OFW in a *relatively* more enviable and *relatively* more lucrative place like Hong Kong or Singapore. Also interesting to point out was that several veteran OFWs said they were planning to go back overseas but that they planned to try to “short-circuit” the private placement agencies and find “direct hires.” The agencies took a significant cut from the OFW’s wage, with “placement fees” of *at least* PhP 30,000 [US\$ 750], deducted from the initial month’s wages.

Figure V.2. Disaggregated data: How many OFW relative(s) do you have?



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

Almost half, 48.9 percent, of the total interviewees in Saint Bernard had a relative who was an OFW. This did not necessarily mean that they were receiving remittances but that they were potentially connected to someone who could send cash, in times of crisis, if their house was destroyed by a flood, for example. When looking at the disaggregated data (Figure V.2) it became clear that most of the people interviewed who had an OFW in their family, had only one. In the discussions with interviewees it also seemed that there was sometimes what I call a *snowball effect*: that having one family member as an OFW provides the financial and social capital for other family members to seek work overseas. A possible explanation for these results in the disaggregated data could be that the people interviewed have only one OFW at a time.

A young woman in an upland village explained that she had started with a stint in Abu Dhabi where she never had a day off. After two years, when that initial contract came to an end, she decided to apply for Hong Kong “because of the better salaries there.” To access this job as a domestic helper (DH) in Hong Kong, she was forced to pay a placement agency in Manila: PhP 30,000 in cash, up front; and then during her first four months her PhP 20,000 salary had a deduction of PhP 15,000 per month.¹⁵⁴ In other words, she paid the agency some PhP 90,000 [over US\$ 2,000] to access a DH job in Hong Kong. In this new location she had Sundays off and would meet up with other DHs from Southern Leyte there. She was planning to go back to Hong Kong and was counting on her social network, carefully cultivated by daily Facebook usage, to help her find her future employment. She said she had “about 200 Facebook friends who are out there.”

Fear and flight in the Middle East

One woman I spoke with in a remote village had recently come back from the Middle East. She had been recruited at a job-fair at the *Poblacion*: “I was afraid, but willing to work to earn money for my family.” The agency picked her up at the airport in Kuwait and brought her to her employer’s home. Her work was mainly to wash and iron clothes. She feared leaving the house: “I told him [the employer] that I didn’t want a day off because I was afraid.” Things got worse before the end of her first year. She discovered her employer was doing illegal activities and was petrified at the idea that there would be a police raid and that she would be accused. She was concerned that “because it is a Muslim country” she would get her “head chopped off.” One day she ran away, leaving all of her clothes and belongings at the house. She went to the Filipino embassy where she said it turned out there were about 130 other women in similar situations. She says she stayed at the embassy for six weeks, and then was flown back to Manila, where she stayed another eight days at the Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA). This agency paid her flight back to Tacloban and gave her the bus fare to return to Saint Bernard. Despite this ordeal, she wanted to try working again as an OFW, but she was explicit that she did not want to be a domestic helper: “I don’t want to be a DH again. Now I want to work in a beauty parlor. They pay much higher salaries, about \$US 600.” She also said

¹⁵⁴ That is a 75 percent cut in her salary during her first four months of work.

that next time around, she will call her Filipina friends in Kuwait to get a job directly, cutting out the agency. “I am discouraged by my experience with the agency. Next time, I am going to try to go through my friends, because the agency was useless: it could not help me when I was in trouble.”

The OFW houses

Across the municipality one notices “OFW houses,” large two or three story cinderblock constructions, often with brightly colored tiles (Picture V.9). Most of these houses were the result of a member of the family working abroad. I interviewed a friendly couple in their early 50s in one of these ostentatious buildings; these houses stuck out from the other more humble bamboo homes in the villages. This couple had two sons working in the construction industry in Saudi Arabia. One of the sons has been out there two years, the other four years. In another village, I interviewed a 75-year-old woman in another big “OFW house.” One of her daughters was a midwife in the US. She had other kids working good jobs outside of the municipality. She explained how her kids sent back approximately PhP 15,000 [US\$ 375] per month, which was a substantial amount of money for the area. She was one of the very rare people I spoke with in Saint Bernard to have her house insured. Nevertheless, this charming elderly lady said that she realized others in the village might think her rich, but that she still considered herself to be poor.

Picture V.9. Typical nipa hut (left) next to typical OFW house (right)



(Source: Veuthey 2013)

4.2. Borrowing money in Saint Bernard

“A debtor’s children [in the 16th century Visayas] were born in debt, his first-degree kin were also liable, and any favor received incurred debt” (Scott 1994, p. 135).

In view of the scarcity of stable incomes in the municipality and the difficulties to access work elsewhere, many people in Saint Bernard often had to borrow money to attend to the necessities of their basic survival. Often food was bought on credit, and certainly in the event of a crisis, such as a medical emergency in the family, rare were the people who had the financial resiliency to take the expense in their stride and bounce back.

In Saint Bernard, few people were integrated into the formal financial sector. A man in his early 30s explained that he and his wife had gotten into debt so she could get a job working as a DH overseas. He worked as a farm laborer in his upland village, and sometimes as a security guard in Manila. When I asked him if he had any savings, he rolled his eyes and started laughing. I then naïvely asked him if he had a bank account and he guffawed even louder. It is about this time that I decided to take this part out of my questionnaire. The way this man and

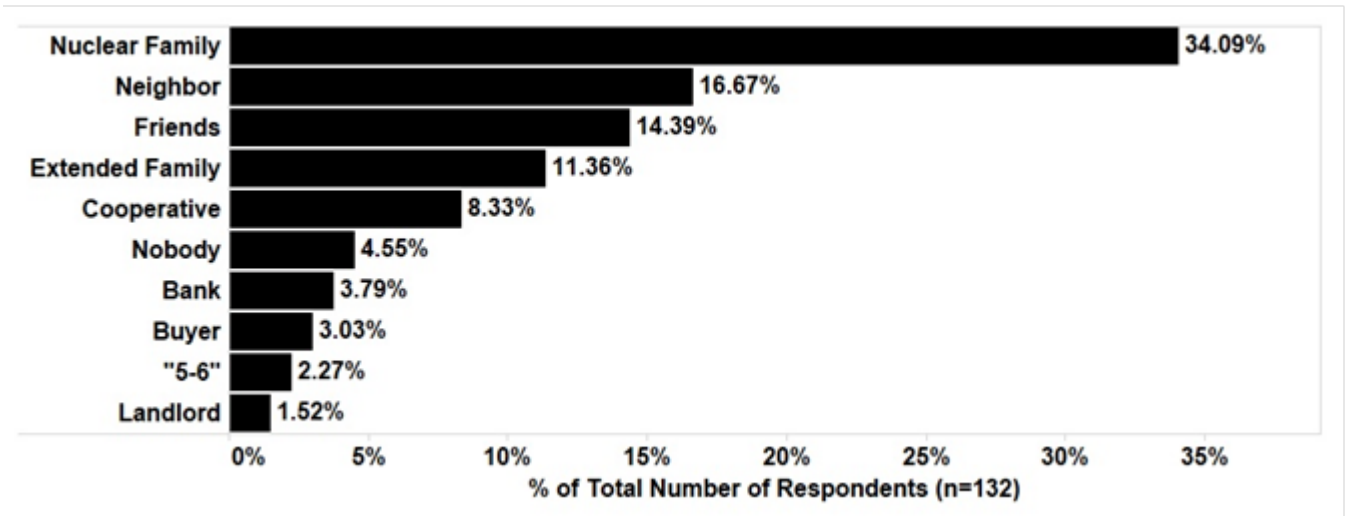
others reacted convinced me that the question was just simply not appropriate in this poor rural setting. Most of the people I spoke with were overwhelmingly *not* integrated into the formal financial sector and seemed to rely on different types of informal social connections to obtain loans for their projects or assistance in times of emergency.

The “Five-Six”

One semi-formal service provider was the local moneylender, also known as the “5-6” because you borrow five and you have to return six. It seemed that in the Philippines this job was very often done by people from India, to such an extent that they are also called *Bumbays*, which is the term used to refer to people from the sub-continent. The 5-6 whom I spent a day with was from the Punjab and had a wife and children living in India. He said he drove about 120 km a day, going from village to village, lending and collecting money. He said he had purchased a “moneylender permit” for this municipality and that he was earning approximately PhP 50,000 [US\$ 1,250] per month. On the day I rode around with him, most of his collections were of small amounts, between PhP 200 and 600 [US\$ 5-15]; he said some days he would not collect anything at all, “sometimes the borrower really is broke.” He explained that he considered his business “much more convenient than a bank.” He did not ask for complicated paperwork, or any formal identification, and “people don’t need to travel to the *Poblacion*.” Also, if there was an emergency he could drive over and lend money at any time of the day or night.

The rare people integrated into the formal financial sector were those who were educated and who held steady jobs. Such an example was one of the local schoolmasters who had a bank account as well as some sort of governmental health plan. Another such rare example was a 46-year-old who was originally from La Union Province in the Ilocano part of Luzon Island. He had come to Saint Bernard with a military detachment in 1988. He had married a local woman and stayed. He had a bank account and insurance from his service with the army.

Figure V.3. Who would you ask if you needed to make a small loan?



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

During the interviews it became very clear that the majority of respondents would turn to the people around them for loans instead of to institutions. Over a third of respondents said (Figure V.3) they would ask their *nuclear family*: parents, siblings, and children. When this was added to the other informal categories, such as neighbors, friends, and extended family, the results showed that over 76 percent of the respondents would not turn to the formal financial sector, or the 5-6, to borrow money. It must be underlined that many, but not all, said their relatives would charge them a fee for borrowing money; the going rate I was told several times was 10 percent interest per month.

5. GROUPS

Membership in groups is one of the indicators often used to measure social capital. Some of the groups described below could be seen as a form of semi-formal local insurance where people pooled their resources to be used when one of the members was in need.

One of the salient options to access money in the municipality, other than family, was the plethora of semi-formal micro-finance arrangements. Several people mentioned the possibility of borrowing money from the *Women's Organization*, which gave loans with only 0.7 percent interests ("Cooperative" in Figure V.3). The president of one of the villages' *Women's Organization* explained how her group had 171 members and that almost every household in

her village had at least a member in the organization. She was also very proud to say that they had two “rich members”: two school teachers, people who had stable income. Another project of the *Women’s*, as it was often referred to, was “Peso for Health” where each member contributes one peso per person in her household, every month. This had been going on for 12 years. As a result, in case of a medical emergency, the women could quickly borrow between PhP 500 to 1,000 [US\$12 – 25] to deal with the immediate expenses, such as transportation to hospital.

Another similar arrangement was described to me by one of the municipal employees. Since 2003 a group of 21 members started pooling their resources. By 2012, they were 48 members. They would bring PhP 20 [US\$ 0.50] per meeting per week and this went into the group’s savings. Then if someone had a project it was on the “first-come first-serve” basis. The loan was payable in the following three to nine months. Members had used the system for livelihood development, such as swine fattening, capital for starting *sari-sari* stores,¹⁵⁵ and other small business ventures. Members borrowed sums ranging from PhP 1,000 [US\$ 25] up to PhP 10,000 [US\$ 250], depending on how long they had been members and how much capital they had brought to the group. In the case of the municipal employee who was describing the system, she has been a member since 2003 and she had contributed over PhP 6,000 [US\$ 150] so she could avail for a loan of 90 percent of that. There was a 2 percent interest on the loans. Most members were farmers and housewives, but there were “a few professionals.” The bookkeeping was done by volunteers. They were registered with the municipality and had been officially accredited. When they started in 2003, they only had PhP 8,000 [US\$ 200]; at the time of the interview in 2012 they had assets of PhP 200,000 [US\$ 5,000]. This was not unlike the rotating credit associations across the archipelago described by Bankoff:

“Participants agreed to a schedule of collections (often weekly) with the order of payout usually determined by lot. According to ‘the luck of the draw’, the first recipient obtained an entire week’s collection but had to continue contributing till all the participants had received their share, at which point the association dissolved or formed anew with the same or different members. There was also the added attraction of

¹⁵⁵ Sari-sari stores are ubiquitous in the Philippines and are little corner stores that sell everything from cigarettes to candy and notebooks.

chance as to who would receive the first payment but without any of the corresponding risks associated with gambling” (Bankoff 2007, p. 343).

Bankoff also described the history of mutual help associations. Ranging from the 16th century religious *cofradías*, to the *Parent-Teacher Associations* (PTAs) that swarmed across the archipelago when the American colonial authorities promoted public education. The former were “primarily religious, they also had important charitable functions: the care and succour of the sick and dying” by gathering cash when people are sick or, later, for funerals (Bankoff 2003a, p. 6). PTAs rapidly became a staple in most villages (Ibid., p. 7; referring to Rivera & McMillan 1952, p. 167). Bankoff argued that although the PTAs were ostensibly providing school related services, “they seemed to have provided a much wider range of services and often acted as the focal point for communal endeavours” (Ibid.). In both cases, Bankoff contended persuasively that these formal and semi-formal village-level organizations in fact dissimulated, or as he says “cloak[ed],” organizations that probably existed long before colonization and which “continued to provide communities with their only reliable form of security against hazard and misfortune” (Ibid., p. 8). The most unavoidable of misfortune that eventually catches up to everyone is death; in the Philippines, funerals and the three-day wake that precedes them, were big expensive ordeals.

5.1. *Dadjung*: how the poor pay for their funerals

The overwhelming majority of people interviewed in Saint Bernard were part of a *dadjung*, an informal money-pooling association, which provides funds for the relatively expensive event of a funeral. Almost nine out of ten interviewees, 88.9 percent (n=90), were members of a *dadjung*.

In one of the villages where I did interviews there were three *dadjung* groups. They each had between 60 and 188 members. These were informal self-help credit groups that were registered neither with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) nor the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The *dadjung* groups had their own “bylaws” and committees (cooking committee, cemetery, etc.). The *dadjung* president and treasurer were elected. I asked one such informal president what were the qualities required to be a good *dadjung* president. He answered rather glumly that the person needed to be “someone who is

popular.” He himself would have preferred not being president because he said “it’s a big burden” but he said he had no choice since no one else was doing it. Each time there was a funeral and a wake, each member contributed PhP 100 [US\$ 2.5], as well as 2 ¼ kg of rice and some firewood. With the money, the bereaved family bought a pig to roast for the funeral meal.

Picture V.10. Dadjung president (in center with helmet and notebook) collecting contributions



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

If members were absent for a funeral “other than their own, of course” they would get a fine of PhP 100. If they could make it to the funeral but could not contribute the PhP 100, then they were also fined PhP 100. A wealthier citizen of the municipality explained that *dadjungs* were

for “poor people.” He said that “rich people,” like him, paid a private company called *Saint Peter* PhP 500 per month during five years, and once they had contributed their PhP 30,000 [US\$ 750] “*Saint Peter* will take care of things when the time comes.”

5.2. Membership in clubs or “formal” organizations

Robert Putnam famously used membership to formal clubs as an indicator for measuring social capital. Putnam studied the decline of memberships to formal organizations in the United States, and argued there was a correlation with the decline in that country’s social capital. The Harvard political scientist was looking at the way Americans in the 1970s decreased their participation to all sorts of formal clubs such as Rotary Clubs, Boy Scouts, and famously, bowling leagues. Within the case of the Municipality of Saint Bernard there were a variety of informal or semi-formal organizations. There was often a fuzzy border between *formal* and *informal* associations, but regardless, there is no doubt that local residents had been coming together in all sorts of ways to help each other out during emergencies, or as Bankoff wrote “provide succour and assistance in troubled times” (2007, p. 338).

In the interviews I considered “membership to an organization or club” any formal, semi-formal, or informal association of people for common activities. For example, this included religious groups, *dadjungs*, farming associations, musical associations, sports clubs, mangrove planting organization, old people’s association, shooting clubs, political groups, lending cooperatives, etc. The point of measuring “organizations,” also done by numerous other authors interested in social capital, was to find indicators that mark a belonging to entities other than one’s family and having a place where one can expand one’s social network. Based on data from the colossal SWS survey with over 1,200 respondents, Abad argued that in the Philippine context, Filipinos are relatively unlikely to be members of formal organizations, and that if they do participate in such activities they were usually church-related.

“Filipino associations, this data suggest, remain minimal despite the proliferation of civil society groups in the Philippines, [...], Filipinos are more likely to participate in organizations that relate to the private realm of religion and sports, than in groups that relate to the realm that directly relates to improvements in material life” (Abad 2005, pp. 44-45).

In Municipality of Saint Bernard, “group membership” on a more localized level provided some alternative findings. In this poor and remote rural municipality, there was quite an array of informal or semi-formal organizations that in fact *did* relate to what Abad calls “the realm that directly relates to improvements in material life.” Abad’s conclusions make sense given the nature of the SWS data he was working with. Those initial results could perhaps be nuanced by also looking at organizations that were both less formal and less mono-purpose.

5.3. Social Networks

While digging into the issue of social bonds in Saint Bernard, it quickly became apparent that almost all respondents had very tightly knit social networks, so much so that it almost seemed somewhat irrelevant to ask people about this aspect of their social capital, since nearly everyone was very strongly connected to their friends and families. However, it also became clear that individuals were often surprisingly shy about meeting strangers from other social groups. I found that they had dense *bonding* connections, to use “Putnamian” terms, with their friends and families, but also often had weak *bridging or linking* connections, with people from other groups, from different families, social class, ethnic groups, etc. Ricardo Abad articulates this quite eloquently in his seminal paper on the situation of social capital at the national level:

“Many studies point out that family relations, or strong ties, also take center stage in social networks across different societies. But the importance of these ties varies from one society to another. These strong ties, for example, are particularly striking in communities where trust is low (Cheale 2000), where people’s options are relatively limited (Phillipson et al. 2004: 11), where the ‘culture of the public world’ is weak (Mulder 2000), and where the state is weak (Carroll 1993). All four apply to the Philippines and so does another factor, (...), namely the relative lack of bridging social capital or ties to wider networks, among Filipinos, the kind of connections obtained from membership and participation in organizations. Filipinos have not taken much advantage of the strength of weak ties” (Abad 2005, p. 44).

As mentioned in this thesis’ first chapter, one way to create these precious “weak ties” is to be part of (formal) organizations, such as clubs or associations, etc. In the case of the Municipality of Saint Bernard, we have seen above there were other kinds of collective organizations that may be not-quite-formal but were nevertheless very active. Moreover, the informality and multi-purpose nature of many of them would perhaps leave them under the

radar of the machine-gunning questionnaires from “parachute social scientists” that airdrop into a research site for a couple of weeks¹⁵⁶ of harried data collecting. Bankoff argues that many western academics had been keen on uncovering

“more mono-purpose associations and networks in relation to community welfare, according to their own criteria of what such organizations should comprise, and who therefore often fail to recognize the existence of other more multi-purpose ones that do not share the same outward form but may fulfil many of the same functions” (Bankoff 2007, p. 330).

5.4. *Hungus*

A *hungus* is a type of informal cooperative labor sharing arrangement, widespread throughout Southeast Asia, and used extensively in Saint Bernard. These work teams gather to accomplish projects that would be too much work for a single person to do, such as planting or harvesting one of the member’s rice paddies. The *hungus* is a group of 15 to 20 people¹⁵⁷ who all work on one of the member’s fields, then proceed to the next member’s field, and so on. Most of the time, no money exchanges hands, and the system works with the expectation of reciprocity. The only “fee” demanded from the owner whose field was being worked on was to provide snacks and drinks. Sometimes, landowners with enough capital could hire a *hungus* team to work their field for them. Similar informal labor sharing arrangements are extensively described by James Scott in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). Scott studied the impacts of the Green Revolution on local class struggles in rural Malaysia.

During my participant observations I had the opportunity to spend several days with different *hungus* teams and it was obvious that these organizations function with strong bonds of trust and that much camaraderie is involved. In one such case, 25 men were harvesting a hectare of rice for a tenant. This was a one-day job that would produce between 100 and 125 sacks of *palay* (unhusked rice), which would make 50 sacks of husked rice, or *bugas* in Cebuano. The rice was then distributed as follows: one fourth for the owner, one half for the tenant, and one fourth for the *hungus*.

¹⁵⁶ Sometimes just days.

¹⁵⁷ Though I’ve been told some have as many as 50 members.

Picture V.11. *Hungus* team replanting rice



(Source: Veuthey 2009. View is looking southwest Behind *hungus* are coconut trees and the scar of the 2006 landslide)

5.5. How to think of group membership

For the “groups” question, when dealing with married people (or living arrangement similar to that) it was considered that both members of a couple were members of the group, even if one of the partners was an “official” member. For example, in the case of the women who were “home makers” I would also count the groups that their husbands were part of, if they themselves mentioned it. The assumption made was that the whole household would be able to access the benefits of that particular group’s social capital, if needed. When I asked to list the groups in which they were members, many stay-at-home mothers mentioned their husband’s *hungus*. The whole household benefited from the *hungus*: from the income generated if there was any, or from the help on the family plot. But also in many other ways, for example at the end of every harvest, most *hungus* organized a pig-roast usually with a bacchanal at a local

seaside beach. During these events, it was common practice for the actual worker, male or female, to bring along his or her spouse and kids to the pig-roast. So all that to say that in the “groups” question I looked at the household as a whole, as opposed to a more individual approach that may have been more common in a Western setting.

In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner famously claimed that the American conquest of its wild western frontier had branded rugged individualism deep into the hide of the United States’ collective psyche. Bankoff (2007, p. 343) makes the delightfully refreshing opposite argument and reasons that the frequency and intensity of natural hazards in the Philippines created amongst Filipino a strong sense of collective care and reciprocity, with the concept of *bayanihan* discussed in this thesis’ first chapter. Bankoff further argues that people who are not generous to others in times of hardship will be remembered, and snubbed when they later find themselves in dire straits (Ibid.).

“Filipinos are Filipinos because the environment they inhabit has played a role in shaping their cultures; that environment is itself the product of both physical and human forces. It is this interrelatedness, the social and cultural construction of nature, and the physical and natural construction of culture that lies at the root of this study of society and environment in the Philippines. And just as nature is a very active force in the archipelago, so, too, has it had a correspondingly very vital influence on human cultures in the Philippines” (Bankoff 2003b, p. 3).

In light of my observations in the rural municipality of Saint Bernard, I am convinced by his argument of a fraternal “culture of disaster” where people are encouraged to care for each other. However, there is a significant caveat to take into consideration, especially for geographers: *scale*. Throughout most of Chapters II and III this thesis was pointing a searchlight on the disjointed nature of Filipino national solidarity, where the shameless selfish profiteering of the country’s elite sits in parallel with the abject neglect of the archipelago’s masses who struggle to survive, as the Tagalog saying goes “isang kahig, isang tuka.”¹⁵⁸ So yes, my local observations at the micro-level concur with Bankoff’s refreshingly human argument that there is a certain “culture of solidarity” which can probably be linked (in part) to the very frequent and extreme natural hazards. However, this solidarity is circumscribed within the tight local network.

¹⁵⁸ Literally “one scratch, one peck,” which would translate as “living hand to mouth” combined with an avian image of surviving by scratching and pecking hungrily.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino¹⁵⁹

For several decades there has been an enlightening, albeit deeply nationalistic, movement to “decolonize psychology” which has led to *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Its champions, not least of which was Virgilio Enriquez (1992), criticized the whole concept of “Filipino Value System” where “smooth interpersonal relationships” were the dominant factors, with attributes such as “hiya.” This movement claims that the former American ways of seeing Filipino culture, popular amongst academics in the 1950s and 60s, justified the US economic and military control of the Philippines. Enriquez purported that in the Philippines “identity” was not to be looked at on an individual level but instead seen as web of social relations. This group perspective of identity proposed by Enriquez could find a very useful resonance, not to say potentially fertile collaboration, with the concept of social capital.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino correctly put its finger on the limitations of cookie-cutter paradigms of certain Western scholars. Certainly, drawing from the sophistication of local languages, and thus local concepts and worldviews, can only be enriching to understanding local social dynamics. However, I must underline that, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, to me, seemed to sometimes overestimate the strength of national identity, and underestimate the archipelago’s lack of cohesion. With all due respect for Enriquez’s groundbreaking contributions in what should be considered a Copernican revolution of local psychological thinking, I found his defense of the nationalist scale of discussion to be deficient, or *kulang* to use the Tagalog term. Small-scale bonding social capital seems to be extremely vigorous in the Philippines (whether in elite circles or amongst poor families), but the larger-scale bridging and linking capital, has “been weighed and found wanting.”

These criticisms asides, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* brought to light a plethora of expedient socio-psychological concepts that illustrate the complexity and delicate nuances of social relations in the archipelago. Notably it presented an elaborate palette of Tagalog terms to describe the quality of interactions with people who were either on the *outside* or the *inside* of one’s community (Table V.5).

¹⁵⁹ Filipino psychology

Table V.5. Tagalog concepts for describing human interactions with both insiders & outsiders

| IBANG-TAO (Outsider) | | HINDI IBANG-TAO (not an outsider) | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <i>Pakikitungo</i> | levels of civility | <i>Pakikipagpalagayang loob</i> | level of mutual trust |
| <i>Pakikisalamuha</i> | levels of mixing | <i>Pakikisangkot</i> | level of getting involved |
| <i>Pakikilahok</i> | levels of participating | <i>Pakikiisa</i> | level of fusion; level of full trust |
| <i>Pakikibagay</i> | levels of conforming | <i>Pakialamero</i> | someone who meddles in other people's issues |
| <i>Pakikisama</i> | levels of adjusting | <i>Pakialam</i> | concern, so that gets involved |

(Source: Enriquez 1992, pp. 49-68)

Sino ang nasa loob at sino ang nasa labas? (Who is inside and who is outside?)

There is no doubt that bonding social capital is very strong within people of the same group, whether amongst the very rich, or the very poor, but where are the borders of the group? Further research is needed to better define the psycho-geographic nature of these boundary lines, as well as the procedures of “checkpoint-crossings” which are highly culturally relative.¹⁶⁰ In the context of my observations in the Municipality of Saint Bernard, I would argue that the *ibang-tao* is anyone outside of the family or *barkada*. Perhaps one way to begin defining this border would be to map the circle of trust.

6. TRUST

*Vertrauen is gut, Kontrol noch besser*¹⁶¹
(Trust is good, control even better)

Trust was defined by the *Webster's New World Dictionary* as the “firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, etc. of another person or thing” (1988). Trust is considered an important component of social capital as well as a fundamental requirement for collective actions¹⁶² – especially in times of emergencies. This thesis used a variety of strategies in its attempt to get an assessment of trust across the Municipality of Saint Bernard.

¹⁶⁰ By “checkpoint-crossings” I mean how one passes from being an outsider to becoming part of the in-group, to crossing the boundary into the category of someone who can be trusted. This would be similar to what one finds in conflict areas when one moves across territories controlled by different warring parties. More research would be needed to establish what are the entry points to become part of an in-group. Bearing in mind that each group having its own codes and structure, the checkpoint-crossings are bound to be different depending on the situation.

¹⁶¹ From the Russian proverb *Доверяй, но проверяй* (*doveryai, no proveryai*) “trust but verify,” supposedly one of Lenin’s favorites. Seligman 2000 says that it was still used by East-German border guards in 1970s, www.zeit.de/stimmts/2000/200012_stimmts_lenin

¹⁶² Even authors like Fukuyama (*Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. 1996) underline the importance of trust; although I strongly disagree with his explanations for the reductions in trust levels.

Did people trust their neighbors? If so, to what extent? Who would they have expected help from in the case of an emergency? Did they trust their authorities? Was there a difference in people's trust depending at the level of authority (*barangay*, municipal, provincial, national)?

6.1. Wallet question

One of the ways to measure trust amongst neighbors was what I call the *Pitaka* Question. In several languages of the archipelago *pitaka* means “wallet” and during my interviews I asked the following questions:

Set up to the question

In your wallet are a picture ID, some important cards, your address, and a lot of money. You are in the immediate proximity of your home (in your *purok*¹⁶³). Your wallet falls out of your pocket, without you noticing.

Questions

How likely is it that your wallet will be brought back to you?

How likely is it that your money will be there?

How about if this happened somewhere in your village?

How about if it fell out somewhere in the Municipality?

Before coming up with the above formulation during my second fieldwork season in 2010, there were several other early experimental stages of the wallet question. The framing of the question was different and it was not providing any interesting results. I had been candidly asking people “if they trusted their neighbor?” And, of course, absolutely everyone said they did. Another attempt was to ask if they felt that “most people would take advantage of them if they had a chance” which was one of the common formulation used in Western research on trust. But here again, the overwhelming majority of respondents were strongly inclined to respond that “everyone was friendly,” and that they *of course* would bring back a wallet if they found one.

These initial results were quite disappointing and Filipino researchers I consulted confirmed that it was culturally inappropriate to publicly claim for oneself a found wallet or to bluntly

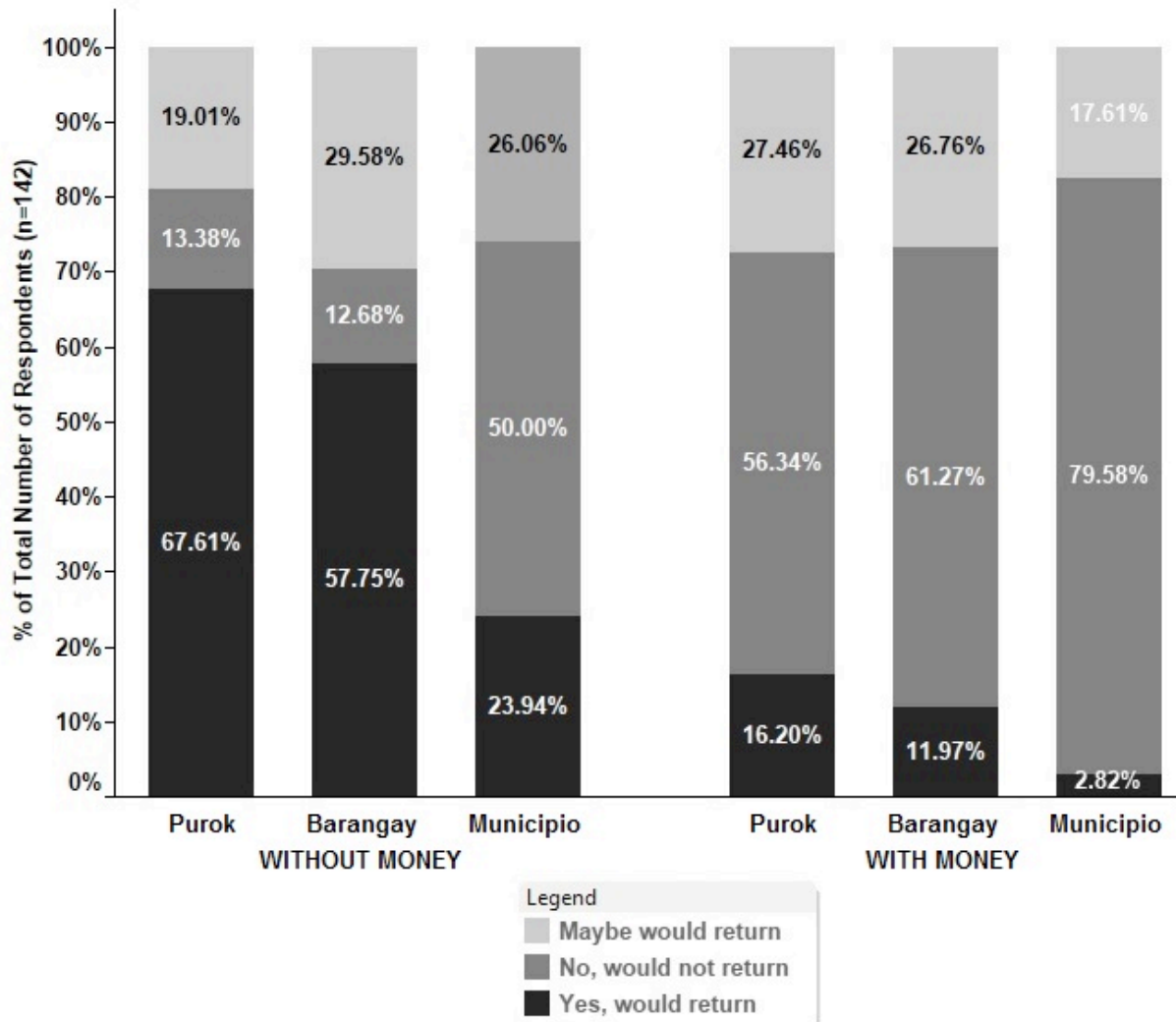
¹⁶³ Barangays are divided into subunits called “*puroks*.” Each *purok* is usually composed of a dozen households and has a waiting shed, and has an unofficial miniature political assembly.

accuse others of being dishonest. Also, I was getting the impression that respondents felt it was polite to agree with whatever it was I was asking about.¹⁶⁴ Transforming the question into an imagined situation allowed for more candor and provided what I believed to be a clearer understanding of how the interviewees perceived, and trusted, their fellow residents of the *purok* / village / municipality levels. It must be noted that the “wallet question” was not my invention; Helliwell and Wang (2010, p. 3) described a similar approach to measure trust.

Pitaka without money. The aggregated responses across the municipality are interesting, and the gradation, not to say the spectacular slope, in the responses exceeded my expectations (Figure V.4). Across the municipality respondents distinctly believed that their hypothetical “lost wallets” without money (but with their important ID cards) would be returned to them, over 67 percent in the areas around their houses (*purok*), and over 57 percent if their wallet fell out in their village (*barangay*). Beyond the *barangay* in the municipality in general, however, the expectation of return was twice lower, at about 24 percent belief that “yes, it would return” and a resounding 50 percent of respondents answering that “no, it would not return.”

Pitaka with money. Respondents clearly seemed to expect their important documents would return, especially near their homes, but what became even more apparent was that they strongly did *not* expect their cash to come back, regardless of where the hypothetical wallet was lost, though the mistrust appeared to continue increasing as one moved further away from the respondent’s home. A walloping 80 percent of respondents said that their money would certainly not be returned to them if they lost their *pitaka* somewhere in the municipality. In this part of the interview, respondents often said something to the order of “*lisud/mahirap ang buhay*” (life is hard [for everyone in the *purok*, *barangay*, or municipality]) and we have seen throughout the previous chapters that life is quite a struggle indeed for most people in the Eastern Visayas.

¹⁶⁴ This might perhaps also explain in part some of the strange “seeming inconsistency” (Abad 2005, p. 38) in the generalized trust results that Abad mentions in his watershed analysis of SWS’s 2001 work with the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

Figure V.4. *Pitaka* Trust Questions

(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

Spatial radius of trust. Judging from the responses to the *pitaka* question, the further away from one's home, the less the respondents seemed to trust "others." A possible explanation is of course that the interviewees have their families and clusters of friends close to their homes, which would reaffirm what most of the existing literature says about the prodigious importance of bonding social capital in the Philippines (Abad 2005).

6.2. Trust of authority

Tumbi ko

Kay mosunod ko.

(*tsinilas*)

Step on me

For I'll follow you.

(slippers)

(Go-Saga, 2010, p. 39)

Another type of trust that this thesis attempted to measure was how much people in Saint Bernard had faith in their leaders, whether they were at the village, municipal, provincial, or national levels. The approach was to ask about the sensitive issue of perceived corruption. According to Rothstein and Uslaner, “[i]n countries with high levels of corruption, the public is hostile to people who have more. Where corruption is high, voters are likely to believe that the poor are treated unfairly by society in general and by government institutions in particular” (2005, p. 56). These authors further deplored a type of vicious circle where “inequality and corruption breed mistrust, which produces no support for the very type of social welfare programs that are most effective in reducing disparities of income” (Ibid.).

In the context of my fieldwork in Saint Bernard I had the opportunity to hear extensively about the 2007 and 2010 election, as well as witness the May 2013 election. It would not be an overstatement to say that vote buying was standard operating procedure. However, there were nuances and most people did not see these payments in a negative light. Quite on the contrary, several poor farmers mentioned that during the election seasons, they could *finally* get some favors from the local elite candidates. One man explained that it was the only season where he would not have to pay for the ambulance’s gas in case of an emergency, “but only during election time.” There seemed to be all sorts of largesse which politicians would indulge during the election season.

For many of the poor, election season was one of the rare times they felt entitled to make demands, and expected to get at least a portion of their requests, from the wealthier members of the municipality. Some voters really played the system as much as they could. Informants explained that they were like starfruit, *balimbing*, because they said “yes” to all the candidates, and accepted cash from everyone. “If we say ‘no’ we will hurt their feelings and they will be offended. If we say yes, they will just flow with it, even if in the end we do not vote for them.

They will say we are ‘*balimbing*’ because the fruits of that tree grow in all different directions.”

During my observations of the 2013 municipal elections, the political group connected with the town’s Chinese business community, which had been swept out of power following the Guinsaugon landslide, was said to offer the highest payments. Several sources mentioned bribes between PhP 1,300 and 1,500 [about US\$ 35] per person, while the incumbent party that had come into power in 2007 was only making small handouts, offering between PhP 200-400 [about US\$ 7.5]. One source from that “cheaper” team said that it was only *pahalipay*¹⁶⁵ and explained that “it is not corruption, just a little amount to make them happy, to thank them for coming out to vote.” This endemic vote buying has to be seen in the context of the ubiquitous poverty. On election night, when most payments had been made, there were long line-ups in many of the municipality’s stores; people were *not* purchasing TVs or fancy products, but basic necessities like cooking oil and rice.

Municipal Politics

One of the many striking aspects of the aftermath of the Guinsaugon tragedy was what I call the “game change” in the political make-up of Saint Bernard. As described earlier in this chapter, for several decades leading up to 2006, municipal politics had been controlled by a group of ruling families,¹⁶⁶ but the elections following the Guinsaugon disaster ushered in a new political group. The “new” mayor, Rocco Velasquez, was at the time a member of the Liberal Party.¹⁶⁷ According to many of the people I spoke with, this was quite an unexpected upset because the families who had been in power had been command of the municipality for several decades and wielded a lot of influence in Saint Bernard.¹⁶⁸ In May 2010, Rocco Velasquez was massively re-elected as mayor of Saint Bernard, making it one of the only two

¹⁶⁵ Literally “congratulation” in Visaya.

¹⁶⁶ During a brief and bizarre interview in August 2010, Fernando Yang, one of the former mayors, explained to me how his family had been in office in Saint Bernard since the end of martial law in the mid-1980s until the 2006 elections. This was not exactly the case and there were in fact two different and distinct Yang families. Both are Chinese and both are involved in business, and both have been in politics since the end of Martial Law.

¹⁶⁷ This was the party of Ninoy and Cory Aquino. The Liberal party has since won the national election with Noynoy Aquino, the son of the two Filipino political icons just mentioned, gaining the presidency in May 2010. Rocco Velasquez was subsequently snubbed by the national Liberal Party during the 2013 elections, to the dismay of his municipal supporters.

¹⁶⁸ These families remain prominent in the political and economic life of the municipality.

municipalities of Southern Leyte's 18 divisions that did not vote for the province's dominant Lakas-Kampi-CMD party (interviews 2012),¹⁶⁹ the party of the Mercado clan whose two brothers occupy the positions of congressman and governor.

Why did these changes happen in Saint Bernard? One explanation, presented by Velasquez, was that during the frantic hours and days following the tragic 2006 landslide, many people in Saint Bernard became frustrated with what they perceived to be the opacity and inefficiency of local authorities in power at the time. "They were not really managing the operations themselves (...) There was a total collapse of local leadership in the management of the disaster relief operations. It was very chaotic."¹⁷⁰ People close to Velasquez claimed that the family in municipal office during the landslide tragedy sought to protect their own commercial interests rather than concern themselves with the disaster's victims. This was, of course, categorically denied by the accused.

The proper use of aid for the disaster's survivors also became quite controversial, as very large quantities of relief goods and substantial sums of cash started funneling into the affected area. Claims of embezzlement during emergencies are very common throughout the Philippines, especially at the national and provincial levels. Similar accusations can also be heard, though less frequently, about the local levels of government (*barangay* and municipal). One 48-year-old fisherman said "they are all corrupt. After a disaster, NGOs gave metal sheeting but the *barangay* gave us nipa [roofs of palm thatch]." In another village, a 55-year-old lamented "international aid provided lots of canned goods, and rice during Guinsaugon, but when the people got the goods, it was only local sardines." This was not really the subject of this thesis so I did not dig into specific accusations. However, I did attempt to get an understanding of how respondents felt about their officials (Figure V.5).

In the chaos that followed the terrible landslide, there did seem to have been a general distrust toward authorities' use of relief aid. A group of young professionals, originally from Saint

¹⁶⁹ Only Saint Bernard and the neighboring municipality of Liloan did not vote for the province's traditional dominant political group in 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Interview of Mayor Rocco Velasquez, 15 December 2009.

Bernard, but who were working in Manila or Cebu, decided to get involved in local politics and create what they called the *Athena Mission*. Velasquez was one of their leaders. He explains:

“We distributed a small leaflet with just four questions: (1) How much is being received by the provincial and municipal government? (2) From what agency? (3) How much has been spent for the operations? And (4) what are the future planned activities for the use, especially of cash donations? Well, it created mixed reactions, both from the victims directly affected and also the NGOs that were present. Some criticized us, saying that instead of helping we were just causing trouble. But we said ‘no, we just want to make sure that donations will be given to the beneficiaries’” (Velasquez interview 2009).

This alleged distrust of governmental authorities because of their supposed corruption was not unique to the Municipality of Saint Bernard, or the provincial government, or the Republic of the Philippines. It is a recurrent phenomenon across Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. That said, the Filipino archipelago has been rather notorious for its “over-average” levels of kleptocracy. Transparency International’s 2004 Global Corruption Report lists Ferdinand Marcos as the second most corrupt leaders in the world over the last twenty years, allegedly embezzling between US\$ 5 to 10 billion between 1972 and 1986.¹⁷¹ A more thorough analysis of the role of corruption is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it nevertheless can be assumed that it had a significant impact on different aspects of social capital, such as social cohesion and trust.

Rothstein and Uslaner underlined the importance of “social trust” because, they argued, it is connected with “highly desirable” social variables. There seems to be correlations between generalized trust of others, similar to what the *pitaka* question tries to evaluate, and a positive view of democratic institutions. More trusting individuals also gave more to charity and “are more tolerant toward minorities and to people who are not like themselves” (2005, p. 41). Uslaner and Rothstein acknowledged that “causality is admittedly a different question from that of the statistical correlations, but because so many correlations point in the same direction,

¹⁷¹ Transparency International (TI), *Global Corruption Report 2004*, p. 13, http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr/gcr_2004 [accessed November 2011]. It is worth noting, that the grand champion of embezzlement, according to TI, is Mohamed Suharto who supposedly funneled to himself 15 to 35 billion US\$ during his time as President of Indonesia from 1967 to 1998.

social scientists from many different disciplines have begun to pay attention to trust” (Ibid., pp. 41-42).

Positive impacts of the political game change

Social cohesion at the municipal level seemed to have been seriously affected by the aftermath of the Guinsaugon landslide. As mentioned above, in May 2007, Rocco Velasquez ran for mayor in Saint Bernard, and to the surprise of many, he was elected, displacing political clans that had been in power for several decades. This new political force claimed that the Guinsaugon tragedy jolted many local residents from their “apathy” and made them concerned enough to want to get involved in local politics. Several interviewees claimed that blatant corruption and self-interest of the past administration was what had caused the political change, as well as their own personal involvement in local politics. From the information I was able to gather, *before* the Guinsaugon landslide and the subsequent political shift, there was limited interest in disaster prevention in the municipality. Below is a quote from Mayor Rocco Velasquez:

“Before, there used to be a culture of apathy, because people really didn’t care before how the municipality was being run. They did not use to care how our leaders had become rich, while the town had remained static. During the elections, people didn’t care if no one ran against the incumbents. But after the landslide, people had become concerned and they had started to speak up” (Velasquez interview 2009).

This new involvement of people in local politics may well have had effects on social cohesion. Some of them positive for future risk reduction, others less so. Amongst the positive impacts of the “political game change,” it was easy to point out the many Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects implemented by the municipality and the barangays, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The magnitude of the Guinsaugon disaster created a major magnet for projects in the area. Nevertheless the administration and ordinary citizens themselves deserved a lot of the credit for their enthusiasm and their cooperation with outside organizations. All of the NGOs I interviewed were full of praise for the Velasquez administration’s interest and promotion of DRR.¹⁷² There were a variety of projects that had

¹⁷² Many of these DRR projects and plans are prepared by the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council (MDCC) often in close collaboration with several Barangay’s BDCCs. Though it must be noted that the MDCCs and BDCCs across the country have now been renamed MDRRMC (Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council) and BDRRMC, in a nationwide shift toward more pre-disaster prevention work.

been offered and implemented, ranging from building new houses, to relocating people displaced by the landslide, to providing new livelihoods, to contingency plans and training drills for people to know what to do when a future hazard struck.

Many of these DRR projects may have increased social cohesion within the municipality because when authorities provided services directly (or collaborate with NGOs who are providing services) the programs could be seen as increasing people's sense of belonging to a place and gratitude to their leaders. Of course, this is not to say that there was no social cohesion at all before. In every municipality certain groups of people will help each other in times of hardship. The catastrophic events in 2006 could be argued to have awakened a sense of collective identity, and a need for increased civic involvement. Several of the locals whom I spoke with had positive impressions of Mayor Velasquez because of his promotion of several of the new projects that had cropped up across the municipality since he was elected in 2007 and re-elected in 2010 with a landslide victory. A population's sense of trust in their leaders, although difficult to measure, remains essential in times of emergency (Wisner 2002, pp. 28-29).¹⁷³ However, it appeared that Saint Bernard's "civic awakenings" also led to the polarization of political groups and a certain fragmentation of the municipality's social cohesion. Velasquez's political opponents were full of vitriol in describing his administration.

Negative impacts of the political game change

The "political game change" described above may also have had some negative impacts on the municipality's social cohesion because it caused some serious political polarization. One of the most striking negative aspects of the change of power at the municipal level was the radicalization of tensions between the newly elected Mayor Rocco Velasquez and the group of Chinese families that had controlled the town during the previous decades. This tension was already palpable during my first visit to the area in 2009, during Velasquez's first term as mayor of Saint Bernard. Several months before the May 2010 elections, both sides had started campaigning, and the animosity was barely veiled: Mayor Velasquez was almost always accompanied by armed bodyguards. The May 2010 elections themselves seemed to have been

¹⁷³ See Wisner's "Golden Dozen" in the IFRC's *2002 World Disaster Report*.

very tense, especially when one of the automated vote-counting machines broke down in an upland barangay.¹⁷⁴ During three days and three nights, people nervously waited for a special computer part to arrive from Manila so as to proceed with the vote counting. During the whole time, partisans from both parties literally camped around the ballot boxes to be sure their opponents would not tamper with them.

Pictures V.12. Color divisions in municipal politics



(Source: the now defunct website of the Municipality of Saint Bernard).

This fierce political competition had serious repercussions on social cohesion in the municipality. During my second visit to Saint Bernard, in July 2010, a color coded rift had distinctly appeared (Picture V.12). On one side where the *yellow* partisans of the incumbent mayor, Rocco Velasquez, from the Liberal Party,¹⁷⁵ on the other side were the *green* partisans of Lucy Yang.¹⁷⁶ This chromatic fragmentation was so tense that bicycle-taxi drivers¹⁷⁷ from a certain political affiliation would supposedly not service potential clients from the opposing camp. It seems most likely that this political tension at the municipal level also had impacts in the barangays. Some of the studied villages voted *yellow* in favor of the incumbent Liberal Party mayor, while other studied villages voted *green* for the opposition Lakas-CMD Party. It

¹⁷⁴ The first year that elections were performed with the assistance of computerized machines was 2010.

¹⁷⁵ Across the country the color yellow has been associated with the Liberal Party.

¹⁷⁶ Who is a member of one of the Yang Chinese families which had controlled the municipal government during the decades preceding what I have called the “political game change.”

¹⁷⁷ Called “putput drivers” in this part of the Philippines.

is possible that this might also, in part, explain the enthusiasm – or perceived lack thereof – of certain barangay officials to collaborate with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programs because these may have been associated with the municipal authorities of Mayor Rocco Velasquez.

In the academic literature on the nature of local political power in Philippine rural areas it was common to underline the importance of alliance systems that often split small town in two antagonist sides (Hollnsteiner 1963; Kerkvliet 1991), often overlapping over the class divisions that one might have expected to find.

“Given the personalistic [sic] alliance system, partisanship is inevitable. Opposing factions will attack almost any project sponsored by their rivals, finding innumerable reasons why it is bad for the community. Though the project may have the noblest of aims [...] every resident knows the real reason for the attack: the enmity between the factions involved” (Hollnsteiner 1963, p. 190).

This may or may not have been the case in Saint Bernard, as in the end all of the studied barangays participated in DRR programs. Nevertheless, according to implementing NGOs, certain villages appeared to have been more enthusiastic about DRR programs, and these were the same *barangays* that voted for Rocco Velasquez.

Trust is considered to be the lubricant – or glue, depending on the metaphor – which allows society to function smoothly and not fall apart. Cohesion and trust are especially essential during collective actions to reduce the risks of disasters, as well as when a hazard strikes and people need to work together and have faith in others. People must trust that their leaders have the collective interest at heart.

Institutional trust

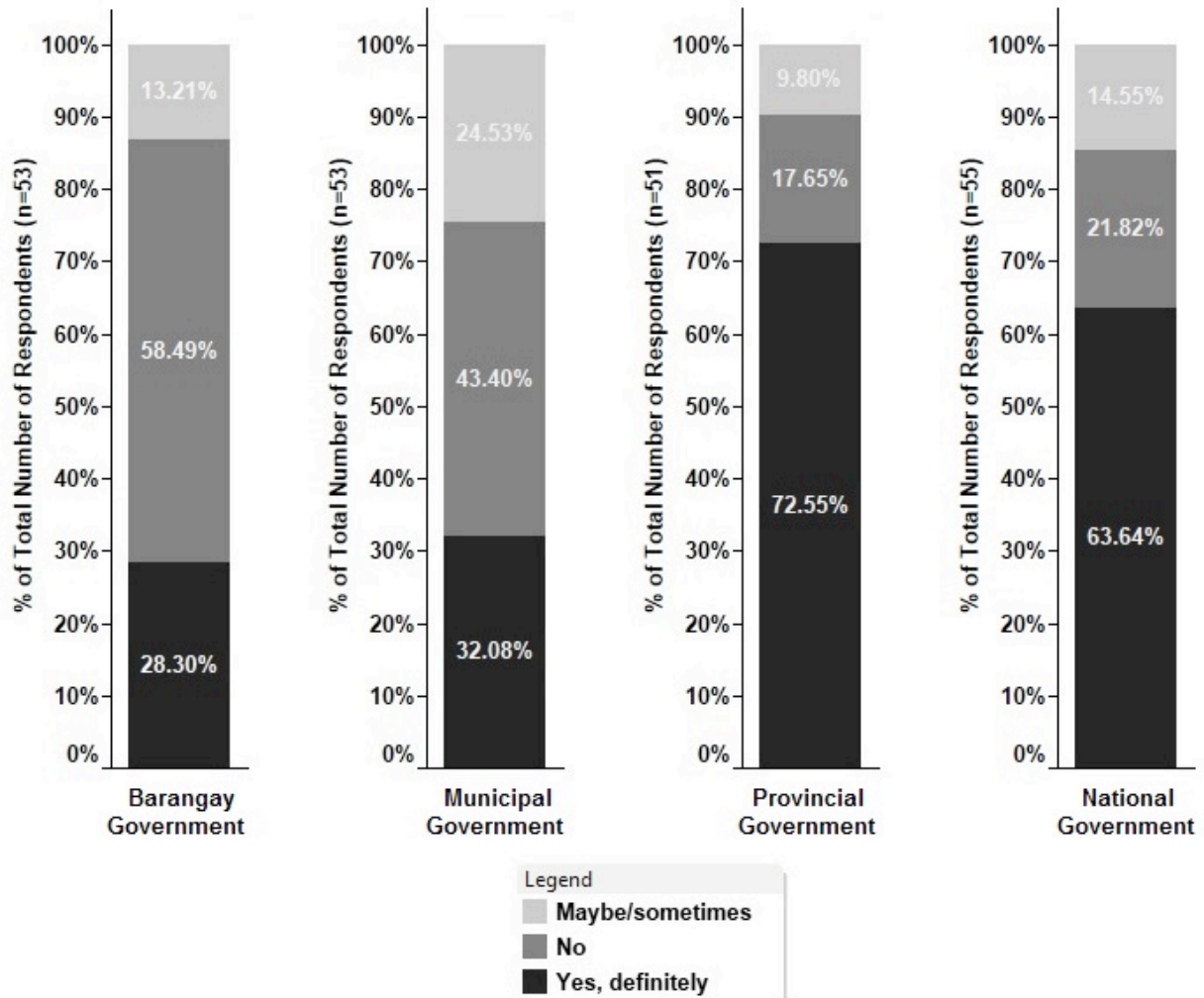
Getting a picture of what ordinary people think of their elected officials was a delicate task. The difficulty was due, in part, to cultural reasons as well as local power dynamics which would make it socially risky to complain too openly about someone else, especially if that other person was powerful, and all the more so if the potential “complainer” was talking with a foreigner who was going to write about it. Regardless of these initial challenges, this thesis attempted to measure the trust people had in their elected officials by guaranteeing anonymity

and framing the question in such a way that respondents who might feel uncomfortable could always “opt out” by giving the vague “maybe/sometimes” option. The compounded results from interviews across the municipality revealed several interesting results. First and foremost, many respondents did not have much faith in the integrity of the government on either the national or provincial levels.

By far the least trusted of government levels was the province, with almost three out of four interviewees saying they believed that “yes, definitely,” the provincial authorities in Maasin were corrupt. This harsh perception of the provincial government as corrupt was followed, relatively closely, by the perception that the government in far away Manila was also corrupt, with over 63 percent of respondents saying they believed the national capital was definitely corrupt. These distressing figures were about twice higher than the corruption suspected of local governments. Only 32 percent of respondents said they believed their municipal authorities, in 2012-2013, were corrupt. The results are even slightly lower for village authorities. Almost 60 percent of respondents said they believed that their *barangay* governments were *not* corrupt (Figure V.5).

What could these results imply about social capital and trust of institutions? Similarly, to the *pitaka* question results about inter-personal trust, these results reaffirmed the importance of scale. At the micro-scale level of the village and municipality, the relatively positive levels of trust seemed to indicate potentially strong social capital, which in this case would have been *small-scale* linking social capital, since the connections were with people of authority, and of potentially slightly higher social status. At the *macro-scale* level of the provincial and the national governments, the linking capital seemed to have been all but absent, and the vast majority of my respondents simply did not seem to trust authorities on those higher, more distant, levels. A caveat about this scalar analysis could be, however, that it might have a lot to do with the particular individuals in those different positions of power. Not all elected officials are perceived as *trapos*. *Trapos* is a contraction of “traditional-politicians” (it also means dishrag in many Filipino languages) and connotes the kind of sleaziness that the image of stereotypical politicians usually inspires.

Figure V.5. Do you think your government is corrupt?



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

In his very detailed, rigorous, and interesting analysis of “institutional trust” Abad (2005) relied on the results of a very large data set administered by the Social Weather Station (SWS) with data from across the archipelago. My own much smaller-scaled fieldwork results concur with his analysis that the “government in Manila” is one of the least trusted institutions in the country (p. 40). However, Abad then self-admittedly goes out on a limb and made a very surprising argument, comparing the large-scale SWS data about *interpersonal* trust, with the large-scale SWS data about *institutional* trust:

“Though the measures of interpersonal and institutional trust are not directly comparable, and use different samples, one still *senses* that that among adult Filipinos,

the degree of institutional trust may be higher than the level of interpersonal trust. Why Filipino [sic] rate institutional trust higher than interpersonal trust [...] [is] difficult to answer in this paper” (emphasis added, Abad 2005, p. 40).

At this juncture, I’m obliged to very respectfully point out that my results from the Municipality of Saint Bernard did not concur with what Abad “sensed” in his comparison of institutional and interpersonal trust. Although my questions were aimed at something arguably slightly different, “perceived corruption” as an indicator for the differences of trust that respondents felt according to different scales of state authority, I nevertheless believe that my results also shed light, although perhaps from a different angle, on institutional trust. My small-scale results highlight different “tones of trust” depending on the scale of the institution. Again, as mentioned earlier, I suspect the differences in our results could probably be attributed to the framing of the SWS questions and the scale of the survey.

In view of both my data analysis results as well as the socio-economic contextualization of this and the previous chapters, it would seem most surprising, not to say slightly shocking, that “the degree of institutional trust may be higher than the level of interpersonal trust” (Abad 2005, p. 40). Throughout this text we have seen how, regardless of the scale, elites have almost always been getting away with institutional plunder. However, the contextualized analysis of municipal dynamics have opened the possibility that institutions at the more local levels, villages and municipalities, may sometimes be (temporarily) in the hands of politicians who are not *trapos*. Or at least, that may be how their constituents perceive things to be. In any case, the insertion of a scalar analysis could possibly bring new perspectives on how people living in remote municipalities of the Eastern Visayas trust both their neighbors as well as their “elected” officials.

7. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) PREPARATIONS IN SAINT BERNARD

Following the massive Guinsaigon landslide disaster in 2006, and the subsequent political changes in 2007, the Municipality of Saint Bernard became a flagship for disaster related programs. These projects came from both the national government as well as from an

assortment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many of the NGOs had left¹⁷⁸ the municipality by 2009 following the trail of journalists to the next fashionable catastrophe to be seen attending to. That said, a few organizations were still in Saint Bernard and were collaborating with local authorities for all sorts of interesting disaster preparation activities.

7.1. ACCORD

One of these projects was called ACCORD which stands for “*Strengthening Assets and Capacities of Communities and Local Governments for Resilience to Disasters*”; it was a collaborative endeavor between two NGOs, namely CARE and the Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR), with the financial support of the European Commission humanitarian aid department (ECHO). CARE arrived in the municipality within 24 hours of the Guinsaigon landslide, and after the immediate humanitarian needs, the ACCORD project aimed to promote disaster preparedness amongst the “most vulnerable communities.” An ACCORD report from 2008 underlined how before the disaster, there had been little hazard assessments and that village and municipal authorities were

“ill-prepared and ill-equipped to undertake disaster response and disaster risk management activities. The disaster coordinating councils (DCCs) at the municipal and village levels had no clear-cut systems and procedures to carry out effectively and efficiently their disaster risk management mandates. The DCCs had no contingency plans. No early warning systems (EPW) and evacuation plans were in place. The municipal government lacked human resources for disaster risk management and disaster response. Lack of DRR capacities among communities and village and municipal local government units, and the exposure of largely poor households to multiple hazards made Saint Bernard a high-risk municipality” (ACCORD 2008, p. 1).

To the defense of the pre-disaster administration the *Legislative Tracking Record of Ordinances and Resolutions*¹⁷⁹ shows that in February 2005 they passed a resolution to allocate PhP 30,000 [US\$ 750] for a proposed “Community Based Disaster Management Training for Barangay Officials chargeable against the 5% Calamity Fund Appropriations” (MSB 2009), but how exactly those funds were used I was not able to determine.

Following the 2006 landslide, the ACCORD program in Saint Bernard worked directly with the LGU as well as with several high-risk villages. The program’s key activities started with

¹⁷⁸ When the fieldwork for this thesis began.

¹⁷⁹ Which was a document once available online on the Municipality of Saint Bernard’s now defunct web side, and which I fortunately downloaded and printed early on in my research.

community risk assessments with an emphasis on the participation of “men, women, children, the elderly, village officials, school representatives, and members of the municipal disaster coordination council” (ACCORD 2008, p. 4), which resulted in the production of contingency plans. The project then tested these plans with a series of drills in both the villages and the local schools.

Picture V.13. An evacuation drill organized by the ACCORD project



(Dulce et al. 2011, p. 71)

The Guinsaugon landslide was still fresh in the minds of many who still lived in Saint Bernard. Several villages adjacent to the smothered *barangay* were permanently relocated to different, slightly less hazard-prone parts of the municipality. Almost the entire municipality is exposed to some sort of natural hazard. Most of the existing literature on Saint Bernard focuses on the trials and tribulations associated with this significant population relocation, the

massive construction of new housing, often by international organization, and the supposed recovery process of these “communities.” The description and analysis of this endeavor has been done by others (Gutton 2009; Luna et al. 2011). Many of my interviewees still had vivid memories of the disaster and had taken DRR to heart. One 53-year-old mother of five, many of whom were OFWs, recalled how she was “very very afraid.” With her family they had evacuated to *Poblacion* and stayed for a month in the Cristo Rey High-School. Since then she has always had an “evacuation basket” ready. She explained how it is her own idea, because last time when they evacuated, they had nothing to wear. Now the basket has some clothes, a small mat, glasses, plates, and blankets.

Many of the respondents remembered with terror seeing with their own eyes when “the mountain came down like a wave.” Because they were so near, they were the first rescue crews and saw “a lot of dead people.” Fear was a recurrent theme in many of the interviews but often associated with a sense of awakening. One woman was pregnant when the disaster happened and had been very afraid. One of her relatives was killed. She said, “It caused a change in the community. Now we are more conscious, now there are drills at school.” Several men whose livelihood was in the mountains, mentioned that they were a lot more careful. When they heard thunder they were afraid that it was the mountain coming down again. Similarly they were afraid of going to the mountains when there was a heavy rain.

The youth in particular seem more prepared

My youngest interviewee was 18 years old in 2012, thus approximately 12 during the Guinsaigon landslide. She says the disaster changed her: “It has made me more conscious of taking care of the environment.” She had participated in many drills, “the first time in elementary, then twice again in high school.” She knew what to do: for example in case of an earthquake she had been trained to hide under a table and then get out of the building while protecting her head. Also, she explained that she always had a bag ready with clothes and a flashlight, and that she knew the safest place to go in case of emergencies.

7.2. Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

The German agency for international cooperation, GIZ, had long standing collaborations in the Eastern Visayas region in general and in Saint Bernard in particular. It has also been an important actor in promoting DRR in the Municipality. While the ACCORD provided more “software” with CBDRM, the GIZ filled the need for “hardware” by working closely with the LGU to develop early warning systems of both landslide and floods. “Telemetered” rainfall and river gauges monitored for any abnormal water level rises, and send the information to the municipal operation center. If water levels became too high, an alarm sounded, and *barangay* officials were contacted via portable radios. In the villages, the GIZ funded public-announcement-loudspeakers then helped the *barangay* authorities to warn their constituents. The GIZ also financed all sorts of other projects such as the refurbishing of local schools and community centers so that they could be used as evacuation centers if need be. The GIZ also promoted the planting of bamboo along the municipality’s river banks to reduce erosion.

7.3. Recognitions

As a result of all its work to better prepare for natural hazards, Saint Bernard received the 2008 *Gawad Kalasag* award from the President of the Philippines. Then in September 2012, a national conference on disaster risk reduction was held in the municipality with the participation of many NGOs and elected officials from across the archipelago. During this event Mayor Velasquez made a public presentation where he explained that despite Saint Bernard being a poor, fourth class, municipality, it had nevertheless invested in Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO) with permanent staff and a commitment to integrate DRR into all of the municipality’s programs. Fundamentally, Velasquez underlined the need for “political will” to better prepare the population for natural hazards. “We cannot change the typhoon’s course, but we can change how people are prepared.” This was a sentiment confirmed by my own impressions as well as the interviews with various NGOs; one project coordinator put it bluntly: “quality of the leadership is what makes the difference. If the leaders are good, the people come to the information meetings, trainings, and drills. If the leaders are not so good, they forget themselves about the meetings.”

Picture V.14. Setting up a public announcement speaker in a village



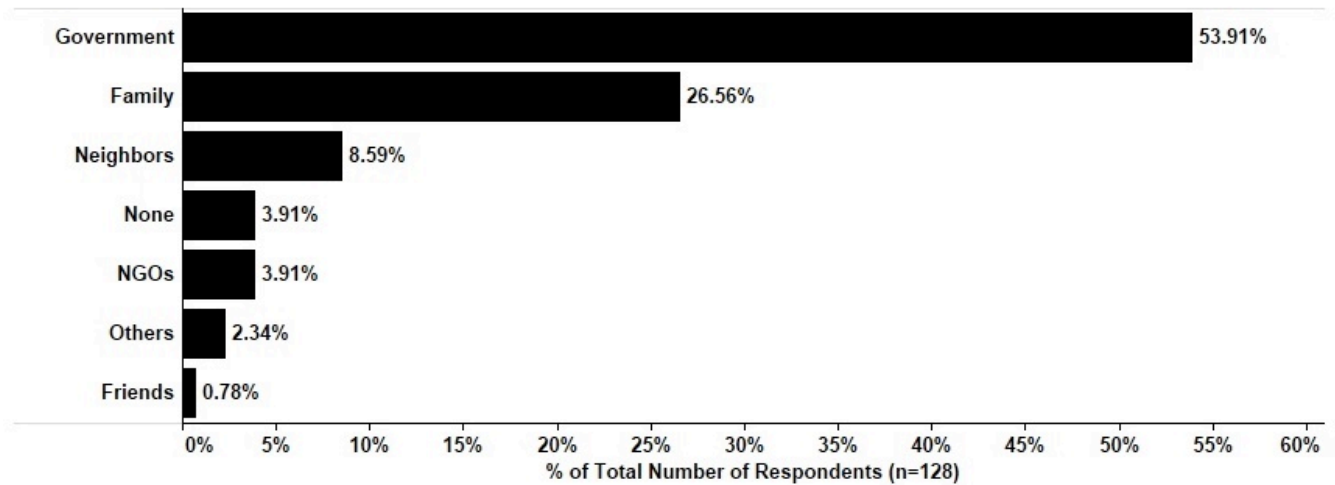
(Source: Veuthey 2012)

Picture V.15. Installing experimental landslide detection devices financed by the GIZ



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

Figure V.6. Who would you expect help from in a disaster



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

Looking at the aggregated results at the municipal level there are a few things that can be said. When respondents were asked an open-ended question about who they would expect help from in the event of a future disaster, over half said they expected some form of government to help them (Figure V.6). A direct reference to Mayor Velasquez was not uncommon. Also frequent was an expectation that *barangay* authorities would provide help, if they could. Less surprisingly, the next source of expected help was family, with over a quarter of respondents saying they would expect help from the most classic source of bonding social capital.

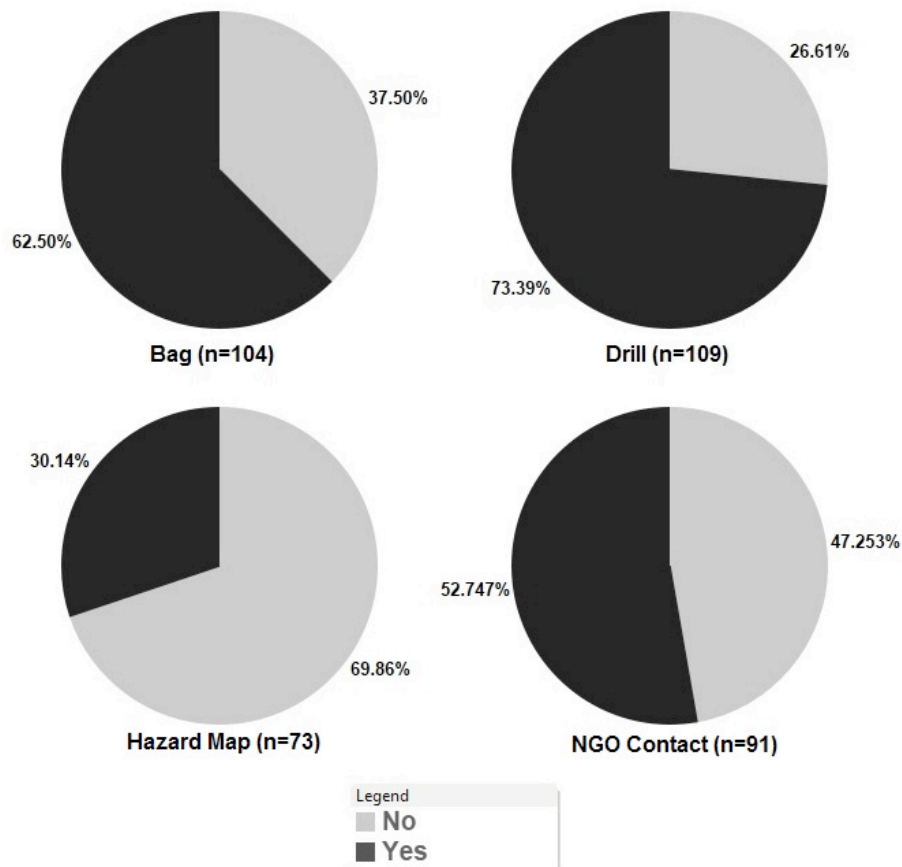
7.4. The municipal level aggregated results for “preparation” indicators shed light on how Saint Bernard may have changed since that terrible day in February 2006. The strongest results were for what is in my opinion perhaps the most important of indicators: participation to drills. Knowing what to do when a hazard strikes can play a crucial role for preventing a disaster. Almost three out of four people interviewed claimed to have participated in at least one evacuation drill, which was a heartening result. Several people, especially the youth had participated in several drills. The next most positive result was about having a “bug out bag” where people would have prepared some essential possessions to grab and run with in the case of an emergency: important documents, clothing, flashlight, etc. In the interviews, the actual contents of the said bag were discussed, partially out of curiosity for what the respondents felt

was essential, partially to verify they had made a bag.¹⁸⁰ The bag's contents varied but often included clothes, medicine, flashlight, and food.

However, the overwhelming majority of respondents in Saint Bernard, nearly 70 percent, had not seen the hazards maps for their village or municipality. These maps did exist, thanks to the work of GIS savvy NGOs. Certain modified versions of the municipal hazard maps have been presented earlier in this chapter. It has perhaps not been emphasized enough that, like in times of war, geographical knowledge is essential in times of “natural” disasters. In the case of Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), it was shown how over 90 percent of casualties were due to the storm surge, a highly predicted and avoidable event, if only the victims had known the hazard maps. Another issue that would merit further exploration is people's understanding and trust of maps. Referring again to the 2013 Yolanda disaster in Tacloban, many of the victims refused to obey when their authorities told them to evacuate, because they trusted neither their institutions nor their neighbors, and feared their meager possessions would be looted. Finally, it must be repeated that this mistrust may be well founded, beyond the systemic economic neglect by the elites, sometimes the maps may simply not have been trust worthy: as mentioned previously, “68% of evacuation centers were overwhelmed by storm surges” during Typhoon Yolanda (Lagmay et al., 2015, p.11). Had the leaders consulted hazard maps? Were the maps wrong?

¹⁸⁰ *Vertrauen is gut, Kontrol noch besser*

Figure V.7. Preparations in Saint Bernard



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

Conclusion

In 2006, Saint Bernard was profoundly shaken by a terrible landslide that left over a thousand dead but also swept in profound sociopolitical changes to what had been a sleepy town of the Filipino archipelago. The disaster exposed the municipality's vulnerabilities and dearth of preparation. The area became the focal point for national and international attention, and a young new mayor was elected with a mandate to improve his municipality's preparation to the slew of natural hazards threatening it. All of this made Saint Bernard an extremely interesting place to observe both social capital dynamics as well as the projects to better prepare for the inevitable future natural hazards. The municipality will continue to have a high exposure to seismic and atmospheric hazards, but fundamentally, even without any natural hazards, most people are teetering on the brink of economic disaster.

Saint Bernard could be seen as a microcosm for the rest of the archipelago: a highly unequal agrarian society continuously threatened by natural hazards. The *Pearl of the Orient Sea* is gangrened by deeply unjust social structures where elites have been shamelessly lining their pockets for generations while extreme poverty leaves one out of three children in the country with stunted growth (UNICEF 2013). At the municipal level, the historical legacy of exploitative social structures left most of the people interviewed in difficult situations: the rare jobs in the area barely provided enough to survive, and many people were eager to join the growing ranks of Overseas Filipino Workers, forced to export themselves as cheap labor in foreign countries, because of the broken socio-economic system at home.

Despite the misery and the systemic exploitation, fieldwork showed that people help each other at the micro-level. Beyond the much-touted fundamental importance of the Filipino family, this chapter reviewed a palette of semi-formal cooperative organizations that provided an array of services and attested to the vitality of social capital, of a certain type and at a certain scale. Furthermore, the political developments of the municipality over recent years seemed to have led many of the respondents to believe that not all politicians were *trapos*.¹⁸¹ This came to light in the analysis of institutional trust, especially at the more local levels.

¹⁸¹ *Trapos* is a contraction of the terms “traditional politician,” and it also means dishrag in many Filipino languages.

CHAPTER VI: BARANGAYS

Introduction

This chapter analyzes social capital and disaster prevention at the village level. The *barangay* is the smallest official administrative unit of the Government of the Philippines and is the equivalent of a neighborhood in urban areas or a village in rural areas. This chapter begins by giving a brief historical overview of the term *barangay* itself, and then compares two specific villages. First, socioeconomic indicators are analyzed. Second, indicators of social capital are compared, and finally, third, I attempt to find differences in the way the *barangays* prepare for natural hazards.

History of the word *barangay*

“*Barangay*, or *balangay*, was one of the first native words the Spaniards learned in the Philippines. When Antonio Pigafetta, Magellan’s Italian expeditionary ethnographer, went ashore to parley with the ruler of Limasawa [an island at the southern end of what is today the Province of Southern Leyte], they sat together in a boat drawn up on shore which Pigafetta (1524b, 118) [sic] called a *balangai*. This word appears as either *balangay* or *barangay*, with the same meaning, in all the major languages of the Philippines, and the earliest Spanish dictionaries make it clear that it was pronounced ‘*ba-la-ngay*,’ not ‘*ba-lang-gay*.’ It is also worth noting that Pigafetta recorded the word both as *balangai* and as *balanghai*, which, of course, he would have pronounced the same since Italian had no *h*-sound” (Scott 1994, p. 4).

William Henry Scott explained that when the Spanish arrived at Luzon Island, they found the term for boat was “also being used for the smallest political unit in [Tagalog] society” (Scott 1994, p. 5). Referring to a 16th century text by Franciscan friar Juan de Plasencia, Scott (Ibid.) writes that *datos* were the local chiefs of *barangays* which were composed of between 30 and 100 households. These small social units of “highly localized government” (Ibid.) were almost exclusively reliant on boats for transportation. Roads were all but inexistent throughout the pre-Hispanic archipelago: “there is no evidence of wheeled vehicles or draft animals” (Ibid.). The “highly localized” nature of the tiny governments was such that people of a *barangay* owed allegiance solely to their local leader, “not to a municipal, provincial, tribal, or national government” (Ibid., p. 6). Furthermore, the *barangay* referred to the group of people, *not* the place itself: “Up to the end of the Spanish regime, baptismal registers identified nonelite [sic]

parents not by their place of residence but as belonging to members of the *barangay* of Don So-and-so, some member of the local gentry” (Ibid.).

In a more contemporary Filipino setting, Allen (2006, p. 84) defined a *community* as a “population living within the territorial bounds of a town or village administrative unit.” As mentioned above, today the *barangay* is the smallest formal administrative unit in the Philippines, usually geographically equivalent to a village in rural areas. The community’s identity is reinforced by yearly social events (fiestas) and regular public meetings. Allen argues that there is often strong intra-community cooperation based on historical cultural norms (Ibid.). In many regards, the conceptual community unit provides a “firm foundation for [...] mobilization” (Ibid.) even if there are substantial limitations to the concept of *community*. Most “communities” are in fact not cohesive units, and there are often long-standing feuds between rival families, ethnic groups, and social classes. The concept of “community” was discussed in Chapter II and it was underlined how such entities were almost always composed of sub-groups, often embroiled in bitter internal conflicts. Those caveats asides, scholars maintain that the village remains a firm foundation for mobilization (Allen 2006).

When natural hazards strike, how do these “community units of mobilization” come into play? How do the *barangays* of Saint Bernard deal with typhoons, earthquakes, and a multitude of other violent events? The Municipality is the fulcrum for disaster preparation, but a lot of the “community” work is done in the *barangays*. Saint Bernard is composed of 30 *barangays* and each has its own little political system and infrastructure, with a few people responsible for local security,¹⁸² a couple of health workers, and a *Barangay* Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (BDRRMC).¹⁸³ At the helm of each *barangay* are elected local officials: a captain and council members. The days of the slave-owning *datu*s who inherit power by birthright are gone, but the scale of *barangay*’s political unit today remains strikingly similar to those of its pre-Hispanic ancestor.

¹⁸² Called *tanods*.

¹⁸³ During my initial field visits in 2009, the *Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010*, RA 10121, had not been passed yet, and the BDRRMCs were still called *Barangay* Disaster Management Council (BDMC).

Because of its small scale, the *barangay* political unit was – and is still – tightly knit in webs of interpersonal relationships. These loyalties often cut across family and class lines resulting in a complex array of different kinds of social capitals. I argue that at this local geographical scale all sorts of bonding, bridging, and linking connections are created. However, the scope of these connections remains limited by the smallness of villages. Spatial limitations curtail linking social capital with people from different power status since most of the truly rich left the villages decades ago (Kerkvliet 1991). Bankoff argued that this local social capital could provide resilience when communities were hit by natural hazards: “entire communities might work together till all the houses in a new or relocated barrio (sector within a village) were built” (Bankoff 2007, p. 331). Bankoff further underlined the importance of the “sub-community level” such as that within families or groups of friends. At these small-scale levels of mutual help and reciprocity, Bankoff sees examples of *bayanihan* and believes that it expresses a “shared community, often defined in operational terms as a neighborhood that guarantees support for its members, especially during times of personal travail or common hardship” (Ibid., p. 332).

Is there more *bayanihan* in poverty and equality?

Bankoff argued that these *bayanihan* networks and associations were more common amongst (1) the poor, and (2) in rural areas where living standards were more equalitarian (Bankoff 2007, p. 333). Bankoff then cites Balmaceda who in 1927 wrote that the phenomenon had reportedly been “‘dying out’ in the centres of towns, ‘where the standards of living are not uniform’” (Ibid.).¹⁸⁴ Bankoff acknowledged the survival of some of these traditions when he wrote that the “nature of these informal associations and networks and the social services they provided (and continue to provide) defies easy definition” (Ibid., p. 337). In both Bankoff’s work and in my own research in villages of Saint Bernard, these informal entities seemed both chronologically and geographically variable. In other words, these informal solidarity networks evolve with time and are somewhat hazy in the reach of their coverage. The sense of “community” is sometimes limited to the family, sometimes to the neighborhood, sometimes to other forms of imagined *local* community. However, Bankoff claims that “evidence

¹⁸⁴ Bankoff is citing Balmaceda 1927, p. 399, who himself is basing his research on a survey done by municipal schoolteachers in 1914.

suggests that the operative mechanism at work here was one that involved more dyadic bonds, a concept of reciprocity that existed on an individual or family basis that was both temporary and shifting” (Ibid.).

Similarly, Zialcita scuppers the romantic assumptions concerning the supposed village-level “deep sense of community” (Zialcita 2005, p. 39). He reports that in his research in the Ilocos region, farmers certainly have “the dyadic exchange of unpaid labor” but that this “largely occurs among close kin, friends, and neighbors to favor one individual. It has nothing to do with the interests of the *barrio/barangay* as a corporate whole” (Ibid.). If the village-level solidarity is put into question, what can be said for larger scale solidarity, for example with one’s municipality, or one’s language group, or even with one’s nation? Zialcita’s text often refers to his “farmer friends.” What kind of farming were these people involved in? And where exactly in Ilocos was his fieldwork based? Perhaps this academic’s “farmer friends” were big landowners doing industrial agriculture in areas close to urban centers. My own experiences in small villages of remote Southern Leyte were quite different, and I have the impression that there was unpaid labor “with the interest of the *barrio/barangay* as a corporate whole” (Ibid.). Perhaps I too have fallen victim to a romantic view of a long-lost way of life which may never have in fact existed. Elegiac prose aside, while acknowledging the fierce internal conflicts within villages, there did seem to be a few forms of solidarity at the *barangay* levels in Saint Bernard.

1. COMPARING THE VILLAGES

During my first exploratory research in the municipality in 2009, I made a pre-selection of two *barangays* as potential research sites. This thesis’ research question and the site selection were in part inspired by hearing local NGO staff talk about the different levels of receptivity to risk reduction projects in these two villages. The *barangays* in question are adjacent to each other and are both quite rural and highly exposed to a great variety of natural hazards. They are both under steep mountainsides (potential landslide hazard) and along the coast (potential hazard of tsunami, storm surge, and typhoon), to name just the most obvious threats that came to mind during my first visit to the area.

Following the tragic 2006 landslide, a consortium of Filipino agencies under the name of “READY” made hazard maps of the whole municipality and of each specific *barangay* to inform people of the hazards threatening them (Maps V.3 and V.4 from Chapter V). The READY project designed maps of eight different hazard types, including earthquakes, flooding, tsunamis, and rain-induced landslides. The two *barangays* selected for this research are the municipality’s most exposed¹⁸⁵ to natural hazards: both villages have seven out of the eight hazards in the READY assessment (ACCORD 2008).

To preserve the privacy and safety of the people interviewed, the selected *barangays* have been given fictitious names: “Acasia” and “Bato.”¹⁸⁶ After my initial six-month investigation in the Philippines in 2009 when I first identified these sites, I went back again to these same villages during my three months of research in 2010, as well as during the final year-long fieldwork in the municipality from 2012 to 2013.

1.1. First impressions of differences between the selected *barangays*

The two villages are adjacent and exposed to the same natural hazards but they also had many differences, which is why they were selected. One of the most striking contrasts was the different concentrations of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). During my first stay in the municipality in 2009 it was immediately clear that the Village of Bato had a higher density of brightly painted multi-story brick houses (Pictures VI.1 and VI.2), indicating more OFWs and thus a portion of relatively rich families. The infrastructure too revealed more wealth: many of Bato’s roads were made of concrete and there was a big covered basketball court. The captain in this richer *barangay* confirmed that 20 citizens had foreign spouses and that over 70 households¹⁸⁷ had at least one family member working overseas. In the Village of Acasia, however, the fancy houses were much rarer. The collective infrastructure too was much humbler in Acasia. Most residents in both villages remain very poor, making the *barangay*

¹⁸⁵ The *barangays* selected are the “most exposed” amongst the *barangays* that were not relocated. Many *barangays* that were in the immediate vicinity of Guinsaugon were immediately evacuated after the tragic 2006 landslide; and these villages were subsequently relocated to another part of the municipality in the following months and years.

¹⁸⁶ These are names borrowed from *barangays* in Maasin City, the Capital of the Province of Southern Leyte.

¹⁸⁷ Out of a total of about 550 households in this *barangay* at the time.

with OFWs, Bato, more economically unequal. Acasia had fewer OFWs and residents were collectively poorer, but they seemed to have more equity in their collective economic hardship.¹⁸⁸

Picture VI.1. OFW house (on the left) and non-OFW house (on the right)



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

This contrast in the levels of inequalities between the two barangays made them interesting for this research because, other than the difference of remittances from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), both areas seemed *at first* relatively similar, especially because they were next to each other and had identically hazard exposure. The hazards did turn out to be similar, but as the fieldwork progressed I realized that the villages were in fact quite different from one another.

NGOs as well as municipal authorities expressed the challenge to organizing people in Bato, saying that it was more difficult to get citizens involved in collective prevention activities. These sources said this in contrast with Acasia, where they felt it was easier to organize participatory events. Officials reported that the poorer but more egalitarian village, Acasia, was more receptive to disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects, such as doing evacuation drills or community hazard assessments.

¹⁸⁸ I want to underline here that as a researcher I am trying hard not to make any value judgments regarding which “development strategy” might be more appropriate.

In many ways, I thought I had found the perfect study sites to measure the impacts of inequalities on a community's social capital and levels of vulnerability to natural hazards. One site, Bato, had lots of OFWs, greater overall wealth – but also more social inequalities – and what appeared to be challenges to the implementing of collective risk reduction projects. The other site, Acasia, had almost no overseas workers, consisted mainly of poor farmers – and yet possibly possessed higher levels of social capital and a greater willingness to work collectively to reduce disaster risk. I hoped, and quite frankly believed, that other than these different levels of socio-economic inequality, most other variables would be the same. However, as fieldwork progressed, it became apparent that the two selected *barangays* had more differences than simply having lots of – or very few – OFWs, and different intensities of economic inequality.

In recent years, a growing number of scientists have in fact been showing how increased socio-economic inequalities damage society in general and trust in particular (Kawchi 1999; Wilkinson 2004; Wilkinson & Pikett 2010). Macro-scaled epidemiological research mainly focusing on Western industrialized countries suggests that stark levels of income inequality are associated with low levels of trust, weak social cohesion, and increased violence (Ibid.). Authors like Wilkinson have found correlations between the strength of social relationships and levels of equality (Wilkinson 2004). Finally, and perhaps most to the point, the same author also finds that where inequalities are high, people are less likely to be involved in community life (Wilkinson 2004, pp. 3-4). This also seems to be the case at the micro-level in rural parts of developing countries like the Philippines.

There is a bit of a paradox when one looks at the impacts of remittances from OFWs on resilience to natural hazards. On one hand, the influx of overseas cash in certain villages may contribute to the *material resilience* of the recipients of the remittances, by way of improved houses and better “hardware.” On the other hand, this inflow of external money to a few lucky families increases economic inequalities amongst residents within a same village, which could

damage the “software” of community participation, and might reduce the *social resilience* of the village as a whole.

Picture VI.2. Rich and poor houses in Bato



(Source: Veuthey 2010)

1.2. *Barangay* demographics

Bato has more land and more inhabitants than Acasia, but in both villages 65 percent of their land is allocated to agriculture (Tables VI.1 & VI.2). Acasia had a higher population density in 2000, but measurements showed in each subsequent year that Bato was denser (Table VI.3). Surprisingly, the measurements for Acasia’s overall population decreased for about a decade, until 2013, when the trend reversed itself and the population increased (Table VI.2). Accordingly, Acasia’s density decreased until 2013, after which it increased. Both villages have population densities much lower than the Philippines on the whole, with 357 people per square kilometer.¹⁸⁹

Public health researchers have begun sketching the possibility of a connection between density and social capital in rural areas: “densely settled rural residents have the least favorable

¹⁸⁹ As mentioned in chapter III

perceptions of their community” and “low-density areas have socially active populations, working to solve problems through community activities” (Greiner et al. 2004, p. 2310). These researchers were studying the rural United States and were focusing primarily on other health variables. Much remains to be explored about the link between density and social capital, especially in the developing world.

Table VI.1. Land use in hectares (From MSB’s assessor’s office, 2010)

| | Acasia | Bato |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Residential Land | 353 (35%) | 570 (35%) |
| Agricultural Land | 652 (65%) | 1,040 (65%) |
| <i>TOTAL LAND</i> | <i>1,005(100%)</i> | <i>1,610(100%)</i> |

Table VI.2. Population sizes in 2000, 2006, 2010, and 2013

| | Acasia | Bato |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Population in year 2000 (MSB CLUP 2001) | 1,277 | 1,804 |
| Population in year 2006 (MSB - CBMS survey) | 1,186 | 2,116 |
| Population in year 2010 (MSB – NSO data) | 1,159 | 2,194 |
| Population in year 2013 (Interviews with <i>barangay</i> officials) | 1,418 | 2,537 |

Table VI.3. Evolution of densities in people per square kilometer (based on the above tables)

| | Acasia | Bato |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| Density 2000 | 127 | 112 |
| Density 2006 | 118 | 131 |
| Density 2010 | 115 | 136 |
| Density 2013 | 141 | 158 |

Comparing livelihoods in the two villages showed how even if they had the same percentage of agricultural land, Acasia had twice as many people working in agriculture. In Acasia, 65.15 percent of people were involved in agriculture, compared to only 30.52 percent in Bato. Conversely many of the inhabitants of Bato had to rely on one of the most unreliable, un-lucrative, and hazardous of all livelihoods in the Philippines: fishing (World Bank 2005; Saguin 2008). Bato, the village with many OFWs, was also the place with the most fishermen, as 28 percent of the population was involved in this livelihood (Table VI.4). Many of the fishermen who were interviewed were very poor, unless they had OFWs in their family. One of these former fishermen in Bato, who had turned seaman on a regional transport ship, said he was saving up money to buy agricultural land, because in his eyes “farming is an easy, stable, and sure way to make money.” This was quite a surprising statement since agriculture itself

seems like a precarious livelihood, being so vulnerable to capricious weather patterns and always at risk of pest infestations. Safety appeared to be a very relative concept which depends what you compare it to. In Acasia, the rare individuals who engaged in fishing only did it part-time. Only about two percent of the people of Acasia were dependent on fishing for their livelihood (Table VI.4). One possible explanation of why people left Bato to work as OFWs was because there were no good farming alternatives.

Table VI.4. Comparing types of livelihoods (CBMS Survey 2006, MSB)

| | Acasia | Bato |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Agriculture | 65.15% | 30.52% |
| Fishing | 2.12% | 28.00% |
| Community, social and personal services | 12.12% | 11.90% |
| Wholesale / retail trade | 4.85% | 10.75% |
| Other | 15.76% | 18.83% |

Although both *barangays* are situated on the coast, only Bato has an easy access to the sea, and Acasia is in fact not directly connected to the open water because of an extensive marsh and mangrove zone. This explains why there are so few fishermen in Acasia.

Fish is the staple protein in the Filipino diet, but fishermen are one of the poorest segments of society (World Bank 2005; Saguin 2008). In Bato, a 33-year-old fisherman who used a one-person traditional *banka* (boat) explained that the job was extremely irregular: “Every day is different. On my best day, I caught a big tuna, 30 kg, which was worth over PhP 150 per kg, so I made about PhP 4,500 [over US\$100] that day. But many times we catch nothing.” Most good fish sell for about PhP 100 per kg. The catch is highly irregular, and if the weather is bad then the men cannot go out at all. Also, there are some non-trivial investments required to purchase a boat; a fisherman explained: “A one-person pump [motor] boat costs about 20,000 pesos [US\$500]. If it was just manual [with a paddle] it would cost about 4000 pesos [US\$100].” On top of that, gasoline was expensive. One fisherman explained that his fuel consumption depended on how far into the sea he had to go to find fish, but that he usually used about two liters a day. At the time of fieldwork, a liter cost PhP 68, so it would cost him PhP 136 for a day’s outing. The same source said it sometimes cost him 500 pesos [US\$12.5]

in fuel just for one day's worth of fishing.¹⁹⁰ Despite these hefty investments there is never guarantee that any fish will be caught. Fishermen are stuck in a very dire form of economic precariousness and the financial risks they take are compounded by the actual physical danger of being out in the ocean on rickety crafts. Even without a typhoon, a minor accident out on the water can turn into a tragedy.

Picture VI.3. Small-scale fishermen heading out into Cabalian Bay before sunrise



View looking South-West to Cabalian Bay and then Surigao Strait (Source: Veuthey 2012)

1.3. Education

Education is important to gain access to professional opportunities. Although some interviewees mentioned that it had once been possible to work overseas without a modicum of university schooling, most agreed that “that is no longer possible now.” The barangay captains in both villages as well as the OFWs whom I interviewed all stressed the importance of having good formal schooling to access overseas jobs. The two barangays studied may be adjacent, but Bato has one of the rare high schools in the municipality. Acasia’s barangay captain mentioned the distance and the time it took for teenagers from his village to commute to the

¹⁹⁰ There were no sailboats in this part of the archipelago during my fieldwork, despite the prevalence of good winds and the fact that the majority of old-timers mentioned they had once been the main form of transportation. This is all the more surprising given how much of an expense fuel has become for fishermen.

high school in Bato, and he argued that this was part of the reason why there were more OFWs in the neighboring village. However, the figures of school participation (Table VI.5) paint a different picture. The municipality's 2006 statistics show that on every education level surveyed, Bato has more children *not* attending classes.

Table VI.5. Comparing percentage of village children *not attending* school

| | Acasia | Bato |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Elementary | 19.37% (21% boys, 17.58% girls) | 21.30% (21% boys, 21.61% girls) |
| 6-16 year olds | 6.92% (7.32% boys, 6.49% girls) | 8.23% (8.85% boys, 7.59% girls) |
| 13-16 year olds (high school) | 22.83% (26.56% boys, 19.05% of girls) | 29.41% (35.9% boys, 22.12% girls) |

(CBMS Survey 2006, MSB)

Gender dynamics in education at the village level continued to concur with findings at the national and regional levels mentioned earlier. In comparing school participation along gender lines, girls were always more frequently at school than the boys, with the only exception being for the elementary children in Bato, where there were slightly more girls than boys who were not attending school. The village-level figures confirm the argument presented in the previous chapters suggesting that while economic inequality is stark, gender inequality is in fact lower than in many parts of Latin America, Africa, or the West. The Philippines is unfortunately still the setting for various forms of Violence Against Women (VAW),¹⁹¹ but there is less structural gender-based injustices in the archipelago than in other parts of the world.

1.4. Other factors

The national highway more or less follows the coastline and was “concreted” after the Guinsaugon disaster in 2006. It crosses through both Villages 1 and 2. The captain of Acasia explained how “it creates opportunities to travel and send goods but also creates danger: traffic drives very fast through the village.” In Acasia, road crashes had already caused two deaths, and there were an additional four fatalities in other villages in Saint Bernard. In conjunction with the new road, Mayor Velasquez had started organizing job fairs where recruiters would

¹⁹¹ The source of this information is from interviews with local police and regional human rights officials.

come to the *Poblacion* to hire locals to become OFWs. Acasia's captain rejoiced that positive changes had occurred "Now with the Mayor's programs, people know, and many are interested, even if they are not qualified or skilled. Before there were no job fairs." The same captain also underlined enthusiastically that Saint Bernard was "the only municipality in all of the Pacific Coast [of Southern Leyte] to have job fairs. That's thanks to our mayor. Before the job fairs were only in Maasin [the provincial capital]. We are ahead of Sogod [the larger and wealthier neighboring town] in that regards."

Local politics

Local political allegiances need to be taken into consideration. The captain and the population of Acasia were very much in favor of Mayor Velasquez: "we are as yellow¹⁹² as it gets" in the words of one *barangay* official. In Bato, however, the incumbent captain at the beginning of my research was a staunch partisan of the "green party" and an ally of the Chinese business families that had ruled the municipality for several decades. This political "chromatic divide" discussed in the previous chapter probably also influenced how enthusiastic *barangay* officials would be with risk reduction (DRR) projects proposed by the municipality, or with NGOs that could be construed as allies of the mayor.

The styles of leaders

Many elected *barangay* officials certainly had overt political affiliations: their homes had banners of the candidates at election time, and they openly voiced their endorsements – and criticisms – in conversations. The local leaders also had very different lifestyles. The captain of Acasia lived in a humble traditional house made of light material. He lived in a cluster of other small houses in a coconut grove. There was no concrete road in front of his house. He was a farmer and owned a small plot of land. He did not have any OFWs in his family. He emphasized how a majority of people in Acasia owned their land, but that "no one here owns a lot of land. People are more or less equal here. We have only few who are abroad." This can be contrasted the two captains of Bato.¹⁹³ Both captains of Bato seemed better off financially. They had OFWs in their families and their houses were big and strong.

¹⁹² Yellow was the color associated with the Velasquez administration.

¹⁹³ While the captain of Acasia was the same throughout my fieldwork, there was a change in leadership in Bato. But both

Ninjas of poverty

“My only son, he is 21, and he sometimes hauls other people’s copra, but he is a ‘NINJA’: No Income, No Job or Assets” (2013 interview with fisherman in Bato 2013).

About three out of four households in both *barangays* had incomes below the poverty threshold (CBMS Survey 2006, MSB). However, the socioeconomic indicators for Acasia were always a tad better than Bato’s (Table VI.5). This is not to say that there were no problems in the more equalitarian village but rather that indicators were consistently slightly better than the *barangay* that had a higher concentration of OFWs.

Table VI.5. Socioeconomic indicators (Source: CBMS Survey 2006, MSB)

| | Acasia | Bato |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Unemployment | 13.16% | 17.04% |
| Households without access to sanitary toilet facility | 2.81% | 6.83% |
| Subsistence (Households with income below food threshold) | 57.19% | 63.35% |

Staff from the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (MSWDO) interviewed in 2012 explained that one of the big differences between the two villages was that Bato had large landholders. In Acasia 75.44 percent of residents owned their house and lot, while only 58.38 percent of people in Bato had similar tenure. Officials argued this was connected to the number of families under the poverty threshold. Municipal authorities explained that Bato had “between 140 and 150” beneficiaries in the national government’s 4Ps program that provides cash assistance to poor families with children. The same sources said that while the people of Acasia come to the municipality for services (e.g. seniors’ clubs), those of Bato came to the MSWDO for “assistance.” Over the same period, Acasia only had 62 beneficiaries in the 4Ps program. In other words, there was a slightly higher proportion of people receiving financial aid in Bato.

This situation is reminiscent of what Alexis de Tocqueville described two centuries ago. Tocqueville underlined the paradox that often surrounds the concept of economic poverty: “*Les pays qui paraissent les plus misérables sont ceux qui, en réalité, comptent le moins d’indigents, et chez les peuples dont vous admirez l’opulence, une partie de la population est*

captains in Bato were nevertheless relatively wealthy.

obligée pour vivre d'avoir recours aux dons de l'autre."¹⁹⁴ In this passage, Tocqueville was comparing two European countries of his time. The first one was Portugal, which was still an agrarian society and had low economic development, but few people in misery that needed official help from their community to survive. The second country was England, already industrialized for about a century, and one able to create large amounts of wealth but also marginalize many people. Tocqueville does not address the question of vulnerability to natural hazards, but he does underline that poor people in unequal societies are dependent on charity to survive during "normal" life. It appears that Tocqueville had already suspected that inequalities are divisive and socially corrosive.

Big houses can be in the dark

Often the people interviewed in massive OFW houses in Bato would refute the idea that they were rich. In fact, they would actually often say they were poor. A 43-year-old woman from Bato explained: "people see the big bungalow houses and they think you are rich, but not really, it's not so, because the electricity is cut from not paying the bills." In the same village, a 63-year-old man with a sister and a son in Saudi Arabia concurred. He said people thought he was rich, but he positioned himself in the middle: "people think we are rich, but we don't get remittances all the time, we are only rich sometimes."

2. COMPARING SOCIAL CAPITAL INDICATORS

"The attitude between rich and poor has changed a lot. After being abroad and becoming rich, now there is a gap in their relationships. Now they are no longer close as before. Now they will no longer look for their old friends." (Interview 2013)

2.1. Group question

In 2010, initial fieldwork indicated that residents in Acasia were more likely to belong to some sort of formal club. In this more agricultural *barangay*, a total of 25 people were interviewed and 15 said they were members of formal organizations. This was in stark contrast with the OFW-dense village, Bato, where 28 people were interviewed in 2010 but only seven claimed to be members of any formal organization. In other words, 60 percent of Acasia's residents said they were members of clubs, compared to only 25 percent in Bato.

¹⁹⁴ Tocqueville A., *Mémoire sur le paupérisme*, Cited in Paugam 2005, p. 24.

This difference becomes even more palpable when looking at the total number of group memberships, as certain interviewees were members of several different formal organizations. Amongst the people interviewed in Acasia there was a total of 43 connections to social groups, whereas in Bato there were only 17 (Ibid.). For example, a 55-year-old farmer in Acasia was a member of seven groups which included his Born Again church group, 4Ps, his local *dadjung*, an irrigation association, parent-teacher association (PTA), a local *hungus*, and a local *gala*.¹⁹⁵ Another example was a pig farmer who was a member of the mangrove planters association, the farmer’s cooperative, the shooting club, basketball team, as well as a church group.

In 2012-2013 “group membership” was again investigated in the interviews and again results suggested that respondents in Acasia were more likely to be members of groups than respondents in Bato. Looking at the average number of groups shows only a slight difference, with respondents in the village with more farmers were connected to an average of 3.5 groups. This is approximately one more group per respondent than in Bato (Table VI.6). The difference is again more noticeable when looking at the total number of connections to groups within the two villages: Acasia had 112 group memberships, while Bato had only 83. This may be an indication of the number of ties within each community.

Table VI.6. Average number of group memberships (Source: Interviews 2012-13)

| | Acasia (n=32) | Bato (n=31) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Average number of groups | 3.50 | 2.68 |
| Average for Males | 3.75 | 2.80 |
| Average for Females | 3.25 | 2.56 |

Abad’s groundbreaking macro-scaled research on social capital in the Philippines suggests that there are asymmetries in social capital depending on “gender, socioeconomic status, and residence, and to some extent, inequalities by age, marital status” (Abad 2005, p. 45). Abad’s findings points to the importance of religion as a source of group membership in the archipelago: “Filipinos are more likely to belong to church groups than any other type” (Abad 2005, p. 19). This was also the case in my studied villages, where the vast majority of

¹⁹⁵ Discussed below.

respondents attended religious gatherings at least once a week, and sometimes they attended every day. The two villages had different religious compositions (Table VI.7), with Acasia being a more homogenously Catholic.

Table VI.7. Religions in the studied villages (2013 interviews with respective *barangay* authorities)

| | Acasia | Bato |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Catholic | 90% | 70% |
| Seventh Day Adventist | 10% | 10% |
| Born Again | | 10% |
| Jehovah's Witness | | 5% |
| Rizalian ¹⁹⁶ | | 2.5% |
| Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC) | | 2.5% |

Picture VI.4. *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (INC) church in the Municipality of Saint Bernard



(Source: Veuthey 2012)

¹⁹⁶ The Rizalians are a religious group that believes in the divinity of José Rizal. They are said to “synthesize Roman Catholic rituals, images, and organization with traditional Filipino elements”

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/505020/Rizalist-cult>) They have a regional centers located in Acasia. The captain of that *barangay* explained how he is unclear about how numerous they are in their gated compound. He said that whenever there was a *tagbo* working group for village projects, “they always send two to five people to help us.” He was in regular contact with their leaders via text-messaging.

Gala

In the para-religious realm, the village of Acasia still had *gala* wedding cooperatives. The captain was a member himself and explained how it functioned: the tradition was that the groom's family shouldered the weddings expenses so member-parents with a son contributed PhP 500 to 1,000 [US\$ 12.5-25] whenever another member of the *gala* had a male-offspring who was getting married. The *gala* functioned like the credit cooperative or the *dadjung* system that still seemed to be relatively more common across the municipality. There were two *gala* associations operating in Acasia at the time of my interviews in April 2013. There was no *gala* at all in Bato, although old-timers mentioned that it was once common everywhere. In different parts of the Philippines people seemed to be very surprised to hear that this kind of semi-formal cooperation for weddings still existed. Especially in more urban areas of Luzon, it seemed that such local collaborations were part of a fabled folkloric past.

Tagbo

Tagbo or *boluntaryo* are Visayan terms which refer to community work parties organized by a *barangay* captain. In Bato it was not quite a "voluntary" activity given that there was a PhP 150 [US\$ 3.75] fine imposed on people who did not participate. That fine could represent half of a daily wage for some workers. In 2013 the captain of Bato explained that it was his role to lead the *tagbo* activities: "we do it once a month and it works by *purok*." If some *purok* does not do their *tagbo*, he goes there to encourage them to participate. "The *purok* cooperation depends on the leaders and some *puroks* are harder than others."

Other *barangays* sometimes also had fines for not participating in *tagbos*, but many did not. In one upland village, the captain said that their fine was only PhP 100 [US\$ 2.5] but that "most prefer to work [with the *tagbo*], but maybe if a carpenter has another job, then he will pay because it will cost him PhP 300 [US\$ 7.5] to not work on his job for a day." This same source also explained that "OFW families often do not participate and instead contribute with snacks and *tuba* [palm wine]." In the Village of Acasia, there are no fines. Acasia's captain explained: "It is voluntary; we have no fines if people don't come. Some other *barangays* do that, we don't, and people come anyway."

The average number of *tagbo* that my respondents participated in during the six months before the interview was 6.07 for Acasia, and 7.65 for Bato. I was surprised to see Bato out-perform Acasia in these collective activities, but I suspect that the financial penalty imposed had something to do with it. Many of the richer families insisted that they considered they had participated in the *tagbo* even if they had not worked themselves but contributed to snacks instead. One tough woman in Bato argued that participation “really depends on the barangay officials.” She said she herself always goes to the *tagbos* but according to her the previous captain, who had been associated with the Chinese business elite and the green party, had not been as good. She claimed that “now the streets are always clean because we have a good mayor and a good village captain.” At the time of this interview, in March 2013, the captain of Bato was a member of the “yellow team” like the mayor. Again, participation in activities appeared to be connected with political allegiances.

The *tagbo* work activities often contribute to village level disaster risk reduction projects. For example in Bato, I witnessed a *tagbo* team cleaning out the rubble under a bridge to prevent flooding during heavy rains. The objective was laudable but its effect short lived, as by the time of my next fieldwork season the river was cluttered again (pictures VI.6). Another such example was a *tagbo* that built gabions to prevent erosion along riverbanks. In Acasia, a large *tagbo* cleared a coconut grove to make space for basketball court which could be used for drying agricultural products (Picture VI.5).

2.2. Trust in neighbors: *Pitaka*

***Pitaka* 2010**

An initial version of the *pitaka*, or “wallet question,” was conducted in 2010 in the two selected *barangays*. In both villages a small majority of people believed something would come back (either an empty wallet, or their identity/insurance cards, or some of their money, etc.). However, responses from Acasia were more confident that a portion of their belongings would come back to them. In this generally poorer *barangay* with almost no OFWs, about 60 percent of people believed that a portion of their possessions would be returned by neighbors, while Bato, in the wealthier but more economically unequal *barangay*, only about 40 percent

of respondents expected their neighbors to “bring something back.” But they do resonate with the subsequent results I got from asking a more sophisticated version of the *pitaka* question in 2012-2013.

Picture VI.5. *Tagbo* in Acasia. Clearing of tree stumps to concrete a common space



(Source: Veuthey 2013)

Pictures VI.6. 2009 *Tagbo* clearing under a bridge (L); 2013 same bridge clogged again (R)



(Sources: Veuthey 2009 and 2013)

Pitaka 2012-2013

During the third and final field season, the “wallet question” was used again as an indicator for the level of interpersonal trust. While initially, in 2010, I had not made spatial distinctions in the *pitaka* question; in 2012-2013 I did ask these details. The aggregated results from across the municipality were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. Here we will look for differences between the two specific *barangays*. Again, the question was framed in such a way as to try and get the respondent’s trust level at different geographical levels. It was formulated as follows:

Set up to the question

In your wallet are a picture ID, some important cards, your address, and a lot of money.
You are in the immediate proximity of your home (in your *purok*¹⁹⁷).
Your wallet falls out of your pocket, without you noticing.

Questions

How likely is it that your wallet will be brought back to you?
How likely is it that your money will be there?
How about if this happened somewhere in your village?
How about if it fell out somewhere in the Municipality?

Wallet with no money

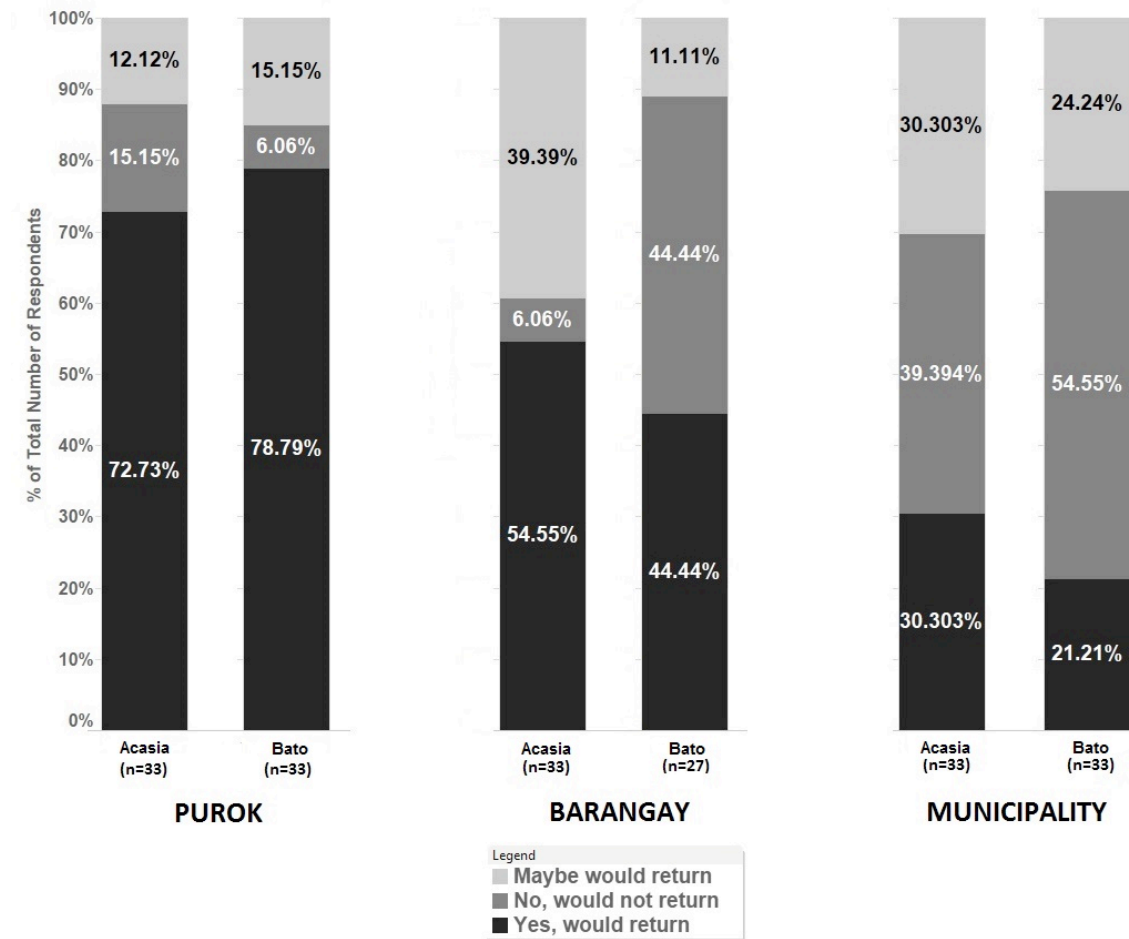
When the results are disaggregated per village, they are reminiscent of the aggregated municipal responses. Fundamentally, people felt they were more likely to get their wallets back when they lost them closer to their homes. In general, the further away from one’s *purok*, the fewer respondents said they thought they could trust people. As with most of the other socioeconomic indicators presented so far in this chapter, Acasia often seems to fare *slightly better* than its richer, larger, but more unequal neighbor. In almost all situations respondents from the poorer and more equalitarian Acasia answered that they would trust their neighbors more than in Bato (Figure VI.1). However, the differences between the two villages are often small and do not deliver a contrast as expressive as in the figures for whole the municipality.

One answer that gave a meaningful contrast between the two villages was: “No, [the wallet] would not return” on the *barangay* level. Analyzing this response provides a different perspective on the lack of trust that respondents had in the people around them in their own

¹⁹⁷ *Barangays* are divided into subunits called “*puroks*.” Each *purok* is usually composed of a dozen households and has a waiting shed, and has an unofficial miniature political assembly.

village. In response to this question a vigorous 44.44 percent of respondents in Bato were gloomily confident that their empty wallets would *not* return if lost in their own *barangay*. This is more than four times more “mistrust” of their fellow villagers than respondents in Acasia, where only 6.06 percent thought the neighbors in their village would certainly *not* return the lost wallet.

Figure VI.1. Would lost wallet *without money* come back to you?



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

There are of course many nuances to be given to these responses. In avoiding the Likert scale, and providing only three possible responses (yes, no, or maybe) the door was opened for my respondents to give a more “human” explanation to their answer than just giving a number on a scale. For example, in Acasia, a 43-year-old tenant farmer insisted that his trust for neighbors would only apply if his wallet was found by an adult. “If it’s a kid or a teenager, you never

know with them.” Still in the same village a 61-year-old home-maker whose husband was a farmer explained how she would make use of the *barangay*’s new public announcement speak-phone system (*bandillo* in Visayan). This would “put people to shame” and is why “they” would return the wallet. She said she would also promise a reward. Also, many respondents spoke at length about their own personal experiences of either losing or finding precious belongings.

Pitaka with money

For the question about the wallet *with* money, very few respondents in either village believed it would be returned. This is similar to what came out from the aggregated municipal results. At the *purok* and municipal levels, both villages had exactly the same percentages of respondents who thought that “no,” nothing would come back. I must admit that the results to these “*pitaka with money*” questions did not show any important differences between the villages.

Caveats

What other factors could influence the responses to the *pitaka* question? My hypothesis is that it has something to do with the large presence of OFWs and the subsequent increased economic inequalities in Bato. It is also possible that the differences in the sheer number of residents combined with the dissimilarities in spatial distribution of the villages also came into play in the local sentiments of interpersonal trust, and whether respondents feel that their lost wallets would be returned.

2.3. Trust in authorities

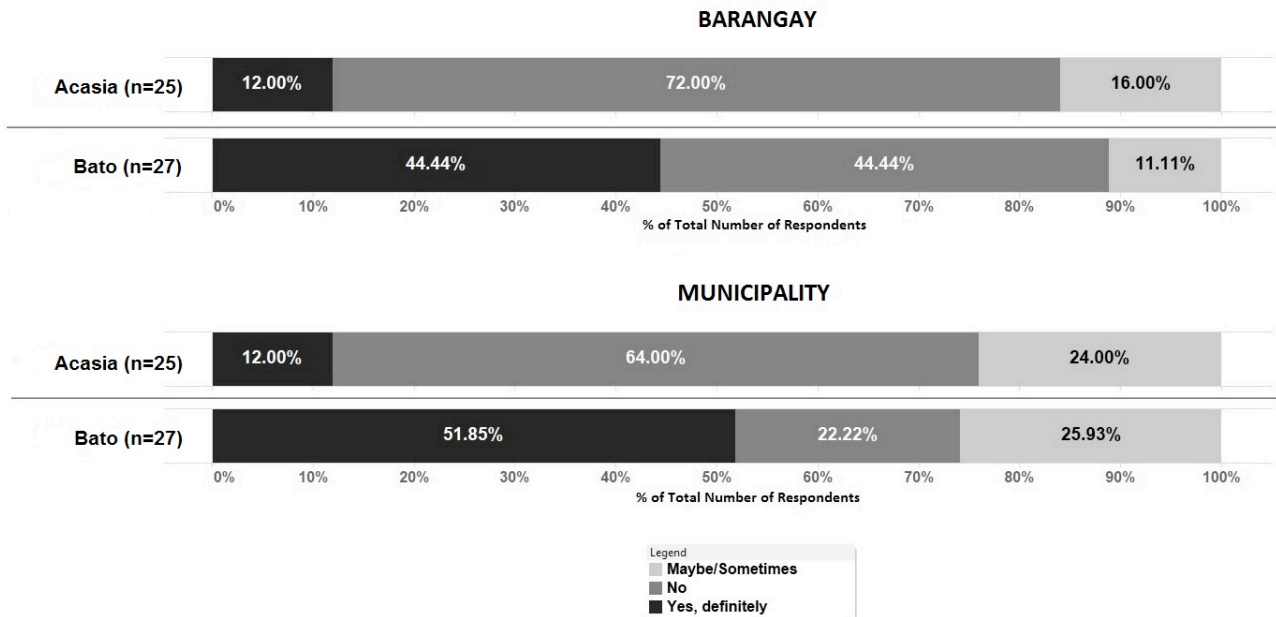
Aggregated data on institutional trust was analyzed for the whole municipality in the previous chapter. A disaggregated analysis shows differences between the two villages regarding how their respondents felt about authorities.

Trust of local institutions

Respondents from Acasia trusted their local authorities a lot more than respondents in Bato, particularly at the *barangay* and municipal levels. In both cases, respondents in Bato were approximately four times more likely to think that their local institutions were corrupt. This is bearing in mind that for all of these potentially sensitive questions, I was always very forward

in offering the interviewee the option of saying “maybe” or “sometimes” so that they could have an elegant way of skirting the question if the subject was too taboo. Also quite striking is how much (72 percent of respondents) people in Acasia felt that their village was corruption-free. In both villages several respondents chose to simply skip the question, particularly when it came to their impression of corruption at the *barangay* and municipal levels.

Figure VI.2. Do you think your *local* authorities are corrupt?



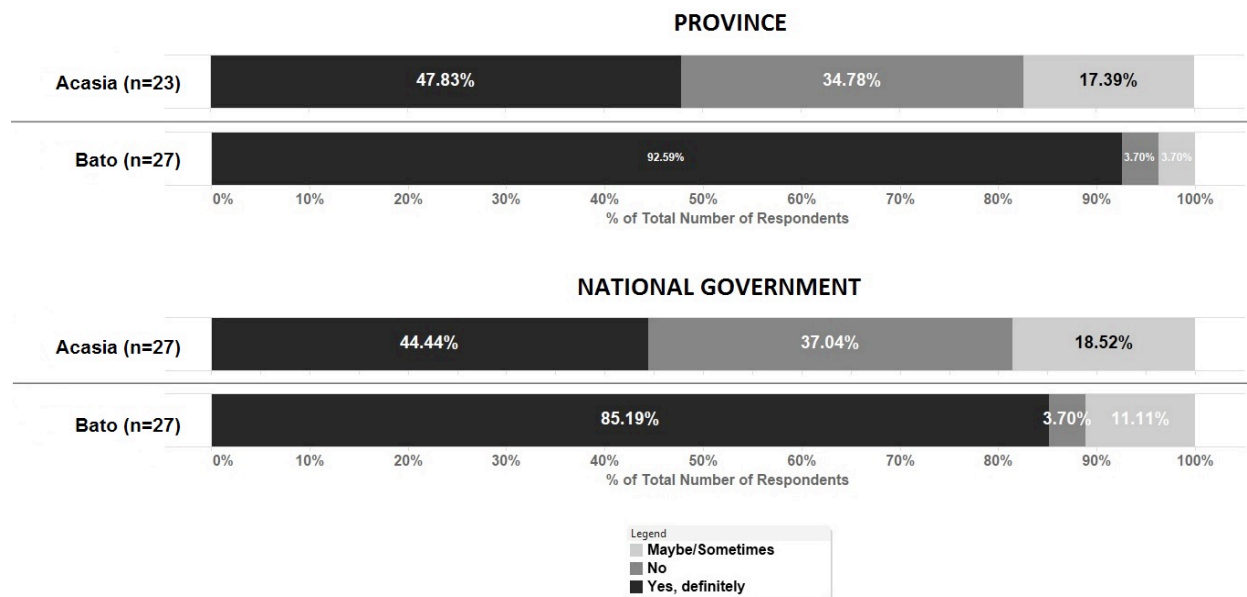
(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

Trust of provincial and national authorities

The responses from both *barangays* are clear that many people did not trust either their provincial or their national authorities. This is similar to the aggregated data for the whole municipality discussed in the municipal chapter. In both villages respondents felt there was corruption at these levels, but respondents in Acasia appeared much more trusting. Both of these institutional levels are objectively very likely to be corrupt. Nevertheless, over a third of respondents in Acasia answered that “no” they did not think they were corrupt. Was this naïveté on their part? A form of nationalist pride and a desire to please a foreign researcher interviewing them? I’m not quite sure how to interpret these differences between these villages in the Province of Southern Leyte. Macro-scale research by Rothstein and Uslaner (2005, p. 46) suggests that there are several social factors that can impact the trust of authorities, and

that relative economic equality and a “shared sense of fate” are definitely environments that encourage people to be trusting of “others” (whether that be the neighbor, or the more distant regional politician). Perhaps respondents in Acasia had better opinions of higher levels of authority *because* their daily interactions with their neighbors and local politicians were trust-inspiring. This possibility would require further research, and it could be interesting to analyze if trust in local authorities can nourish a more generalized trust of all authorities.

Figure VI.3. Do you think your *provincial* and *national* authorities are corrupt?



(Source: Interviews 2012-13)

It can be argued that corruption and poverty are slow-onset forms of violence. All violent events have lasting impacts on the social cohesion of “communities.” Also, civil strife, regardless of whether it is drawn-out or lightning quick (which it seldom is) must also have impacts on a village’s social capital. Rothstein and Uslaner (2005, p. 49) compare trust levels amongst different nations, and argue that “countries that have experienced civil wars are less trusting.” On a more micro-level, different historical experiences with local violence may also be playing a role in the social capital make-ups of the two villages being studied.

Different village histories of violence

Throughout this thesis a historical context was given at each level of analysis, because it contributes to understanding the social dynamics in a particular geographical space. It may now be useful to give some micro-level history for the compared villages, especially a brief history of local violence.

The municipality was the site of intense armed conflict during both World War II as well as more recently during Martial Law. In the 1970s and 80s, the Village of Bato in particular was the scene of several murders as well as site for the camp of the 55th Battalion of the Philippine Constabulary (PC). Many of the respondents from that village spoke of the fear they had of soldiers during Martial Law. Several people from that village remembered that the PC abused local people, women in particular. The soldiers were from the Ilocos and Tagalog regions. One 72-year-old who had been a farmer in Bato explained how he had to stop farming corn in the mountain because it became “forbidden to go to the mountain.” He evoked the horror of seeing the bodies of two murdered people in the village. He had an M16 Armalite rifle put against his chest when he was coming back from working on a boat and was stopped by a PC patrol. He says he “was happy to see the PC go.”

Similarly, a 45-year-old woman recalled how in Bato they had to turn off their lights at night “because of crazy soldiers roaming around. There was fear of abuse of women, they were not disciplined. Especially the 55th battalion of Philippine Constabularies, they were not disciplined; their camp was right in the village.” Many respondents said the PC was much worse than the locally manned Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF)¹⁹⁸ whose camp was near but who were much more respectful. None of the respondents in Acasia mentioned any of this kind of fear of violence, and they seem to have been relatively sheltered from these governmental abuses. The different historical experiences of violence between the two villages may play a role in the explanation of why respondents had different levels of trust of their neighbors and of authorities.

¹⁹⁸ Which were later to become the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

Civil strife can be compared to natural hazards. On one hand, both cause fear of bodily harm and death. Such experiences by definition cannot be benign and leave deep skid marks in the psyche of both individuals and groups. On the other hand, in times of “traumatic events,” the importance of other people and the quality as well as the quantity of our links with them comes to the fore. In times of armed conflict and in time of natural hazards, knowing people and being able to trust them can make the difference between life and death. To be clear, several authors have shown that violence is destructive to thin-trust, also called generalized trust or bridging capital, as fear for one’s life makes people less trusting of people from other groups (Rothstein&Uslaner 2005). The impacts of violence on thick-trust, or bonding social capital, amongst people of the same group remains to be further studied, but perhaps the importance of trust within criminal organizations may foreshadow a possible answer.

3. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

This thesis has attempted to see how social capital may have an impact on the preparation for natural hazards. So far this chapter has compared socioeconomic differences, indicators for social capital, and *barangay* histories. To find contrasts in disaster preparation in the two villages, this thesis had a two pronged approach. First, it attempted to find differences in the descriptive statistical analysis of data from respondents in both villages; and second, it analyzed qualitative interviews with villagers and key stakeholders.

3.1. First the bad news: disappointment of descriptive statistics for DRR preparations

I must admit that I was disappointed by the results of my attempts to quantify – and compare – levels of preparation to natural hazards. Much to my anguish, the findings are not convincing and do not really show any meaningful differences. As a whole, respondents from both *barangays* answered in similar ways and these results were analogous to what was found for the municipality as a whole, presented in Chapter V.

As for the municipality as a whole, I attempted to compare the preparation of the two villages by looking at four indicators: (1) participation to DRR evacuation drills, (2) having a “bug-

out-bag”¹⁹⁹ ready, (3) having seen the hazard map for their area, and (4) contact with an NGO doing DRR. In all of these instances the responses from the two villages were uncomfortably similar, if not identical. In both villages 84.38 percent of respondents had participated in DRR drills. This is great news for their DRR preparation but is useless for my argument. More than half of respondents from both villages said they had a “bug-out-bag,” but only about a third of respondents in either Acasia or Bato had seen the hazard maps. The differences between the villages are not important enough to draw any conclusions.

3.2. The qualitative good news

Staff from the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (MDRRMO) explained during several in-depth interviews that for them, there were palpable differences between the two villages. The municipal authorities play a critical role as they are the fulcrum for many of the “community” projects, such as those doing DRR. The *municipio* is the interface for activities presented by NGOs and the national government. In most cases the Local Government Unit (LGU) has a “counterpart agreement”: the municipality is responsible for supervising the projects and sometimes provides some of the heavy machinery, while the *barangays* provide the labor and organize the people.

DRR is local politics

Municipal authorities made it clear they preferred working with Acasia rather than with Bato because officials in Acasia were “very proactive and in close coordination with the *municipio*.” Officials explained that Acasia was “very organized, we can call them anytime. They are very supportive of DRR. It’s not only the leaders but also the ordinary people.” In the eyes of the municipality the fact that the captain in Acasia was finishing his third term also played in their favor: “He is seasoned in politics, people follow him.” In contrast, in Bato the captain in 2009 was not of the same party as the mayor and he was an ally of the former administration of Chinese businesspeople. In 2010 the *barangay* elections in Bato brought a new captain who was of the same political color as the municipality. Municipal officials underlined this new captain was “very supportive” but they explained that since it was only his first-term “[local]

¹⁹⁹ “Bug-out-bags” is the term used by locals to refer to a bag with essential possessions (important documents, water, medicine, clothes, etc.) to grab and run with in the case of an emergency.

politics are still hot, because the former captain completed two terms and he has many ‘die-hard’ supporters” which would not always be keen on collaborating.

The views expressed by the Local Government Unit (LGU) seemed to echo those of the NGOs officials who explained that Acasia had completed two phases of DRR programs, while Bato had only finished one phase: “they are behind.” Authorities also underlined that Bato had more “informal settlers and fishermen” which explained why “it is hard for them to go to the seminars and trainings because they are so dependent on fishing, and always heading out to sea.”

In the interviews with the *barangay* captains, all three of them, including the two generations of leaders in Bato, told me they felt DRR was important. The “new” captain from Bato spoke about all sorts of drills in his *barangay* (earthquakes, tsunami, and flash-flood drills): “People participate in the drills because we go get them in their houses.” This newly elected official did underline that “some are more interested in the drills than others, *because of the lack of trust in authorities.*” Also, he lamented that some of his constituents “are over confident that their place will not be affected by [natural hazards].” The local leader of Bato underlined that “most [of those who are reluctant to participate in preparations] are rich.” He seemed adamant that his efforts were geared at putting pressure on “all community members to participate.” Municipal authorities also mentioned that the relative increase in wealth amongst some in Bato was having repercussion on the way people participated in community-based projects: “if we are poor, we have to consider our neighbors; you cannot do anything without your neighbor. If you are rich, you don’t mind your neighbor.”

Structural mitigations

Both villages have had “structural mitigation” with the help of NGOs. These projects have involved activities such as dredging rivers and planting mangroves along the seashore. These accomplishments are made using *barangay* work-parties. The dredging of rivers (Picture VI.6), and the planting of trees and bamboos, help to reduce both flooding and erosion during times of heavy rain. Replanting mangroves provides precious barriers in the events of storm-

surges and tsunamis. A group of coastal barangays, including Acasia and Bato, founded an association which produces “propagules,” seedlings for these salt-tolerant trees (Picture VI.7). The association also produces mangrove seedlings for other municipalities in Southern Leyte, because several areas of the province are replanting mangroves. The only other producer of propagules is near the provincial capital of Maasin. Thanks to the planter’s association the mangroves on Saint Bernard’s coast have expanded and locals say this has resulted in “more fish than before, more shellfish, squid and crab too” (according to interviewees). These projects are increasing the safety of people from natural hazards as well as improving their livelihoods.

Picture VI.7. Recently replanted mangrove propagules



Poblacion across the water and Mount Cabalian volcano in background. (Source: Veuthey 2013)

Picture VI.8. Earthquake drills in a Saint Bernard village.



(Source: Veuthey 2013)

Drills

Throughout the disaster literature, education and practice drills are always a prominent part of disaster risk reduction (DRR), especially in the case of community-based projects. Municipal authorities explained that it was more difficult to organize the drills in Bato. Acasia outshone its larger neighbor and has already done several evacuation drills. At the time of the final fieldwork, it had run “more than four already,” while Bato had had only one. Another type of drill is for earthquake preparation and is organized directly with the schools. Authorities said that in both of the villages the schools were quite receptive and always collaborated with the drills. During these exercises, children are taught to hide under their tables, then to evacuate their buildings in an orderly fashion while protecting their heads (Picture VI.8).

3.3. Communication technologies

Education is a way to spread information and prepare a population before a hazard strikes. However, once a violent event is imminent, communication is vital, both between authorities and their constituents and between different levels of authority, as well as amongst the people themselves. For example if there is a need for evacuation because a threat is looming,

barangay captains need to be able to rapidly spread that information throughout their villages. In view of this need for rapid communication, the German cooperation agency in 2011 financed public address speakerphone systems in many at-risk villages in the municipality. The locals call it *bandilio* and use it for all sorts of non-emergency reasons as well. They use it for organizing *tagbo* work activities, as well as to “signal a missing *carabao* [water buffalo]” for example. The captain of Acasia explained that it was “very useful” and that they use it “sometimes twice a day, other times four times a week.” He was very proud to show that their *bandillio* could also be powered by a small gas-run electrical generator.

Cellphones

Mobile telephones have been ubiquitous across the Filipino archipelago for decades but because the Municipality of Saint Bernard is so remote, it was only in 2004 that telecommunication companies started putting up antennas that gave local people immediate and affordable connection to the outside world. In 2013, many of the villages away from the center of the *Poblacion* still had very limited reception. Some of the villages where I stayed had none at all. The two particular *barangays* which have been compared in this chapter both benefited from cellphone accessibility as soon as the antennas were installed.

The profound “connections” between telecommunication and social capital have yet to be fully researched. Similarly the potential importance of cellphone technology for DRR is only starting to become apparent. More generally, cellphones are having unprecedented impacts on many aspects of life in the rural Philippines ranging from new venues for teenagers to flirt, to transferring money, to accessing new employment. One 27-year-old in Bato even said that “cellphones help in the relationship between rich and poor because before the rich were not approachable. Now, with cellphones they are much more approachable even if financially they are still much richer than us.”

This is a very exciting field of research which I look forward to develop extensively in forthcoming studies. The affordability and versatility of this technology means that everyone has access to it. Extremely rare was the person who did not have a cellphone, no matter how

poor they were; although it did happen some were too old to bother being interested. There seemed to be a difference in the cellphone usage when comparing Acasia and Bato. The average “load” paid per month in cellphone credit was PhP 183 [US\$ 4.5] in Acasia (n=21), quite a bit higher than the PhP 146 [US\$ 3.6] average in Bato (n=16). These results run counter to what I would have expected since Bato is the one with the most OFWs. One possible explanation might be the small sample size. It might also be related to another type of information technology that I feel must be discussed: the Internet.

Internet

In 2012-2013 many locals were using their cellphones to access the internet. Acasia only got an internet shop with connected computers in 2012. Bato had one since 2006. Several of the OFW houses had their own antennas to access the internet from their homes. Therefore it is possible that people in Acasia were spending more on their cellphone bills than people in Bato, because the former needed to use this mobile technology to access the internet. By the time Acasia got its first internet shop in 2012 Bato already had three. Some of the other villages of the municipality were only getting internet access toward the end of my 2013 fieldwork (Picture VI.9). This access to the World Wide Web is opening immense opportunities for folks in these very remote *barangays*. It meant being able to correspond with friends and family who were far away, sometimes working as OFWs. But it also meant getting information about jobs and government contracts. In one of the upland villages a group of farmers had started a tree nursery and were bidding online for, and sometimes winning, lucrative government contracts to replant parts of the province.

Facebook

Several of the interviewees who accessed the internet used it only for one thing: Facebook. Telecommunication companies offer that option, especially for clients accessing the internet via their cellular telephones. Many of my contacts in the municipality with whom I continue to correspond at the time of writing this final chapter (July 2015) communicate with the rest of the world using Facebook. This is also the case in times of disasters. In 2013 when Super Typhoon Yolanda struck the Island of Leyte, I sent money via Western Union with a predatory

transaction cost, but the request for help and the coordination of the payments was all done free of charge via Facebook. My correspondents no longer had electricity in their homes but were sending me Facebook messages with their cellphones.

There remains immense and exciting research to be done on how social media can impact both social capital and preparations to natural hazards. Some trailblazing scholars have begun inquiring into this rapidly expanding field. Daniel Aldrich has undertaken qualitative and quantitative research on how social media can be used in *post*-disaster recovery (Aldrich 2012) but much remains to be done for *pre*-disaster preparation. Not surprisingly, the most interesting analysis remains, for now, mainly *online*. Leading thinker Patrick Meier asks “Can social media (which is not restricted by geography) influence social capital?” and argues that “open source fosters social ties, networks, communities and thus social capital” (Meier 2013). For this author, this new technology can provide survivors with information, as well as financial and physical help. But again, this is a budding field and much is yet to be studied, especially when it comes to what happens *before* a hazard strikes. How can this spread of “digital social capital” be used for prevention and what are its impacts on social cohesion?

Picture VI.9. Village youth using a newly connected internet shop (mainly to kill monsters)



(Source: Veuthey 2013)

Conclusion

This final chapter analyzed social capital and disaster preparation at the village level. Two *barangays*, Acasia and Bato, were compared in socioeconomic indicators. The villages were chosen because they are adjacent to each other and have the same very high exposure to natural hazards. They were also chosen because of their socioeconomic differences and perceived enthusiasm – or lack thereof – for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects.

The objective was to see if there were differences between the villages in their indicators of social capital, and if so, if these differences had any parallels with indicators of prevention. My hypothesis had been that the village with more social capital would also be the one with more preparedness and participation in DRR projects.

The village-level analysis shows that the two *barangays* are socioeconomically different. Bato is somewhat larger and because it has better access to the ocean it has a higher proportion of fishermen. Bato also has more Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), and is subsequently generally wealthier. But this wealth is more unequally distributed than in Acasia where most people are farmers on small plots of land, and few families receive remittances from overseas. Indicators for poverty and education were similar in both *barangays* but consistently showed that Acasia was doing slightly better.

The indicators for social capital show slight differences between the two villages. Acasia's residents were more involved in groups and still had several traditional semi-formal cooperatives that no longer existed in Bato. Respondents in Acasia had distinctly more generalized trust for all levels of authorities. Concerning interpersonal trust in their villages and using the question "if your wallet *without money* was lost, would your neighbors bring it back to you?" respondents in Bato were over four times more distrustful of people in their village than respondents in Acasia. However, the responses for most other questions about interpersonal trust gave disappointingly similar results for the two villages. Nevertheless, responses from Acasia almost always indicated slightly more trust than Bato.

The attempt to measure and compare DRR preparations did not yield any meaningful results. The descriptive statistical results of respondents in the two *barangays* were too similar to draw any convincing conclusions from their comparisons. In this sense, it was not possible to test my hypothesis that the village with more social capital would also be the one with more preparedness: respondents from both villages seemed similarly prepared. However, interviews with key stakeholders nevertheless indicated that Acasia had done more drills and was keener in its DRR participations.

Finally, both villages seemed connected with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) thanks in particular to cellphones, which had first arrived in 2004 and are now ubiquitous in many of the municipality's *barangays*. These low-cost versatile devices bring with them a myriad of possible repercussions at the village level on both social capital and preparations to prevent natural hazards from turning into disasters.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS ON INEQUALITIES, SOCIAL CAPITAL & DRR

Sa bukid nagbuno

Miabut sa lungsod ang dugo.

(*Baha*)

Killing in the mountain

The blood reaches downtown.

(Flood)

(Go-Saga, 2010, p. 32)

Introduction

The objective of this thesis has been to shed new light on social capital and preparations for natural hazards in the Philippines. The research contributes to different fields of knowledge and emphasizes the importance of inequalities, contextualization, and scale. The thesis underlines the significance of historical, geographical and political contexts to an understanding of social dynamics. A strong emphasis was placed on applying a multi-scalar analysis: the settings and the concepts were examined at different geographical levels, zooming from the Asia Pacific region, to Southeast Asia, to the Philippines, to the Eastern Visayas, to the Municipality of Saint Bernard, and finally to two selected villages.

There is a growing body of scholarly literature, often from the public health sector and medical sciences, which shows the detrimental repercussion of inequality on social capital (Rothstein & Uslaner 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Similarly, budding scientific inquiries have begun to address the connections between social capital and “natural” disasters (Aldrich 2012; Meyer 2013). This dissertation attempts to start building a link between these two fields of knowledge by analyzing the Filipino situation in general, as well as making a more specific case study of an impoverished municipality in a remote part of the country.

The thesis’ primary question was: “How does social capital in remote rural villages of Southern Leyte Province impact preparations for natural hazards?” The main hypothesis was that places with higher indicators of social capital (interpersonal and generalized trust, formal and informal group participation, etc.) would be more highly prepared for natural hazards. This hypothesis did not verify itself, or at least, not very convincingly in the comparison of the two villages. *Barangay*-level quantifications and comparisons often revealed only mild contrasts, especially for measurements of hazard preparation. The comparison of the data collected via qualitative interviews, however, underlined other factors that influence

preparations at municipal, regional, and national levels. The thesis' secondary hypotheses were at least partially confirmed: (1) places with more Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), and thus more inequality, tended to have lower indicators of social capital; (2) people and villages more involved in traditional non-formal groups had slightly higher indicators of social capital; and finally (3) village officials who were politically affiliated with the mayor appeared more likely to adopt risk reduction projects.

SYNTHESIS

This thesis has provided the geographical and historical background to contextualize how deep structural inequalities have brewed a peculiar mix of social capital and preparations for natural hazards in the Filipino archipelago. The Philippines is highly vulnerable to a battery of hazards because of its geography as well as its deep socio-historical inequalities rooted in its colonial past. The contemporary archipelago's emaciated central state apparatus has evolved, but it continues to perpetuate a deeply unjust social system where entrenched privileges leave feudal structures unruffled to this day.

The archipelago's cohesion was weighed and found wanting (Chapters II & III)

The Philippines has always been a disjointed archipelago. The central state during Spanish times was all but inexistent outside of Manila and a few coastal towns. Benedict Anderson postulated that if it had not been for US imperialism, "the Philippines in the early twentieth century could have fractured into three weak, *caudillo*-ridden states" (Anderson 2004, p. 200). But, for better or for worse, America's ferocious colonization was unifying, to a certain extent. It cobbled together 80 language groups on over seven thousand islands sprawled across the equivalent of the Eastern United States. The native *mestizo* elite, fine political weathercocks, engaged in lucrative collaborations with each of the successive regimes of the 20th century. Indeed, using the concept of social capital, the thesis illustrated how strong intra-group bonds are a mechanism that help perpetuate power amongst the elite.

The *Pearl of the Orient Sea* continues to have deeply unjust social structures where oligarchic families shamelessly line their pockets while extreme poverty leaves one out of three children

in the country with stunted growth (UNICEF 2013). The extent of this misery in a resource-rich country in the midst of “economic growth” (Habito 2012) provided material for this thesis to question the contemporary nationalist narratives. Despite the clamor of noble heroic ancestors and media reports of *bayanihan* solidarity during the yearly typhoons, the country seems to direly lack national cohesion and the community truly appears fictional. The fragmented national identity is further scattered by complex language politics: English remains hegemonic (Rafael 2000, p. 9) while Manila continues peddling the rhetoric that Tagalog, euphemistically called Filipino, is the national language, even if it is the native tongue of little more than a third of the population (NSCB 2013). Underneath the language divisions, ethnic fissures also lurk. The thesis reviewed the complex history of the Chinese minority, trying to offer nuance and perspective with respect to the common stereotype that portrays the *Tchinois* simply as wealthy capitalists. This discussion about the Chinese-Filipino communities shed light on the complexities of social capitals within the archipelago, illustrating the ambiguities of identity and belonging, while also giving a background to the power dynamics within the municipality of Saint Bernard where *Tchinois* families have been playing a central role.

Despite its glaring shortcomings, the Filipino state has in recent years followed a global trend of changing its way of dealing with natural hazards. Moving away from a top-down technocratic system, new legislation has, since 2010, been pushing a different paradigm that is more people-centered. However, Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM) is far from a panacea and it potentially entails many socio-political problems (Allen 2006). On one hand, the new legislation has the merit of shifting attention toward preventive measures and encourages authorities to take action and prepare *before* natural hazards strike. On the other hand, the new approach strives to further decentralize responsibilities in an already fragmented country, and can potentially be “depoliticizing” (Allen 2003) by seeing disasters as something disconnected from the systemic abuse and ubiquitous poverty. These new community-based approaches can potentially distract attention away from the archipelago’s deep structural problems.

The Eastern Visayas: a long neglected region (Chapter IV)

The Eastern Visayas, also known as administrative Region VIII, has long been one of the poorest and most neglected parts of the archipelago. Battered by regular typhoons and earthquakes, the region has had anemic economic growth and the country's highest levels of inequality. Inhabitants have been migrating away from the Eastern Visayas for decades. The thesis illustrated the dire socioeconomic setting of this region long neglected by academic researchers. There has, however, been a recent surge in interest in the region from social scientists, following the 2013 passage of the most powerful typhoon ever recorded, and the subsequent trail of media and NGOs in its wake.

The municipality is the fulcrum of activities (Chapter V)

In 2006, The Municipality of Saint Bernard was profoundly shaken by a landslide that left over a thousand dead but also swept in profound sociopolitical changes to what had been a sleepy agricultural town of the Filipino archipelago. The municipality elected a young new mayor with a mandate to improve the preparations for the inevitable future natural hazards.

Research revealed that the municipality continues to have a very high exposure to seismic and atmospheric threats, but fundamentally, even without any natural hazards, most people are teetering on the brink of economic disaster. In this sense, Saint Bernard is a microcosm for the rest of the archipelago: a highly unequal agrarian society continuously threatened by natural hazards. At the municipal level, the historical legacy of exploitative social structures has left most of the people interviewed in precarious situations: the rare jobs in the area barely provide enough to survive, and many aspire to join the ranks of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), to export themselves as cheap labor. The impact of these remittances from overseas at the municipal level cannot be over-emphasized, as they are such a significant strategy across the country. While they provide a new source of income to rural areas, they also have the potential to accentuate existing inequalities since the poorest of the poor are very often not the ones who have the means to access these overseas jobs.

Despite the glaring misery and the systemic exploitation at the macro-level, fieldwork showed that people help each other at the micro-level. Beyond the much-touted fundamental importance of the Filipino family, the thesis reviewed a palette of semi-formal cooperative organizations that provide an array of services and attest to the vitality of a certain type of social capital, at a certain scale. For example, some of these local organizations do collective labor for improving the preparation for natural hazards by dredging river beds.

The thesis measured interpersonal trust in the municipality using a question that in essence asked respondents (n = 142) “what they thought would happen if they lost their wallet and their neighbors found it.” The question was framed to obtain responses according to different spatial scales, ranging from sub-neighborhood (*purok*), to village, to municipality. Respondents clearly indicated more trust closer to their homes, with mistrust increasing with distance. While many expected “others” to bring back their important identification cards and their lost wallet, an overwhelming majority felt no money would ever be returned. Trust in authorities was sounded by inquiring about perceived corruption. Almost 60 percent of respondents felt their *barangays* were honest. Similarly, less than a third thought their municipal government was corrupt. The provincial and national governments, however, were overwhelmingly perceived as crooked. The interviews indicated that many of the respondents believe that not all politicians were corrupt “traditional politicians” *trapos*, especially at the more local levels.

Municipal-level indicators for preparation for natural hazards showed that almost three out of four respondents had already participated in “disaster drills,” and over 60 percent had prepared an emergency bag (bug-out-bag) with essential possessions to grab and run with in case of looming hazards. However, only 30 percent of respondents had seen any of the existing hazard maps.

Social capital and preparation in the villages (Chapter VI)

Two villages from the municipality were compared. They are adjacent and exposed to the same natural hazards but were chosen because of their socioeconomic differences and

perceived enthusiasm – or lack thereof – for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects. The village-level analysis showed that the two *barangays* were socioeconomically different. One had a higher proportion of OFWs, and subsequently certain families were relatively wealthy. The other was poorer but more equalitarian and most people were farmers on small plots of land. Overall indicators for poverty and education were similar in both *barangays* but consistently showed the village without OFWs doing slightly better.

The indicators for social capital collected from the interviews showed small differences between the two villages (each with 33 respondents). In the more equalitarian village, residents were more involved in groups and there were more traditional semi-formal cooperatives. Generalized trust of neighbors was compared between the villages by using the results of the “lost wallet” questions. Respondents in the *barangay* with OFWs were generally less trusting of their neighbors. Similarly, mistrust for all levels of authority was distinctly higher in the more unequal village.

The attempt to measure and compare DRR preparations did not yield any meaningful results. The descriptive statistics from respondents in the two *barangays* were disappointingly too similar to draw any convincing conclusions. In this sense, it was not possible to test the thesis’ hypothesis that the village with more social capital would also be the one with more preparedness: respondents from both villages seemed similarly prepared. However, the qualitative interviews nevertheless revealed that the more equalitarian village had done more drills and was keener in its DRR participations.

Finally, respondents in both villages seemed connected with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). These low-cost versatile devices have many possible repercussions at the village level on both social capital and preparations to prevent natural hazards from turning into disasters.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The objective of this research was to begin patching the gaps that lies at the intersection of two bodies of relatively recent scientific scholarship: how social capital applies in the Philippine setting as well as how the concept can be useful for the growing field of disaster studies.

Social capital in the Philippines

In the Philippines, research on social capital has been uncommon; this thesis thus refers to Abad's trail-blazing analysis of national surveys. I applied similar key notions to measure social capital: group membership and trust. Building from Abad's analysis of social capital on a national level, I propose a finer-grained localized analysis of these concepts at the municipal and village levels. Furthermore, by placing my observations in a socio-historical context, I hope to have contributed to a different perspective on social capital in the Philippines.

Abad ends his seminal article writing that the "task of change will thus come from expanding social capital at the bottom, and shaking the 'other things' from above so that the system can dismantle its strategies of exclusion" (2005, p. 45). I propose that the "other things" may perhaps be more pressing than "expanding social capital at the bottom." I concur with Bebbington that the concept of social capital needs to be handled most prudently. This care is especially necessary in places like the Philippines because of the legacy of unjust and unequal social structures. The concept of social capital must not promote the acceptance of the status quo which sees "people as poor not because of massive resource transfers out of their countries, but because they have not made the effort to invest sufficiently in their own social organizations and networks" (Bebbington 2009, p. 169). I would add that the transfer of wealth also goes to the national elite. As argued throughout Chapters II and III, the Filipino state has been controlled for generations by a small group of oligarchic families that have been successfully and shamelessly plundering the country.

The strength of "bonding social capital" in the Philippines results in the neglect of all those outside of the group. Abad's results show that "Filipinos build strong bonding social capital with family members and depend upon them for material, psychic, and symbolic needs

throughout the life cycle” (Abad 2005, p. 45). At the national level my review of the “wanting nationalist narratives” for the archipelago resonates with the strength of the inter-group bonding capital, especially that of the elite. The dominance of family in the Philippines, and the strength of its bonding capital, seems almost absolute, as beautifully illustrated in Lukas Kaelin’s 2012 book appropriately entitled *Strong Family, Weak State*. At the local levels, the results from my qualitative interviews revealed a more nuanced picture (Chapter V). Certainly “Filipinos have learned to rely upon their families for the sorts of social services that the state provides in many developed nations” (McCoy 2002, p. 7), because there have been so many regime changes in the archipelago, but family bonding capital does not explain everything.

The thesis aligns itself with the argument made by Vervisch et al. (2013) who call for adding more of a political economy perspective to the consideration of social capital. I argue for the importance of context in general and of power dynamics in particular. My findings concur with those of Vervisch et al. when they argue that social capital is “inextricably bound up with other forms of cultural capital (e.g. educational qualifications) and economic capital (e.g. resources directly convertible into money)” (2013, p. 152). These authors show the potentially negative effects of social capital, such as the accentuating of unfair situations, once social capital becomes “enmeshed in broader socio-economic power relations” (Vervisch et al., 2013, p. 168).

Szreter and Woolcock argued that it is “impossible to understand how particular networks and social structures are initiated and sustained without reference to the state” (2004, p. 656) since the state and its laws inevitably influence patterns of associations. They claim that findings on social capital remain incomplete, and possibly misleading, if not placed in political context. They see the state as “the public arbiter of the liberal polity’s collective resources” (Ibid.). Szreter and Woolcock’s integration into the concept of social capital of both power relations (with “linking social capital”) and the role of the state allows for an analysis significantly more consolidated with a political economy framework. However, I argue that their paradigm, which sees the state as a benevolent “public arbiter,” simply does not apply to the dysfunctional Filipino structures, not at the national level at least.

Previous studies of social capital in the Philippine argued that group memberships “remain minimal despite the proliferation of civil society groups in the Philippines [...], Filipinos are more likely to participate in organizations that relate to the private realm of religion and sports, than in groups that relate to the realm that directly relates to improvements in material life” (Abad 2005, pp. 44-45). In the Municipality of Saint Bernard, my results on “group membership” provided alternative findings. In this poor and remote rural municipality, there was quite an array of informal or semi-formal organizations that in fact *did* relate to what Abad calls “the realm that directly relates to improvements in material life.” Abad’s conclusions make sense given the nature of the national data set he was working with. However, his initial results could perhaps be nuanced by also looking at organizations that were both less formal and less mono-purpose.

In the Municipality of Saint Bernard, there were other kinds of collective organizations that may be not-quite-formal but were nevertheless quite active. This thesis has underlined the importance of informal and multi-purpose groups. In this, my findings confirm Bankoff’s historical analysis that these local solidarity networks are frequently informal, and are thus often under the radar of academics searching for more formal group participation to measure social capital. The Philippines has a long tradition of semi-formal organizations “committed to individual and community welfare that enhance people’s capacity to withstand the magnitude and frequency of misfortunes” (Bankoff 2007, p. 330). This type of localized social capital has often been harnessed by communities to deal with disasters.

My findings in the villages of Saint Bernard corroborate Bankoff’s argument that these informal entities seemed both chronologically and geographically variable. In other words, these informal solidarity networks evolve with time and are somewhat hazy in the reach of their coverage. The definition of “community” is sometimes limited to the family, sometimes to the neighborhood, sometimes to other forms of imagined *local* community. However, both Bankoff (2007) and Zialcita (2005) claim that these associations are more a form of “dyadic exchange of unpaid labor” that “largely occurs among close kin, friends, and neighbors to

favor one individual. It has nothing to do with the interests of the *barrio/barangay* as a corporate whole” (Zialcita 2005, p. 39). The findings from my interviews in the small villages of remote Southern Leyte were different, and lead me to affirm that in fact unpaid labor contributions do exist “with the interest of the *barrio/barangay* as a corporate whole” (Ibid.). An example would be work parties that plant mangroves or make gabions along riverbanks where villagers, thanks to their strong social capital, collectively contribute to preparing for future natural hazards.

Bankoff defines *bayanihan* as a Filipino concept of solidarity: “toiling on another’s behalf, and assuming another’s burdens. The meaning behind the concept is definitely more complex than mere ‘unity’ or ‘togetherness’ and has the connotation of shared identity and common association” (2007, p. 332). Bankoff argued that traditional *bayanihan* networks and associations were historically more common (1) amongst the poor, and (2) in rural areas where living standards were more equalitarian (Ibid., p. 333). This thesis presents a significant caveat to the use of this concept: geographical scale. Throughout most of Chapters II and III, this thesis has pointed a searchlight at the disjointed nature of Filipino national solidarity, where it can be seen that the shameless and selfish profiteering of the country’s elite parallels the abject neglect of the archipelago’s masses who struggle to survive, as the Tagalog saying goes “*isang kahig, isang tuka.*”²⁰⁰ So yes, my local observations at the micro-level concur with Bankoff’s refreshingly human argument that there are certain “cultures of solidarity” which can probably be linked in part to the frequent and extreme natural hazards. However, this solidarity is circumscribed within a certain scale.

Links between inequality and social capital in the Philippines

This thesis contributes to the argument that socioeconomic inequalities are corrosive to social capital. I have tried to show this at several geographical scales. At the national level, the extreme structural inequalities, corruption, and rampant poverty puncture the contemporary nationalist narrative of *bayanihan* solidarity and cohesion. At the local level, this thesis suggests that inequality is also detrimental to local social capital. The municipal and village

²⁰⁰ Literally “one scratch, one peck,” which would translate as “living hand to mouth” combined with an avian image of surviving by scratching and pecking hungrily.

level case study follows the arguments presented at the macro-scale by public health scholars such as Wilkinson and Pickett (2010). By comparing two villages with different levels of inequality I attempt to provide a small-scale case study for the arguments of Wilkinson and Pickett who write that “the quality of social relations deteriorates in less equal societies” (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010, p. 51). These authors found strong correlations between the quality of social relationships and levels of equality. They were comparing countries and were using very large databases to generate inferential statistical models. My qualitative case study comparing two villages in Saint Bernard argues that a similar phenomenon may also be taking place, but on a micro-level. In particular, Wilkinson and Pickett argue that strong income inequality is detrimental to interpersonal trust, a concept that I investigated in an original way in a rural setting in a developing country.

Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) purport that countries with high levels of inequality will have citizens with low levels of trust for their institutions. Again, my micro-scale case study endeavors to underline this at a local level. What this thesis attempted to measure was how much people in Saint Bernard trusted their institutions, whether these institutions were at the village, municipal, provincial, or national levels. In the context of my fieldwork I had the opportunity to hear extensively about the 2007 and 2010 elections, as well as witness the May 2013 election. It would not be an overstatement to say that vote buying was standard operating procedure. This thesis applies Rothstein and Uslaner’s argument at local levels in its analysis of trust indicators for different types of government institutions. Trust of authorities becomes vital in times of disaster: without trust, citizens are likely to disregard what their leaders advise them to do. For example, mistrust of authorities can cause people to ignore calls for evacuation, and, when the flood waters rise, to drown.

Disaster studies

Academic inquiries into the overlap between the social capital literature and research on disasters have only recently begun. This thesis contributes to this discourse. The existing research has so far predominantly been set in the United States (Reininger et al. 2013; Meyer 2013), and has predominantly focused on how social capital can impact *post*-disaster recovery

(Aldrich 2012). This thesis addresses the conceptual issue of the role of social capital for preparations in a developing country *before* hazards strike. It does this while placing it in the context of the historical, socioeconomic, and political setting of the understudied region of the Eastern Visayas.

Social capital and disasters

In his 2012 book entitled *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*, Daniel Aldrich makes some interesting points that money is *not* the most significant factor for recovery (p. 9), and that instead “high levels of social capital – more than such commonly referenced factors as socioeconomic conditions, population density, amount of damage or aid – serve as the core engine of recovery” (p. 15). While Aldrich’s work is quite original, I have several reservations about his approach, not least of which is his focus on post-disaster situations. Furthermore, he seems quite uncritical of the socio-economic inequalities that underlie his case studies. In a tone reminiscent of Putnam’s work, Aldrich does not propose to address structural societal problems, but rather to increase social capital by giving “incentives for community participation” such as offering forms of payment to encourage people to volunteer (p. 160), or to build community centers where people can “create deeper levels of trust” (p. 161). I argue for a more contextualized analysis of the systemic inequalities that influence social capital. Social capital and preparations for disasters are not disconnected from society: historical and political dynamics need to be included into these analyses.

Similarly, in the summer of 2013, Michelle Meyer submitted a PhD dissertation in sociology at the Colorado State University entitled *Social Capital and Collective Efficacy for Disaster Resilience: Connecting Individuals with Communities and Vulnerability with Resilience in Hurricane-prone Communities in Florida*. I applaud her addressing the importance of social capital, her analysis of “collective efficacy,” as well as the distinction she makes between disaster and non-disaster social capital (p. 226). Meyer called for future research to demonstrate the importance of geography on social networks in disasters (p. 229), something I have tried to do in this thesis. However, as has been the case with many of the studies which linked social capital with disasters, there was what I perceive to be a certain lack of political

depth combined with scarce historical and geographical contextualization. Social capital is certainly important, but it does not happen in a vacuum.

Disaster management is conceptually composed of several phases: preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. The majority of academics have been looking at what happens chronologically *after* a hazard strikes. This thesis's contribution lies in its focus on what happens chronologically *before* a hazard strikes. In other words: disaster preparedness. In one of the rare articles to address the role of social capital in natural hazard preparedness, Reininger et al., in a study set in the Southern United States, underline the need for more of this kind of research: "Studies have yet to examine social capital's association with disaster preparedness among marginalized populations who live in an area where the threat of natural disaster is common" (Reininger et al. 2013, p. 51). In a US-focused study of potential pandemic outbreaks of influenza, Koh and Cadigan address preparedness and highlight that "all preparedness is local" (Koh & Cadigan 2008, p. 277) and underline the importance of drills (p. 282). My thesis agrees with their argument and reveals similar findings but in a rural and remote municipality of a developing country, and provides a case study example of the importance of local preparedness and drills.

Disaster risk reduction in the Philippine setting

In 2010 the Congress of the Philippines approved a new law, RA10121, which placed strong emphasis on decentralization, giving Local Government Units (LGUs) the responsibility of integrating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into their development planning. It is important for me to add my voice to others criticizing blanket decentralization, as it can sometimes give national governments an excuse to shed their responsibilities to lower administrative levels. In the Philippine case, LGUs are legally responsible for land-use planning, but many of them do not have the necessary capacities to do the job. Again, this thesis contributes to this debate by underlining the fundamental inequalities built into the Filipino state, and by pointing to the great heterogeneity of LGUs. Some LGUs are very well funded and extremely competent, especially in urban areas, while other LGUs, often in poor rural areas, do not even have a single staff member working on DRR. The case of the Municipality of Saint Bernard was

particular because there was strong political will as well as support from many NGOs to shoulder these responsibilities.

“Community participation”

Involving the “community” has become an almost ubiquitous part of most of today’s disaster risk reduction programs. The new Filipino law encourages communities to be “actively engaged in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities, and where people are at the heart of decision-making [...]” (Congress of the Philippines 2010, p. 3). Twigg argued that there is a lot of rhetoric over community participation but that a lot of it remains “public relations exercises” (2005, p. 65) and that much remains to be done in practice. Disaster management used to be top-down, interventionist, technology-centered, and dominated by outside experts (Allen 2006, p. 82). Over the last 20 years the field has moved toward a more preventive as well as a more community-centered approach. There have been an increasing number of national and international non-governmental organizations pushing – and paying – for “bottom-up” projects that seek to empower communities at the local level (Ibid.). In the Filipino context, this is particularly the case because the “top,” i.e. the central state in Manila, has historically had precious little interest in the well-being of the “bottom” communities in the rural provinces.

There is a significant amount of contemporary academic debate on this shift in policies. Authors like Scolobig et al. examined in 2015 the transition’s “teething problem” and underlined the need for flexibility in finding the right mix in the distribution of responsibilities between authorities and the public (Scolobig et al. 2015, p. 9). The thesis contributes to this debate and agrees that while local survivors and local authorities will certainly be the first responders in a disaster event, the larger countrywide structures have an important role to play, especially in the preparations for large hazards.

The need to question the concept of “community”

The thesis contributes to contesting the complex concept of “community.” The term almost always gobbles-up a great variety of potentially conflicting sub-groups. Most communities are in fact far from being cohesive entities, and there are often long-standing feuds between rival families, ethnic groups, or social classes. Beyond the romantic rhetoric about “communities” it must not be forgotten that they are often “self-interested and self-reproducing power structure[s]” and that they are as “rife with interest, power, and divisions as any market, corporation, or city government” (Brint 2001, p. 6). Local communities are often highly heterogeneous, even if they can provide a high degree of mobilizing capacity. These internal tensions were very much what I observed in the municipality of Saint Bernard, as well as at a more micro-level in my selected villages. Social capital can replicate already existing inequalities, and therein lays the importance of applying political and historical contextualization when handling the concept.

Trust and Super Typhoon Haiyan

Using the concept of social capital for disaster preparation has, for better or for worse, much future ahead of it. Grey literature from NGOs working in the Eastern Visayas has revealed that the mistrust of neighbors and of authorities caused many deaths in 2013 when the City of Tacloban got pummeled by Super Typhoon Haiyan (called Yolanda in the Philippines). The brunt of the deaths and injuries was due to the storm surge that caught many people unprepared despite two days’ worth of advance warning (Neussner 2014).²⁰¹ Many of the victims had simply refused to heed the call for evacuation because they did not trust either their authorities or their neighbors, and feared their homes would be looted (Ibid.). More troubling still, however, is it seems people had every reason not to trust authorities: “68% of evacuation centers were overwhelmed by storm surges” (Lagmay et al., 2015, p.11), despite the existence for several years of hazard maps, including maps which indicated storm surge risks.

²⁰¹ According to the German International Cooperation agency, GIZ, who has been working in the area for decades, 94% of the casualties in and around Tacloban were due to the storm surge.

LIMITATIONS

Measuring preparation

Another significant limitation has been the inability to prove, or disprove, the hypothesis using descriptive statistics. My attempt to use quantitative indicators for disaster preparation to compare two villages did not yield any interesting contrasts. In this, I only have myself to blame for faulty design, as well as for not having had the self-awareness to realize that the data I was collecting was not showing any relevant contrast between the two villages. These results may also suggest certain limitations of trying to apply quantitative methods to study certain social issues.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In view of the shortcomings mentioned above, I invite others to explore better ways to measure social preparedness for future natural hazards. There is an intrinsic difficulty in this process since it requires measuring, and comparing, something that will only really be tested in the future. The complexity is accentuated in the case of measuring social preparations, which are even more intangible.

The importance of social capital for minority groups in the Philippines could use further research. An area to be considered includes how the concept of social capital can be applied to minority groups such as indigenous peoples (IPs), the Chinese communities, and sexual minorities (Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender, LGBT). In my fieldwork I collected lots of information about trust levels for these minority groups, but could not fit them into this thesis. I plan to use this data in forthcoming articles.

There remains immense and exciting research to be done on how the pullulating of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is impacting both social capital and preparations for natural hazards. Some trailblazing scholars have begun inquiring into this rapidly expanding field. Aldrich has begun researching how social media can be used in *post*-disaster recovery (Aldrich 2012) but much remains to be done for *pre*-disaster preparation.

Studying these new technologies will require research that takes geographical and historical context into consideration.

Final conclusion

This thesis' original contribution to the field of knowledge has been to begin filling the gap at the confluence of several bodies of scholarly literature: bringing a geographer's perspective to studies of social capital in a Philippine context, as well as contributing to the growing discipline of disaster studies, by underlining the many social, historical, and political variables that contribute to collective preparation for natural hazards. A cautious use of the concept of social capital, which bears in mind the complexities of the context it is applied to, most certainly has the potential to improve the way people collectively prevent hazards from turning into disasters.

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Annex 1

Guidelines for Semi-Structured Interviews in villages

INTRODUCTION

Brief presentation of research team

Brief presentation of research

Ethics procedure is explained

Emphasis on possibility of withdrawal, or skipping questions, at any time

Does the potential interviewee have any questions?

Consent is requested

BASIC DATA

Name, Age, Gender, Birthplace

BRIEF LIFE HISTORY

Date of arrival in village

Highest educational level

Number of children (and their ages, and their educational levels)

Kin and their location

RESSOURCES

Type(s) of work

Presence/absence of family who are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

Number of OFWs in family; discussion of impacts

Economic assessment

SOCIAL CAPITAL - GROUPS

Interviewee is a member of how many groups? What kind of groups?

Is interviewee member of a *dadjung*?

What religion does interviewee practice? How many times a week?

SOCIAL CAPITAL - TRUST

Lost wallet (*pitaka*) with/without money (*purok/barangay/municipality*)

Would you expect it to be returned? (Yes/No/Maybe)

If you were sick and had to stay in bed for a couple of days, who would you expect to help you for small chores around the house? (Nuclear family/Extended family/Neighbor/Friend/Other)

What is that person's gender?

If you needed to borrow money, who would you ask? (Nuclear family/Extended family/Neighbor/Friend/Buyer-Boss/Landlord/Bank/etc.)

Gender of lender?

If you had an accident and needed to get to hospital, how would you get there? (Nuclear family/Extended family/Neighbor/Friend/Government official/Other)

How many times have you participated in a *tagbo* community work group in the last year?

HOPE

Do you think *your* life harder/easier/same as life of your parents? Why?

Do you think your children's lives will be harder/easier/same as yours? Why?

For the village as a whole, do you think life today is harder than in your parent's time? Why?

Do you vote? Do you feel it changes things?

TRUST OF AUTHORITIES

(It was emphasized again here that it was possible to skip questions, if the interviewee felt uncomfortable)

Do you think there is corruption on the barangay level (yes/no/sometimes)?

Do you think there is corruption on the municipal level (yes/no/sometimes)?

Do you think there is corruption on the provincial level (yes/no/sometimes)?

Do you think there is corruption on the national level (yes/no/sometimes)?

COHESION WITH MINORITY GROUPS

Do you have any friends who are *Mamanua*? (Indigenous group living in the area)

Have you ever been afraid of *Mamanua*? (yes/never/depends)

If the house next to yours was empty and a *Mamanua* family wanted to move in, would you feel ok/uncomfortable? Discussion

If your son/daughter was dating a *Mamanua* would you feel ok/uncomfortable? Discussion

If your son/daughter wanted to bring their BF/GF over for dinner would you feel ok/uncomfortable? Discussion

If your son/daughter wanted to move in with their partner would you feel ok/uncomfortable?

In your opinion, the lives of the *Mamanua* are easier/harder/same as other members of the community? Discussion

(Same set of questions for the Chinese and LGBT communities)

CHANGING OF SOCIAL NORMS

What do you think the is optimal number of children a couple should have?

What do you think is the age young people in the village today have their first sexual contact?

What was that age 20 years ago? Why do you think this has changed?

CALAMITY

In case there was a disaster (flooding, earthquake, etc.) who would you expect to help? (Family/Neighbors/Friends/Government/NGO/Other)

Would you expect help from the following branches of government:

Barangay (Yes/No/Maybe)? Municipal (Yes/No/Maybe)? Provincial (Yes/No/Maybe)?

National (Yes/No/Maybe)? NGOs (Yes/No/Maybe)?

Where you here during martial law? Did you see violence? What do you remember from those times?

Where you here during the Guinsaugon Landslide? Did you see it?

What natural hazards are you now most worried about?

DRR

Do you feel you are prepared for natural hazards?

Do you have a “Bug-out-Bag” prepared to grab and run in case of emergency?

What is in that bag?

Have you participated in disaster drills? How many times?

Have you seen the hazard maps?

Have you had contacts with NGOs?

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Do you have a cellphone? Since what year? Approximately how much money does it cost you a month? Do you use it more for texting/calling?

Have you ever used the internet? Have you ever used your cellphone to access the internet? Do you use FaceBook? Approximately how many FaceBook “friends” do you have? Do you think any of these contacts would help you in case of disaster?

In the event of an emergency what are the ICT that you would try to get help with?
(Cell, texting, calling, email, FaceBook, other).

Do you have an AM/FM radio? Approximately how many hours a week do you listen to it? In Cebuano? In Tagalog?

Do you have a TV? Approximately how many hours a week do you watch it? In Cebuano? In Tagalog? In English?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Is there anything you would like to add?

Do you have any final questions about the researcher or the research?

Formal expression of gratitude and exit

Annex 2

| LIST OF RESPONDENTS FROM VILLAGES 2012-2013 Interviews | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Respondent Number | ID | Barangay | Gender | Age | No. of OFW Relatives | No. of Groups |
| 1 | AC1 | Acasia | Female | 61 | 2 | 2 |
| 2 | AC2 | Acasia | Female | 42 | 0 | 5 |
| 3 | AC3 | Acasia | Female | 53 | 1 | 5 |
| 4 | AC4 | Acasia | Male | 34 | 2 | 4 |
| 5 | AC5 | Acasia | Female | 24 | 2 | 2 |
| 6 | AC6 | Acasia | Male | 86 | ND | 4 |
| 7 | AC7 | Acasia | Female | 27 | ND | 2 |
| 8 | AC8 | Acasia | Male | 50 | 0 | 7 |
| 9 | AC9 | Acasia | Female | 25 | 0 | 3 |
| 10 | AC10 | Acasia | Male | 19 | 3 | 1 |
| 11 | AC11 | Acasia | Female | 80 | 0 | 3 |
| 12 | AC12 | Acasia | Female | 71 | 1 | 6 |
| 13 | AC13 | Acasia | Male | 58 | 1 | 5 |
| 14 | AC14 | Acasia | Female | 37 | 0 | 4 |
| 15 | AC15 | Acasia | Male | 70 | 0 | 1 |
| 16 | AC16 | Acasia | Female | 26 | 0 | 1 |
| 17 | AC17 | Acasia | Male | 59 | 0 | 3 |
| 18 | AC18 | Acasia | Female | 58 | 0 | 1 |
| 19 | AC19 | Acasia | Female | 27 | 1 | 3 |
| 20 | AC20 | Acasia | Male | 65 | 4 | 3 |
| 21 | AC21 | Acasia | Female | 61 | 4 | 3 |
| 22 | AC22 | Acasia | Male | 39 | ND | 4 |
| 23 | AC23 | Acasia | Male | 43 | ND | 4 |
| 24 | AC24 | Acasia | Male | 28 | 0 | 2 |
| 25 | AC25 | Acasia | Male | 25 | 0 | 3 |
| 26 | AC26 | Acasia | Male | 21 | 0 | 4 |
| 27 | AC27 | Acasia | Male | 24 | 1 | 3 |
| 28 | AC28 | Acasia | Male | 55 | 1 | 7 |
| 29 | AC29 | Acasia | Female | 61 | 1 | ND |
| 30 | AC30 | Acasia | Female | 62 | 1 | 4 |
| 31 | AC31 | Acasia | Female | 93 | 1 | 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------|----------|--------|----|----|----|
| 32 | AC32 | Acasia | Male | 60 | 1 | 5 |
| 33 | AC33 | Acasia | Female | 56 | 0 | 5 |
| 34 | BT1 | Bato | Male | 36 | 1 | 5 |
| 35 | BT2 | Bato | Female | 45 | 0 | 6 |
| 36 | BT3 | Bato | Female | 38 | 0 | 2 |
| 37 | BT4 | Bato | Female | 55 | 1 | 2 |
| 38 | BT5 | Bato | Female | 21 | 3 | 1 |
| 39 | BT6 | Bato | Female | 90 | 1 | 3 |
| 40 | BT7 | Bato | Male | 42 | 3 | 5 |
| 41 | BT8 | Bato | Female | 36 | 0 | 2 |
| 42 | BT9 | Bato | Male | 72 | 0 | 3 |
| 43 | BT10 | Bato | Male | 60 | 0 | 2 |
| 44 | BT11 | Bato | Female | 21 | 0 | 1 |
| 45 | BT12 | Bato | Male | 29 | 3 | 1 |
| 46 | BT13 | Bato | Female | 53 | 5 | 3 |
| 47 | BT14 | Bato | Female | 44 | 0 | 1 |
| 48 | BT15 | Bato | Female | 37 | 3 | 4 |
| 49 | BT16 | Bato | Female | 54 | 0 | 2 |
| 50 | BT17 | Bato | Male | 63 | 2 | 3 |
| 51 | BT18 | Bato | Female | 52 | 5 | 4 |
| 52 | BT19 | Bato | Female | 44 | 0 | 4 |
| 53 | BT20 | Bato | Male | 54 | 2 | 1 |
| 54 | BT21 | Bato | Female | 28 | 1 | 2 |
| 55 | BT22 | Bato | Male | 27 | 1 | 1 |
| 56 | BT23 | Bato | Male | 45 | 1 | 4 |
| 57 | BT24 | Bato | Male | 43 | 0 | 2 |
| 58 | BT25 | Bato | Male | 52 | 0 | 1 |
| 59 | BT26 | Bato | Male | 50 | 1 | 2 |
| 60 | BT27 | Bato | Male | 55 | 3 | 2 |
| 61 | BT28 | Bato | Female | 43 | 2 | 1 |
| 62 | BT29 | Bato | Male | 33 | 1 | 4 |
| 63 | BT30 | Bato | Male | 77 | 6 | ND |
| 64 | BT31 | Bato | Female | 77 | 6 | ND |
| 65 | BT32 | Bato | Male | 48 | 3 | 6 |
| 66 | BT33 | Bato | Female | 33 | 2 | 3 |
| 67 | UL1-1 | Upland 1 | Female | 71 | 0 | 4 |
| 68 | UL1-2 | Upland 1 | Female | 89 | ND | 1 |
| 69 | UL1-3 | Upland 1 | Male | 29 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|----------|--------|----|----|---|
| 70 | UL1-4 | Upland 1 | Male | 53 | 2 | 5 |
| 71 | UL1-5 | Upland 1 | Female | 52 | 2 | 5 |
| 72 | UL1-6 | Upland 1 | Female | 37 | 0 | 2 |
| 73 | UL1-7 | Upland 1 | Male | 62 | 0 | 1 |
| 74 | UL1-8 | Upland 1 | Female | 35 | 1 | 3 |
| 75 | UL1-9 | Upland 1 | Male | 49 | 1 | 2 |
| 76 | UL1-10 | Upland 1 | Male | 44 | 0 | 4 |
| 77 | UL1-11 | Upland 1 | Female | 43 | 0 | 4 |
| 78 | UL1-12 | Upland 1 | Male | 58 | 2 | 3 |
| 79 | UL1-13 | Upland 1 | Female | 54 | 2 | 3 |
| 80 | UL1-14 | Upland 1 | Female | 24 | 1 | 0 |
| 81 | UL1-15 | Upland 1 | Female | 29 | 0 | 2 |
| 82 | UL1-16 | Upland 1 | Male | 77 | 0 | 1 |
| 83 | UL1-17 | Upland 1 | Male | 71 | 0 | 2 |
| 84 | UL1-18 | Upland 1 | Female | 69 | 0 | 2 |
| 85 | UL1-19 | Upland 1 | Female | 40 | 1 | 4 |
| 86 | UL1-20 | Upland 1 | Female | 37 | 0 | 2 |
| 87 | UL1-21 | Upland 1 | Male | 45 | 0 | 2 |
| 88 | UL1-22 | Upland 1 | Female | 44 | 0 | 2 |
| 89 | UL1-23 | Upland 1 | Male | 26 | 0 | 2 |
| 90 | UL1-24 | Upland 1 | Male | 36 | 0 | 0 |
| 91 | UL1-25 | Upland 1 | Female | 22 | 1 | 2 |
| 92 | UL1-26 | Upland 1 | Female | 28 | 1 | 2 |
| 93 | UL1-27 | Upland 1 | Female | 27 | 1 | 1 |
| 94 | UL1-28 | Upland 1 | Female | 18 | 0 | 2 |
| 95 | UL1-29 | Upland 1 | Female | 23 | 0 | 1 |
| 96 | UL1-30 | Upland 1 | Male | 56 | ND | 0 |
| 97 | UL1-31 | Upland 1 | Male | 33 | 0 | 2 |
| 98 | UL1-32 | Upland 1 | Female | 35 | 0 | 9 |
| 99 | UL1-33 | Upland 1 | Female | 53 | 3 | 5 |
| 100 | UL1-34 | Upland 1 | Male | 40 | 0 | 5 |
| 101 | UL2-1 | Upland 2 | Female | 55 | 0 | 2 |
| 102 | UL2-2 | Upland 2 | Male | 26 | 0 | 4 |
| 103 | UL2-3 | Upland 2 | Female | 40 | 0 | 3 |
| 104 | UL2-4 | Upland 2 | Female | 29 | 0 | 3 |
| 105 | UL2-5 | Upland 2 | Female | 55 | 0 | 1 |
| 106 | UL2-6 | Upland 2 | Male | 41 | 0 | 7 |
| 107 | UL2-7 | Upland 2 | Female | 23 | 1 | 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|----------|--------|----|----|----|
| 108 | UL2-8 | Upland 2 | Male | 52 | 0 | 6 |
| 109 | UL2-9 | Upland 2 | Female | 58 | 0 | 1 |
| 110 | UL2-10 | Upland 2 | Female | 25 | ND | 0 |
| 111 | UL2-11 | Upland 2 | Female | 72 | 0 | 3 |
| 112 | UL2-12 | Upland 2 | Male | 54 | 1 | 3 |
| 113 | UL2-13 | Upland 2 | Female | 46 | 0 | 3 |
| 114 | UL2-14 | Upland 2 | Female | 55 | 1 | 5 |
| 115 | UL2-15 | Upland 2 | Female | 52 | 0 | 4 |
| 116 | UL2-16 | Upland 2 | Female | 33 | 0 | 3 |
| 117 | UL2-17 | Upland 2 | Female | 48 | 0 | 3 |
| 118 | UL2-18 | Upland 2 | Male | 36 | 1 | 6 |
| 119 | UL2-19 | Upland 2 | Female | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 120 | UL2-20 | Upland 2 | Male | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 121 | UL2-21 | Upland 2 | Male | 24 | 0 | 1 |
| 122 | UL2-22 | Upland 2 | Male | 50 | 0 | 4 |
| 123 | UL2-23 | Upland 2 | Male | 46 | 1 | 2 |
| 124 | UL2-24 | Upland 2 | Male | 33 | 2 | 1 |
| 125 | UL2-25 | Upland 2 | Female | 40 | 0 | 3 |
| 126 | UL2-26 | Upland 2 | Male | 74 | 0 | 2 |
| 127 | UL2-27 | Upland 2 | Male | 81 | 0 | 2 |
| 128 | UL2-28 | Upland 2 | Female | 40 | 0 | 4 |
| 129 | UL2-29 | Upland 2 | Female | 18 | ND | 0 |
| 130 | UL2-30 | Upland 2 | Male | 56 | 0 | 2 |
| 131 | UL2-31 | Upland 2 | Female | 58 | 0 | 2 |
| 132 | UL2-32 | Upland 2 | Male | 57 | 2 | 2 |
| 133 | UL2-33 | Upland 2 | Female | 75 | 1 | 7 |
| 134 | UL2-34 | Upland 2 | Female | 43 | 1 | ND |
| 135 | UL2-35 | Upland 2 | Female | 34 | 3 | ND |
| 136 | UL2-36 | Upland 2 | Male | 42 | 1 | 1 |
| 137 | UL2-37 | Upland 2 | Female | 19 | 0 | 3 |
| 138 | UL2-38 | Upland 2 | Female | 32 | 1 | ND |
| 139 | UL2-39 | Upland 2 | Male | 43 | 1 | 1 |
| 140 | UL2-40 | Upland 2 | Female | 23 | 1 | 0 |
| 141 | UL2-41 | Upland 2 | Male | 48 | ND | 2 |
| 142 | UL2-42 | Upland 2 | Female | 40 | 0 | 2 |

All of these interviews were conducted between 13 October 2012 and 18 April 2013

ND: No Data (Times when respondent decided to skip a question)

Annex 3
OTHER INTERVIEWS 2009 – 2013

| Interviews with Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) officials | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------|
| # | Position / Description | Place | Date |
| 1 | Coordinator NGO promoting DRR nationally | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 2 | Officials of (3x) NGO working with coastal groups | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 3 | Coordinators (2x) of Peasant Organizations | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 4 | Officials (3x) of Rural Development NGO | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 5 | Project development officer Rural Development NGO | NCR | Oct. 2009 |
| 6 | Lawyer from human rights institute | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 7 | Local representative NGO for street-children | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 8 | Founder of NGO for street-children | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 9 | Project advisor DRR with GIZ | Tac. | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2012 |
| 10 | Senior DRR advisor with GIZ | Tac. | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 11 | ICRC delegate for Eastern Visayas | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 12 | GIS specialist GIZ | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 13 | DRR Officer NGO for coastal villages | Sors. | Nov. 2009 |
| 14 | Community organizer | UL-2 | Dec. 2009 |
| 15 | DRR senior adviser GIZ | Tac. | Dec. 2009 |
| 16 | Project director ACCORD | StB | Sept. 2010 |
| 17 | ICRC delegate for Eastern Visayas (new one) | Tac. | Sept. 2010 |
| 18 | Official from NGO coordinating local governments | NCR | June 2012 |
| 19 | ICRC delegate for Eastern Visayas (again new one) | Tac. | June 2012 |
| 20 | President of community based forest management NGO | UL-2 | Nov. 2012 |
| | | | |

| Interviews with government officials | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| # | Position / Description | Place | Date |
| 1 | Counselor Foreign Embassy | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 2 | Foreign Ambassador | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 3 | City Planning and Development Coordinator | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 4 | Officials (3x) from National Economic Dev. Agency (NEDA) | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 5 | Director of Municipal Social Welfare and Dev. Department | Tac. | Multiple |

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------|
| | | | extensive interviews 2009-2012 |
| 6 | Municipal Social Worker | Tac. | Nov. 2009 |
| 7 | Mayor of Saint Bernard | StB | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 8 | Municipal DRR Officer | StB | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 9 | Municipal Engineer | StB | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 10 | Captain of Acasia village | Acasia | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 11 | First captain of Bato village (he was voted out in 2010, so even if I kept visiting him out of courtesy, starting in 2012 I was also interviewing his successor) | Bato | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2010 |
| 12 | Village council member | UL-2 | Dec. 2009 |
| 13 | Village council member | UL-2 | Dec. 2009 |
| 14 | Barangay health worker | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 15 | Barangay health worker | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 16 | Former mayor | StB | Aug. 2010 |
| 17 | Barangay health worker | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 18 | Municipal councilman | StB | Sept. 2010 |
| 19 | Manager and principal of municipal high school | StB | Sept. 2010 |
| 20 | Official from Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) | StB | Aug. 2012 |
| 21 | Official from Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) | StB | Aug. 2012 |
| 22 | Official from Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) | StB | Aug. 2012 |
| 23 | Municipal Agriculturalist | StB | Oct. 2012 |
| 24 | Former Mayor (another one) | StB | Oct. 2012 |
| 25 | Public Employment Services Officer (PESO) | StB | Oct. 2012 |
| 26 | Employee for OFW placement agency | StB | Oct. 2012 |
| 27 | Municipal Social Work & Development Officer | StB | Nov. 2012 |
| 28 | Municipal police officer | StB | Jan. 2013 |
| 29 | Municipal police officer | StB | Jan. 2013 |
| 30 | Municipal doctor | StB | Fev. 2013 |
| 31 | Former district public health supervisor | StB | Mar. 2013 |

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------|
| 32 | Second captain of Bato village (elected in 2010) | Bato | Apr. 2013 |
| 33 | Captain of Upland-1 village | UL-1 | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2010 |
| 34 | Catholic religious official for the municipality | StB | May 2013 |
| 35 | Captain of Upland-2 village | UL-2 | May 2013 |
| 36 | Officer for the Fiber Industries Development Authority | StB | May 2013 |
| 37 | Officer with Philippine Coconut Development Authority | StB | May 2013 |
| 38 | Provincial Department of Public Works & Highways | Maasin | May 2013 |
| 39 | Manager with provincial branch of Philippine Coconut Auth. | Maasin | May 2013 |
| | | | |

| Interviews with academics | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------|
| # | Position / Description | Place | Date |
| 1 | Professor in Dept. Social Work & Community Development | NCR | Sept. 2009 |
| 2 | Professor in Geography Dept. UP-Diliman | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 3 | Instructor in Geography Dept. of UP-Diliman | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 4 | Instructor in Geography Dept. of UP-Diliman | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 5 | Instructor in Geography Dept. of UP-Diliman | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 6 | Professor in Sociology Dept. at Ateneo de Manila University | NCR | Multiple extensive interviews 2009-2013 |
| 7 | Professor in psychology UP-Manila | NCR | Aug. 2010 |
| 8 | Professor in Social Work from UP-Diliman doing an evaluation of post-disaster housing in Saint Bernard | StB | Sept. 2010 |
| 9 | Professor Dept. of Anthropology, Sociology and History, San Carlos University | Cebu | Feb. 2013 |
| 10 | Professor Dept. of Anthropology, Sociology and History, San Carlos University | Cebu | Feb. 2013 |

| | | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 11 | Professor Dept. of Anthropology, Sociology and History, San Carlos University | Cebu | Mar. 2013 |
| 12 | Official from Southern Leyte State University in San Juan | San Juan | May 2013 |
| | | | |

| Preliminary interviews with villagers | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Position / Description | Place | Date |
| 1 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 2 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 3 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 4 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 5 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 6 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 7 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 8 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 9 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 10 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 11 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 12 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 14 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 15 | Villager | UL-2 | Jan. 2010 |
| 16 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 17 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 18 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 19 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 20 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 21 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 22 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 23 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 24 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 25 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 26 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 27 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 28 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 29 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 30 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 31 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 32 | Villager | Acasia | Aug. 2010 |
| 33 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 34 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 35 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 36 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 37 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |

| | | | |
|----|----------|--------|------------|
| 38 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 39 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 40 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 41 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 42 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 43 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 44 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 45 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 46 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 47 | Villager | Bato | Aug. 2010 |
| 48 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 49 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 50 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 51 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 52 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 53 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 54 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 55 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 56 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 57 | Villager | Bato | Sept. 2010 |
| 58 | Villager | Bato | Sept. 2010 |
| 59 | Villager | Bato | Sept. 2010 |
| 60 | Villager | Bato | Sept. 2010 |
| 61 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| 62 | Villager | Acasia | Sept. 2010 |
| | | | |

GIZ: *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*. German international cooperation organization.

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross.

NCR: National Capital Region; Manila and surrounding cities.

StB: Municipality of Saint Bernard.

Tac.: Tacloban City; capital of the Eastern Visayas Region.

UL-1: UpLand village number 1.

UL-2: UpLand village number 2.

UP: University of the Philippines.

