

# Land grabbing, conflict and agrarian-environmental transformations: perspectives from East and Southeast Asia

An international academic conference  
5-6 June 2015, Chiang Mai University

## **Conference Paper No. 11**

### Land grabs, climate change, and disasters: exploring the politics of their intersection in a Philippine small island

Maria Angelina M. Uson

April 2015



BICAS

[www.plaas.org.za/bicas](http://www.plaas.org.za/bicas)

[www.iss.nl/bicas](http://www.iss.nl/bicas)



#### *In collaboration with:*

Demeter (Droits et Egalite pour une Meilleure Economie de la Terre), Geneva Graduate Institute  
University of Amsterdam WOTRO/AISSR Project on Land Investments (Indonesia/Philippines)  
Université de Montréal – REINVENTERRA (Asia) Project  
Mekong Research Group, University of Sydney (AMRC)  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

#### *With funding support from:*



**Land grabs, climate change, and disasters: exploring the politics of their intersection in a Philippine small island**  
by Maria Angelina M. Uson

*Published by:*

**BRICS Initiatives for Critical Agrarian Studies (BICAS)**

Email: [bricsagrarianstudies@gmail.com](mailto:bricsagrarianstudies@gmail.com)

Websites: [www.plaas.org.za/bicas](http://www.plaas.org.za/bicas) | [www.iss.nl/bicas](http://www.iss.nl/bicas)

**MOSAIC Research Project**

Website: [www.iss.nl/mosaic](http://www.iss.nl/mosaic)

**Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI)**

Email: [landpolitics@gmail.com](mailto:landpolitics@gmail.com)

Website: [www.iss.nl/ldpi](http://www.iss.nl/ldpi)

**RCSO Chiang Mai University**

Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University Chiang Mai 50200 THAILAND

Tel. 66-53-943595/6 | Fax. 66-53-893279

Email : [rco@cmu.ac.th](mailto:rco@cmu.ac.th) | Website : <http://rco.soc.cmu.ac.th>

**Transnational Institute**

PO Box 14656, 1001 LD Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel: +31 20 662 66 08 | Fax: +31 20 675 71 76

E-mail: [tni@tni.org](mailto:tni@tni.org) | Website: [www.tni.org](http://www.tni.org)

April 2015

Published with financial support from Ford Foundation, Transnational Institute, NWO and DFID.

\*Note: This paper was published as a working paper titled “Grabbing the ‘clean slate’: the politics of the intersection of land grabbing, disasters, climate change – insights from a local Philippine community in the aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan” by the International Institute of Social Studies in February 2015.

## Abstract

This paper captures one of the trajectories of the land grab phenomenon where political processes intersect with institutions of the humanitarian field and climate change discourse. It particularly examines the politics behind this intersection. Focusing on a small island in the Philippines devastated by the 2013 super typhoon Haiyan, it probes into the community's history of agrarian land conflict, specifically how humanitarian principles and instruments and climate-change-related strategies are called upon to justify large-scale land deals in the wake of a disaster. In the context of a global land rush, this interaction obscures the line between what constitutes land grab and securing people's lives by recasting the character and intent of each of these phenomena. This paper introduces a set of political processes involving new actors and alliances, rationalizations, and mechanisms of dispossession that changes the pace and trajectory of land grabs. Using a political economy lens, it explores this complex interplay that has the potential to reboot spatial, institutional, and political land arrangements swiftly in poor communities on a large, global scale. By unpacking these political processes and dynamic transformation, this paper contributes to the broad literature on land grabs by building the foundation for future research on this nexus.

**Keywords:** land grabs, climate change, disasters, Philippines, small islands

## Land grabbing, disasters, and climate change

The familiar narrative of land grabs shows how fear of global crises in food, fuel, finance, and climate drives financially rich but resource-poor states to acquire offshore lands. Transnational corporations have capitalized on this fear, forging one-sided land deals with states that perceive these as lucrative sources of employment and taxes. Land grabs, however, do not necessarily and always involve foreign capital.

Although widely understood to be a result of these convergent global crises, land grabs are triggered by initiatives blanketed by well-intentioned environmental agenda, such as the transformation of productive lands into protected areas, nature reserves, and ecotourism sites (Zoomers 2010). Consequently, land and its associated resources (e.g., water) are constantly revaluated and commodified, drawing in non-conventional actors such as corporate entities into agrarian conflicts. With numerous groups and individuals scrambling for limited resources, politics around land has amplified in recent years and created different trajectories of property rights, values, and relations (Borras et al. 2011, Feldman and Geisler 2012, McCarthy et al. 2012). These trajectories include the eviction of rural poor families from their land or their subjection to unequal contract-farming arrangements and/or labor relations in the capitalist market in their own lands.

Land grabs and green grabs have been examined by numerous scholars (Edelman et al. 2013, Borras et al. 2011, Fairhead et al. 2012, White et al. 2012), yet new intersections around them continue to be uncovered. Among them is a nuanced understanding of how the interaction of climate change mitigation initiatives, such as biofuel policies and REDD+,<sup>1</sup> which holds the potential for a socially inclusive growth, can lead to land grabs (ISS 2014).<sup>2</sup> This paper contributes to this understanding by investigating the correlated nexus of climate change and disasters involving recurring events that may have devastating large-scale impact and may swiftly reboot spatial, institutional, and political land arrangements in poor communities.

Stories of land dispossession and displacement are repeated in many disasters caused by extreme weather events, geophysical hazards, and man-made conflicts: Hurricane Katrina and Rita, which displaced many New Orleans residents (Adams et al. 2009); extended drought in Northern Sudan in the mid-1980s, which forced off the Hawaweer nomadic group from their lands (Haug 2002 cited in Reale and Handmer 2011); Pakistan and India earthquake in 2005, when tenants in rural and urban areas were prohibited by landowners from re-establishing their rental rights (Reale and Handmer 2011).

In Sri Lanka, the 2004 Asian tsunami swept away homes of fishing communities, forcing them to relocate temporarily to safer areas. The state saw this as an opportunity to “clean” the beach of unauthorized establishments and pursue its previously foiled plan of converting the coastal fishing town into a high-end tourism area (Klein 2007). Designed with support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, and Asian Development Bank, this market plan was part of the state’s initiative to rebuild Sri Lanka’s economy after the civil war ended. Within months, it approved national policies establishing buffer zones along the beach area, implemented relocation programs for families, and ensconced security forces in what had become private areas, all done under the tenet of “people’s safety and security” (Klein 2007).

In Afghanistan, after the international conflict that started in 2001, reconstruction of road infrastructure and reconstitution of land rights were top priority areas for peacebuilding (Unruh and

---

<sup>1</sup> Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and enhanced forest carbon stocks.

<sup>2</sup> This fragment is one of the objectives of the MOSAIC project of the Institute of Social Studies, Den Haag, Netherlands. The project focuses on the interplay of climate change mitigation policies and land grabbing, and its impact on conflict and cooperation in the fragile and post-conflict states of Myanmar and Cambodia ([www.iss.nl/mosaic](http://www.iss.nl/mosaic)).

Shalaby 2012). Road reconstruction was intended to lead to economic and livelihood recovery, facilitate the return of dislocated families, and resolve territorial claims gained or lost during the war. The situation was reversed when the country's weak customary and tenurial system intersected with increasing land values emerging from the reconstruction, prevalent corruption, and claims of absentee landowners as well as their heirs who had been displaced by the war. Post-disaster rehabilitation and mitigation efforts, which were initially intended to re-establish people's lives and property rights, became channels to dispossess them of their land.

These cases show the politics underlying people's eviction from their lands in the context of climate change and disasters that, in many instances, have been overlooked and perceived as a natural by-product of disasters (Feldman and Geisler 2012). People affected by calamities who eventually fail to cope with the loss of their resource base are assumed to be "rational agents" who will logically migrate to other areas to find income (Feldman and Geisler 2012). The real forces behind the exodus are thus either omitted or tempered down in conversations (Feldman and Geisler 2012). The transformation of a short-term humanitarian problem into a long-term social crisis involving people's rights to their land is discounted.

Klein (2007) looked into these politics when she analyzed how powerful alliances of states and corporations, backed up by international financing institutions, capitalize on catastrophes to take control of public spheres and use these as market opportunities. Disasters erase physical boundaries, destroy metaphysical land arrangements, and create "blank slates" out of previously occupied landscapes. Market-driven plans lying around, waiting for years to be accomplished, are *swiftly drawn* on these landscapes, creating permanent changes. US Republican Congressman Richard Baker was overheard saying to a group of lobbyists after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did" (Klein 2007:4). His statement was supported by Joseph Canizaro, one of the wealthiest developers in New Orleans, who remarked, "I think we have a clean sheet to start again. And with that clean sheet we have some very big opportunities" (Klein 2007:4). Whose plans are drawn, by who, how, and why are the objects of intense political and economic processes underlying disasters. Calling it "disaster capitalism," Klein (2007) reveals how capitalist forces take advantage of the collective trauma of affected communities to impose rapid and irreversible social and economic reforms before the survivors are able to recover and regroup themselves. They operate under the guise of humanitarian aid and pillage local and national economies with privatization and state-contracted debt. Disasters are thus transformed into new markets (Klein 2007) with lands of the displaced communities as one of the commodities up for sale.

Climate change mitigation policies and strategies have become sites of politics, too, as conversations around who should be responsible, why, and how take place (Compston and Bailey 2011). In relocating community in low-lying and coastal areas, for instance, these policies and strategies are generally built around principles of "do no harm," "build back better," and "safe and secure settlements." However, when placed in the hands of powerful groups, such original intent can be overturned to favor their interests.

Indeed, disasters and climate change are not accidental but are instead shaped by dominant forces as part of their design to maintain hegemony. Partly anthropogenic, these events become a breeding ground for land politics and power relations where resources are controlled and people's vulnerabilities are intensified (Hannigan 2012, Ribot 2014). Addressing this issue goes beyond technocratic, infrastructure-focused interventions and also entails unearthing the structural violence and analyzing histories and extractive relations, as well as the social causes of the vulnerabilities (Quarantelli 2005 and Barton 2005 cited in Perry 2007, Ribot 2014). It is therefore important to read these incidents not as past histories but as the current norm and the trajectory of future disasters (Adams et al. 2009).

What then happens to land and poor people when disasters hit sites of land struggle and create a

sudden crisis of resource scarcity simultaneous with abundance of external capital in the form of humanitarian aid? How do the politics of climate change interact with the ensuing land struggle and crisis? What happens to land when disasters traumatize communities and momentarily paralyze states, with vulnerability and desire for survival reaching peak levels? What happens to land when multiple actors in the international aid and climate change arena bring with them multiple conflicting and complex objectives?

These questions imply that while there is nothing new about disasters facilitating people's expulsion from their lands, this nexus gains certain particularities when it happens within the current context of climate change policy initiatives *and* the global land rush. The complex relationship between climate change and disasters and dispossession is already complicated to study and tackle in policy terms – but situating this in the context of a raging global land grab makes it even more difficult to address in policy and political terms.

Given the magnitude and potentially far-reaching and irreversible impact of disasters, intensifying climate-related hazards and global rush for land, and continuous land dispossession and displacement of people, finding out what is happening, how and by who becomes urgent. This study helps elucidate this nexus by answering the question: How do land grabs shape and how are these shaped by climate change and disaster-related adaptation strategies, policies and principles? This paper does not attempt to give a comprehensive analysis of land dispossession cases in the Philippines, as it focuses only on specific variables. It also takes place in a small island where conditions may differ from other areas. Still, answering this question can potentially contribute to *solidifying the relief-rehabilitation-development link* that humanitarian actors have been struggling to realize over the years.

## **Accumulation by dispossession, green grabbing, and disaster capitalism**

Spurred by the global crises and the crisis of capital overaccumulation, state and capitalists apply a “spatio-temporal” fix where an external “other” is created to absorb their surplus and access cheaper inputs (Harvey 2003). New markets are thus opened and production systems as well as associated relations are reorganized (Harvey 2003). However, instead of solving the crisis, it produces a wide range of violent and non-violent processes that lead to “accumulation by dispossession,” or ABD (Harvey 2003). These processes include the use of either or a combination of consent or coercion and non-market- or market-driven strategies to control and profit from factors of production, such as labor and land, and suppress people's rights to access these resources. According to Harvey (2003), consent provides legitimacy to dominant class power through the construction of hegemony anchored in higher-order values (e.g., freedom, democracy, equality) and the need to restore a sense of moral order. But in cases where counter-populist or social democratic movements attempt to subdue the dominant interests, coercion or use of force and non-market-based strategies are applied. In many cases, these two strategies work together with consent to provide a climate of legitimacy for coercive tactics (Harvey 2003).

Disasters facilitate the application of this spatio-temporal fix by creating “blank slates” of land. Corporate elites and the state take over the land of rural poor inhabitants using new business models and different terms of exclusion (and inclusion) to create new enclosures. Capitalizing on disasters depends on how fast the dominant elites and the state can change the spatial, political, and institutional landscape, and execute their plans (Klein 2007). It also depends on how far they can take advantage of people's trauma to overrule the latter's articulated needs and garner positive support for their corporate investments. According to Hilhorst and Jansen (2010), the humanitarian field is a political arena where different actors use its language and principles to legitimize their operations and interests in a crisis

situation. This enables them to portray themselves as apolitical and fair, which helps conceal and yet advance their real intended and unintended purpose (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). Hence, what appears as “land grabs” become “reimagined in mainstream discourse as necessary and ‘responsible investment’” (Borras and Franco 2013:1724). Conversely, the principles are contextual whose meanings can change depending on how it is translated and used in everyday practice. Hence, these are seen as “socially negotiated and acquiring meaning in practice” (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1121).

Apart from the humanitarian field, growing narratives and representations of the green agenda are being used by dominant elites and the state to justify their claims and authority behind the accumulation (Corson and MacDonald 2012). These also serve to nullify the land rights and claims of previous land occupants (Corson and MacDonald 2012). These so-called “green grabs” involve a new range of unlikely actors, such as environmental organizations, mining companies, and philanthropists, that are embedded in capitalist networks and that form themselves into alliances (Fairhead et al. 2012). The strength of these new alliances allows them not only to enclose frontier lands but also to reconstruct the lives of people living in the area (Fairhead et al. 2012). For instance, those who adhere to the prescribed logic and requirements of the market are labelled as environmental warriors while those who resist are excluded. This exclusivity partly breeds inter-community conflicts that powerful alliances capitalize on using force, regulation, and legal and market mechanisms. With these newly formed partnerships, resource governance is restructured as power relations are realigned, new institutions are created, and different business models and new patterns of resource governance are followed (Corson and MacDonald 2012).

## **Recasting spatial and institutional arrangements**

Inherent in land grabs is a reciprocal interplay between the political processes and institutions that shape the spatial, institutional, and political configurations of current land conflicts. Spatial arrangements, according to Harvey (2006), involve one’s organization of the material and tangible things in space. These also pertain to one’s representations of these material realities that are, in turn, shaped by their histories, ideologies, identity, and experiences over time. The interplay of these multiple dimensions of space accounts for the politics of resources. These politics emerge as incongruences in understanding a particular phenomenon are forcedly fit into a unified endeavor.<sup>3</sup> Resolving this therefore requires institutions, such as state and non-state policies, to accommodate context-specific dimensions of space and the dialectical tensions within it rather than apply these in absolute terms (Harvey 2006:123).

Inasmuch as this land grab phenomenon rearranges space, its inherent political processes shape and are shaped by institutions. “Institutional dynamism,” as it is called, goes beyond mechanical, static accounts of change but explores the “political conditions under which particular institutions have specific consequences” (Steinmo and Thelen 1992:16). There are four sources of institutional dynamism in which the impacts and consequences of institutions over time and within countries are explored (Steinmo and Thelen 1992:16-17).

1. Broad changes in the socioeconomic or political context can produce a situation in which previously latent situations suddenly become salient, with implications for political outcomes.
2. Changes in the socioeconomic context or political balance of power can produce a situation in which old institutions are put in the service of different ends, as new actors come into play,

---

<sup>3</sup> Scott (1998) demonstrates this as he describes how land conflicts emerge from the state’s tendency to simplify unwritten, dynamic, and fluid histories and customary resource regimes through a single record that it can fit into its administration grid.

- pursuing their (new) goals through existing institutions.
3. Exogenous changes can produce a shift in the goals or strategies being pursued within existing institutions – that is, changes in outcomes as old actors adopt new goals within the old institutions.
  4. Dynamism can occur when political actors adjust their strategies to accommodate changes in the institutions themselves. This can occur in moments of dramatic change . . . but it can also be the result of more piecemeal change resulting from specific political battles or ongoing strategic manoeuvring within institutional constraints.

It is worthwhile to note these sources, since the inherent political conflicts within the intersection of land grabs–climate change–disasters are strongly influenced by the links of old and new institutional arrangements of resource governance.

Playing a central role in land grabs are state and non-state regulatory orders (e.g., religious laws, local customary laws), which coexist and contend with each other – sometimes referred to as ‘legal pluralism’ (Franco 2011). In this situation, the relative importance of a set of rules to others varies over time and across locales as groups compete to make a set of norms and rules authoritative in a specific context (Franco 2011). The prevailing regulations will “define the power resources and options available to parties in conflict, influencing who will use which specific field of law, when, and how” (Franco 2011:9). Each of these overlapping and contending regulatory fields carries with it a specific set of norms and procedures that can advance or draw back either of the opposing group’s claims. It can also produce shifts in power balance and change configurations of social forces. Its interplay thus creates the context where social and legal relations are obfuscated and conflicts occur (Franco 2011).

While institutions have an important role in constraining and refracting politics that produce land conflicts, they are not the sole cause and determinant of the outcomes, as other socioeconomic variables can come into play (Steinmo and Thelen 1992). It is apparent from the sources of institutional dynamism that the political agency of contending groups and individuals is influential. They act on opportunities and maneuver their way within new institutional arrangements created by shifting conditions to advance their claims. In his work on social movements and conflicts, Tarrow (2011:33, 160) refers to these opportunities as “political opportunity structure” that groups leverage to advance their claims. This is created when contending groups are able to maximize changes in opportunities and decrease the levels of threats (e.g., availability of allies, rifts within elites, decline of state’s capacity for repression). Such openings can produce contentious politics that in many cases lead to changes in regimes. The political agency of these actors not only filters the impacts of institutions but also “influence[s] the institutional parameters within which their interactions occur” (Steinmo and Thelen 1992). The overlapping legal fields therefore are not static, as they shape and are shaped by interactions of contending groups (Franco 2011).

## **State–society interaction in land conflicts**

Land conflicts are complex phenomena that can be understood by analyzing why and how certain land reform policies succeed or fail in the context of political contestations between state and social forces. Fox explains this complexity using an approach that focuses on “the interaction between state and society, the institutions that mediate such interaction, and the factors that account for how those institutions are in turn transformed” (1992:39). Here, institutions are considered as both objects and contexts of conflicts within and between the state and society. Unlike others, this approach does not adopt a one-dimensional view of state and society, where one is either weak or unified, passive or active. Rather, it recasts notions of state power by considering the *degree* to which it can set its own goals independent of external interference (autonomy) and its capacity to act on these goals (capacity)



(Fox 1992:12). Social actors, on the other hand, are regarded not as mere spectators of changing contexts but, much like the state, as having the autonomy and capacity to engage with these changes, and define and accomplish their goals (Fox 1992:24). In many instances, notes Fox, autonomy and capacity may not be simultaneously present but the strategic interaction between state and society can change the context and account for unexpected political outcomes.

To understand this interaction and the competing forces, Fox (1992) uses two concepts: access routes and policy currents. Access routes are internal divisions and contradictions within and among state actors and agencies that create opportunities for social actors to pursue their claims in the state. Based on their location in the state structure and the constraints and opportunities provided by the institutional environment, state actors from the same agency can have conflicting perceptions and actions toward land conflicts. Such divisions may be rooted in the agency's ideology, orientation, and administrative tasks and the state's efforts to balance its dual conflicting tasks of capital accumulation and preservation of political legitimacy. Or, sometimes, these simply stem from the tendency of individuals to protect their positions in the structure for career advancement.

Policy currents are new alliances among social actors and, at times, between social actors and the state that serve as channels for advancing or blocking land reform policies. Similar to access routes, social actors develop strategies to push the state to move in the same direction as their cause. They may engage in mobilization and negotiation to influence the state's response or use threats of withdrawal of a vital resource (e.g., capital) to shape the state agenda.

With pressure "from above" and "from below" resulting from access routes and policy currents, the state and social actors are brought into an interactive relationship that can then "offset the power of entrenched authoritarian elites and may well account for rural reform dynamics across a wide range of political systems" (Fox 1992:8). Borras (1998) argues that while this approach does not automatically guarantee the success of reform policies, it increases the chances of program success by weakening the resistance of anti-reform groups. For Borras and Fox, it is by looking into structural and institutional factors *and* the interaction between pro-reformist social and state actors that one can understand why distributive policy reforms fail or succeed.

The presence of policy currents and access routes creates opportunities for popular resistance to occur within formal and official channels. "Rightful resistance," as it is called, recognizes prevailing state structures and institutions. It does not view state instruments as inaccessible to the marginalized but rather perceives them as sources of entitlement, inclusion, and empowerment (O'Brien 1996). Rightful resisters exploit these instruments to create disruptions and pressure those in power to adhere to promised legal commitments and established tenets. For instance, the "subsistence ethic" expects society to respect the subsistence needs of peasant households living very close to the subsistence margin who have very limited options for maximum gain (Scott 1976). Local communities are prompted to resist when this ethic is violated and their notion of economic justice and exploitation (or "moral economy," in short) is challenged (Scott 1976). People resist not based on how much is taken but on how much is left for them to subsist on (Scott 1976). Working within the state legal system, they do not use unlawful force or other criminal behavior that can weaken their standing and discourage supporters (O'Brien 1996). However, they engage in noisy, public, and open acts to get the support of justice advocates and proclaim their allegiance to ignored values.

Do local communities react and mobilize in a unified fashion? Borras and Franco (2013) assert that several factors affect the political decisions and actions of affected social groups over land deals. First are the overlaps and intersections between class and other identities, as well as their experience of capital and oppression. Second is the availability of relocation site and livelihood or employment opportunities therein. Third is the question of whether they will receive compensation for their expulsion and have formal or community-recognized rights to the land. Fourth is the threat of a subsistence crisis. Fifth is the presence of political opportunity structures and the ability of the local

communities to maximize these. Institutional overlaps also influence how people will frame the struggle, the claims they will make, and the institutional frameworks they will use and challenge. All these factors help explain what people do to each other and reflect the different dimensions of space that, as Harvey (2006) asserts, need to be considered when implementing policies. Land deals, in sum, will affect members of social groups differently, depending on their space locations, and can create cracks within social mobilizations from below (Borras and Franco 2013).

## **Overview of the Country Context**

### ***Drivers of the Philippine economy***

The service and industry sectors have been the top drivers of economic growth in the country, with the former accounting for half of the total gross domestic product (GDP) and the latter consistently contributing around 30 percent. In contrast, the share of the agricultural sector in GDP constantly declined from 29 percent in the late 1940s to 14 percent in 2000 and further down to 12 percent in 2010 (NSCB 2014). Naturally, the service and industry sectors, which are dominated by elite capitalists, have enjoyed state policy support. Public-private partnership is promoted. Resources are poured into pursuing corporate-led development of economic investment areas, including converting agricultural lands for industrial and urban use.

Tourism is one of the country's top service industries, making up 6 percent of GDP from 2000 to 2011 (DOT 2011). The goal of the Department of Tourism to have 10 million international visitors in 2016 is supported by the state administration, including the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. In an interview for this research, the Minister said that prospects for income from tourism are high, especially if these tourism areas would be transformed as timeshare properties of clients from the Global North.<sup>4</sup> He supports the opening of forestlands for tourism purposes if good ecotourism plans are in place. Accompanying this growth of the tourism industry is the improving performance of the real estate industry, with gross value added rising to 18.3 percent from 2012 to 2013 alone (NSCB 2014).

All this development is causing strain on the country's remaining frontier and agricultural areas that are being converted into leisure landscapes and industrial zones. These include small islands with untapped forest and coastal areas and accessible to mainland and other small islands that have been attracting foreign and local investors.

### ***Conflicting land policies and mandates***

The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is carved from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988, which aims to correct past inequalities between landlords and landless farmers and farmworkers by redistributing public and private agricultural lands to the latter.

Since it started, CARP claims to have redistributed about 6 million hectares (ha) of land to more than 3 million peasant households by 2006, which is lower than the optimistic estimates of program advocates but higher than the pessimistic estimates of critics (Borras 2007). CARP implementation has been hampered by persistent property rights problems, slow resolution of land cases by courts and state agencies, fraudulent acts and politicized decision making within state agencies, and overlapping and contradicting state land policies, among other reasons. In many cases, state laws conflict with each other because these emerge from various social fields (e.g., housing, water, agriculture, and mining)

---

<sup>4</sup> Personal interview with Minister Ramon Paje at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office on 7 August 2014 (hereafter, *Paje* interview). The more commonly used term "Minister" is applied in this paper, rather than the Philippine term "Secretary."

that have different interpretations of land use and occupation. As noted by Franco (2011), this obscures whose claims and what rights should be upheld and how land should be appropriated and used in a particular context.

Confounding this is the coexistence of state and non-state laws, such as the *cacique* law, which bequests informal authority and control to powerful landed elites over wide tracts of land that they own (Franco 2011). This informal law, which exists predominantly in the Philippine countryside, is a central feature of many land-grabbing cases. Private authority of the elite undermines public authority and their rules are imposed through private armies and farm overseers. A close network of local public authority allies, including local litigation courts, protects their operations, which oftentimes are concealed from the national media and state, especially those that happen in remote areas. While *cacique* law does not necessarily control all aspects of people's lives, it has made its mark on state land reform initiatives by disrupting many titling procedures. It provides powerful landed elite and their cohorts with the authority to use coercive and consent tactics. Farmworkers are forced, voluntarily or involuntarily, to waive or sell their land titles, and some local agrarian state officials are pressured to delay the titling process. In some cases, the rural poor know more about the *cacique* law than the state law, which is often perceived as absent and distant (Franco 2011).

In recent years, the urgency of addressing climate change and disasters has resulted in the creation of several international strategies, principles, and agreements, including the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), do-no-harm, strengthening resilience, reducing vulnerability, and building back better. These new sets of regulations bring with them a different assembly of norms, actors, legitimations, and ideologies that are applied in land conflicts bearing multiple overlapping land policies. Interacting with existing political land processes and legal fields, these make the outcomes and nature of land conflicts increasingly unpredictable and complex, as noted earlier by Franco (2011). For instance, the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC has accepted planned relocation as a climate change adaptation strategy, particularly to protect vulnerable coastal communities, low-lying areas, and small islands. This strategy, though, is double-edged. While relocation may be inevitable in some areas, this strategy is being exploited by elite capitalists and some state actors as they grab the lands of disaster-affected communities (Adams et al. 2009, Klein 2007, Middleton and O'Keefe 1998, Reale and Handmer 2011).

In the process of designing these plans, what is being transformed is not just the material space but also its representations. The prevailing assumption is that rural poor communities are vulnerable and can be "tragic victims" of climate change if they are not relocated to safer areas. Their resilience and responsiveness are set aside, and attention to the root causes of vulnerability is diverted (Farbotko 2005). This approach can facilitate land grabs, depending on the actors involved in the crisis, their representation of the space, and the values they attach to it. It can also be used as a consent mechanism that if left unchallenged can become "natural" and hegemonic. Harvey (2006) thus calls for policies to consider context-specific dimensions of space and the tensions within it. The complex interplay of these legal fields and spaces provided the context for the protracted land battle under CARP.

Adding to this complexity is the prevailing free market ideology, which, according to Danny Carranza, National Coordinator of the RIGHTS Network,<sup>5</sup> has buttressed the place of private property regime in the state's land policies and relegated social justice goals to the background:

The prevailing philosophy is we need to create more wealth . . . The state therefore does not want to interfere with business because it needs them. And because they do

---

<sup>5</sup> RIGHTS Network is a nationwide network of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines supporting rural social movements.

not want to interfere, they cannot protect the rights of people.<sup>6</sup>

This regime manifested itself in the post-Haiyan situation of the country, with the corporate elite becoming the state's "co-shepherds," helping manage the massive funds coming from donors. The state, burdened by its bureaucratic processes, could not immediately release rehabilitation funds. To protect the state's political legitimacy, the President had to call on the corporate elite to address this capacity gap, since they had relatively less bureaucratic procedures. In the document titled "Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda" (RAY), the state facilitated this new role of the elite through different modalities such as the expansion of public-private partnership arrangements and adopt-a-town partnerships (GOP 2013:19).

This free market ideology strengthens the private property regime in the country and puts corporate elite interests over what should have been the state's function of protecting people's rights. Carranza says this is what triggers land grabs in the country: "The corporate elite in the Philippines has too much capital that it has to acquire lands and even get out of the country to invest."

While these structural and institutional environments might have partly created past imbalances of power and wealth, these are not the only factors shaping the outcomes of policies (e.g., land grabs). Fox (1992) cautions us that this attribution presents a one-dimensional view of the state and a bifurcated picture of its relationship with capitalists and society (i.e., weak-strong, subordinate-dominant), both of which do not explain unexpected outcomes of policy reforms. In administering land deals, the state becomes a calculating agency where it exercises its autonomy and capacity to balance its political legitimacy and capital accumulation. Since it is not a single entity but is composed of individual actors who decide, react, and respond to land reform issues based on their current spatial location, there exist internal contradictions within the state that have produced some of its strong yet silent reactions to the free market ideology. These became the access routes and part of the policy currents that did not necessarily guarantee the success of CARP but nonetheless determined its nature, pace, and trajectory.

More than disregarding land titles, land grabbing is about rights being violated, as noted by Carranza. He says that the state is conflicted in protecting these rights, especially land rights, since this would mean exercising eminent domain over the land and regulating private interests, a move that is unacceptable in the free market world.

Our state is not dependent but is being controlled by the corporate elite because of this ideology. The state cannot regulate the whole system that ensures the protection of rights. With this ideology, the state can sacrifice human rights in return for profits. And the profits do not necessarily have to go straight to its coffers for as long as these generate more profits.

Unless this ideology changes, he says, it would be difficult to find a common ground between capitalist interests of the corporate elite and the rights of the people. And for O'Brien (1996:55), "So long as a gap exists between rights promised and rights delivered, there is always room for rightful resistance to emerge."

Such is the political and institutional landscape in Sicogon island.

---

<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Danny Carranza at the RIGHTS Network office on 12 August 2014 (hereafter, *Carranza interview*).

## The beginnings of the land battle

### *Another island to be groomed*

Sicogon island is one of the small islands lying along the central portion of the Philippines (see Figure 1). Composed of three villages, it is home to around 1,100 families, some of whom migrated to the island before the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> A majority of the residents are artisanal fisherfolk. One or two own small passenger boats while a few work as public school teachers in the island or have menial contractual jobs in the mainland. There are no big landowners in the community. Most, if not all, of the households depend on artisanal fishing and backyard farming. Prior to the land dispute in the early 2000, the residents were able to grow domestic crops in their fields and gather driftwood from the forest. Since the dispute, they have been barred from going to their farms and have had to contend with planting fruit trees and vegetables in lands near their houses.

About 70 percent of the island is privately titled while the rest is classified as public and forest land. One village is located within titled property while the others are located in public land. The Sarrosa family, owner of the private firm Sicogon Development Corporation (SIDEKO), bought a portion of the island in the 1970s from another influential family and turned this into a prime high-end tourism destination in the mid-1970s. The island easily attracted European tourists and local elite families because of its long, wide stretch of white sand, hidden coves, abundant spring water, primary growth forest, and accessibility from the mainland. The vice president of SIDEKO claimed that the resort was profiting so much that it paid Php 30M (approx. €21T)<sup>8</sup> worth of taxes to the municipality.<sup>9</sup> Resort operations were gradually disrupted during and after the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, when communist insurgency became quite active in this area and when the sugarcane industry collapsed in the 1980s. The Sarrosa family tried to save the business by asking the municipal office to reclassify the land into an agricultural land, which required lesser tax. In reassessing the land, the municipal office discovered that it was being used for agricultural purposes by the local communities and thus reclassified it as agricultural land in 1979. This move, however, was not enough to maintain the resort. By 1983, the Sarrosa family officially closed the business, leaving behind tax arrears and unpaid salaries and benefits of the employees, some of whom were local residents.

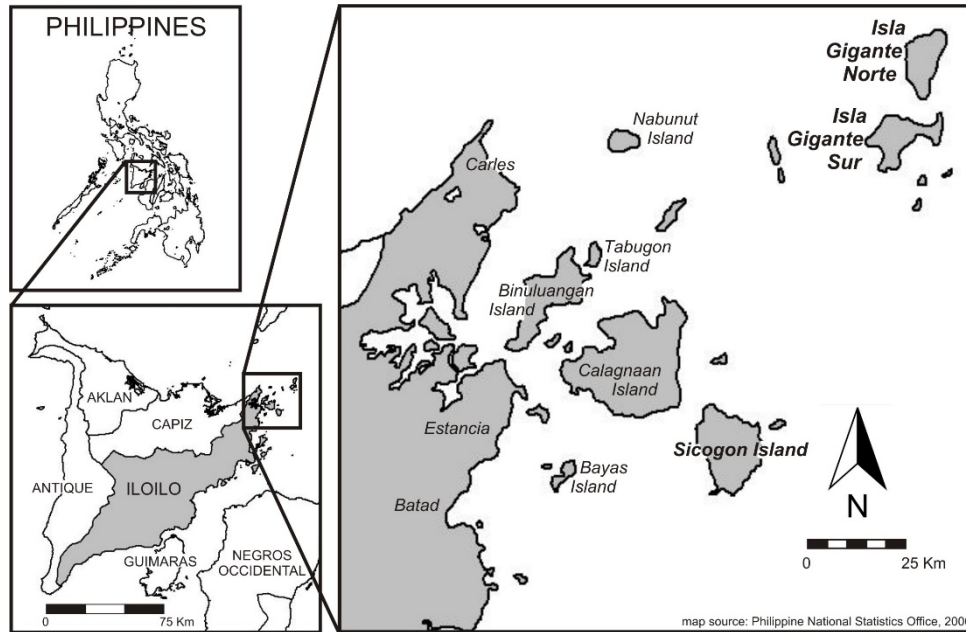
---

<sup>7</sup> Data extrapolated using the population count as of May 2010 by the Philippine Statistics Authority - National Statistical Coordination Board ([www.census.gov.ph](http://www.census.gov.ph)).

<sup>8</sup> BSP exchange rate (29 August 2014): €1 = Php 57.53 (<http://www.bsp.gov.ph/>).

<sup>9</sup> Personal interview with Edmund Sarrosa in Iloilo Province on 23 July 2014 (hereafter, *Sarrosa* interview).

Figure 1. Sketch map of Sicogon Island, Province of Iloilo, Philippines



The island's location among a cluster of other small islands made it an attractive jump-off point for building a multimillion dollar tourism complex. It was this potential that persuaded Ayala Corporation to partner with SIDECO in reviving the island into a top tourist destination.<sup>10</sup>

In an interview, Marciano Paynor, external and media relations point person of Ayala Corp. for its typhoon Haiyan project,<sup>11</sup> said that the company's foray into the tourism industry began with the acquisition of hotels and the development of resorts. Its plans in Sicogon are part of its objectives of expanding its tourism portfolio (Benaning 2014), providing jobs, and supporting the national state's thrust of attracting 10 million foreign tourists to the country by 2016 (Yap 2014). Talks abound that Ayala Corp. is targeting other islands in this cluster to be part of the tourism business that it is planning not only in the province but in the region.

The land struggle in the island does not involve financially rich albeit resource-poor foreign states and investors but an alliance of the state, local elite, and a big business conglomerate. As we shall see later, the alliance is a perfect symbiotic relationship where the state provides legal and administrative support; the business conglomerate and its international network are sources of technology and large capital stocks for expanding their tourism portfolio; and the local elite use their local political influence and network in favor of the alliance.

### *Land struggle before typhoon Haiyan*

Composed of titled private lands, forestland, public land, and coastal areas, Sicogon island would naturally fall within the jurisdiction of several state agencies, each with their respective guidelines for

<sup>10</sup> Ayala Corp. is one of the top private holding companies. Established in 1834, it is the oldest and largest Philippine business conglomerate with a diverse business portfolio in real estate, financial services, telecommunications, water services, electronics, manufacturing services, business process outsourcing, power, and transport infrastructure (Ayala Corporation 2013). It also has multiple businesses in China, Mexico, United States, and Europe.

Ayala Corp. currently boasts of a market capital worth US\$ 7.9B (Forbes 2014) and in the past five years alone has invested nearly US\$11B across these business sectors, bringing their net value asset in the US and Asia to US\$211M (Ayala Corporation 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Personal interview with Marciano Paynor at the Ayala Corp. office on 19 August 2014 (hereafter, *Paynor* interview). Paynor was also a former ambassador of the Philippine government.

appropriating and using land based on their agenda and functions. Bring in the local communities, with their state-bestowed land entitlements, and the local elite landowners, with their own land titles, the island has become a site of struggle among these contending parties.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is the state agency in charge of implementing CARP. Its local office introduced the program in Sicogon in 1994, when it was still classified as an agricultural land. This prompted the landowners to ask local officials, including local agrarian reform officials, to reclassify the land back as a tourism area so that it could be exempted from the program.<sup>12</sup> Apart from contending that the resort had helped transform Carles into a second-class municipality, the landowners used the following arguments to legitimize their claims: First, there were no agricultural activities in the island, since the land was not arable. Rice and corn had not been planted, and standard farming practices were not observed. Second, agriculture could not support the livelihood of the people. Dividing the land into smaller parcels among the CARP beneficiaries and allowing the cultivation of root crops would only destroy the forest cover and the ecosystem. Third, the community's main source of livelihood was fishing and so the people were fisherfolk and not farmers. Fourth, a landlord-tenant relationship did not exist, since SIDEKO was not a landlord. Fifth, agricultural development was inconsistent with tourism requirements for structures and facilities, such as golf courses and sports clubs. Agricultural production would be limited because of tourism activities in the area. Lands with less than 18° slope would be used for recreational facilities. Sixth, as people earned their livelihood from the resort alone, they would likely not cultivate the land to be awarded to them and sell it. Seventh, the answer to the development problem was not transforming the people into farmers with 3 hectares (ha) of land that they could not develop but through the development envisioned by SIDEKO.

State actors such as the Minister of Tourism, together with local business councils, supported the landowners' request probably because of the potential of the island to generate high tourism revenues. Successive municipal ordinances and resolutions declaring the island for tourism purposes were passed. The latest municipal Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and Zoning Plan for the period 2013-2022 indicate that, except timberland, the whole island of Sicogon is a high-end tourism zone.<sup>13</sup> Land allocated for agriculture is notably missing. According to the local planning and development officer, a study conducted by the local DAR office identifies the island as not suitable for agriculture because of its rocky soil.<sup>14</sup> The local agrarian reform officer confirmed the conduct of such study but clarified that this only involved high-level officials from their office. He did not agree to the study results, contending that his office's projection map of the island showed the presence of agricultural crops in the area.<sup>15</sup> Supporting his argument was the local state assessor who had conducted a similar study based on the actual use of the land.<sup>16</sup> As part of the CARP titling procedures, a multi-state agency inspection was also carried out, resulting in the identification of 335 ha of private land as meeting the requirements of the program. It was based on these findings that the regional director of DAR issued a Notice of Coverage informing the landowners that 335 ha of their land would be placed under CARP.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Under the law, only alienable and disposable lands, public lands, and private lands suitable for agriculture can be placed under CARP.

<sup>13</sup> The CLUP is a long-term framework that directs public and private investments by identifying which areas can and cannot be developed (DILG 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview with Cerena Villanueva at the Municipal Planning and Development Office on 21 July 2014 (hereafter, *Villanueva* interview).

<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Francisco Canones at the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office on 22 July 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Personal interview with Riza Lapinig at the Municipal Assessor's Office on 21 July 2014.

<sup>17</sup> These Notices are issued for CARP-covered private agricultural lands, informing the landowner of the size and location of the land being acquired. Once the Notice is served to the landowners, DAR initiates the land acquisition and distribution process.

In response to the Notice, the concerned landowners filed one civil case after another against the regional DAR director and other officials involved, on the grounds that they violated CARP procedures. They also repeatedly applied to DAR for exemption from the program, supporting their position with official state documents and unofficial state letters declaring the island either a commercial or tourism zone. This strategy of “forum shopping,” in which landowners file similar cases before various courts and agencies, most likely to generate favorable judgments, is prevalent in the Philippines and has been used to delay titling procedures (Franco 2011). But not to be intimidated, the regional DAR director remained steadfast and declared two Orders of Finality, making his decision final and executory at the local level.<sup>18</sup> Sealing this decision was another Order of Finality issued by the Minister of Agrarian Reform in April 2014. As expected, the landowners filed an appeal at DAR.

These incidents reflect the obscured parameters of juridical courts and state agencies as well as civil and legal laws that contending parties have to endure to make their favored policy authoritative. Elite landowners use the local courts to threaten pro-reform state and social actors and to complicate the policy setting. It is a strategy to confuse the communities of the legal blitzkrieg, prolong the battle if necessary, exhaust people’s capacity to remain in battle, and ultimately dissuade them from pursuing the titles. From another view, these incidents show that there are state actors who act independently of landowners’ influence but not necessarily without internal pressure from their agency. Following Fox’s earlier assertions, it is the initiatives of these state actors, or “access routes,” not necessarily coming from one state agency or rank, that provide people with entry points to the state machinery. The Order of Finality was a huge feat for the people and the program was achieved with the help of these access routes.

The landowners knew they had to exploit the plural legal situation of the island if they were to establish their ownership of it. Maneuvering their way around the legal system, they extended their claims beyond the farmlands to cover the island’s public land and forestland. Through their local political network and influence, the landowners would be one step ahead of the local people in obtaining management rights to these lands. This move again indicates how overlapping policies produce conflicts and influence the decisions of contending groups on which state agency to engage and institutional framework to invoke.

Not content with the legal blitzkrieg, the landowners resorted to harassment to weaken people’s resolve. This began in 2002, when PROGRESO, a nongovernment organization (NGO) expert in militant community organizing and focused on agrarian reform initiatives, entered the community to assist the villagers in asserting their land claims through the CARP framework. By 2003, 214 families had applied as program beneficiaries. Some failed to qualify either because their main source of livelihood was not farming or they were threatened by the landowners. Cases of illegal logging and notices of lawful eviction were filed by local state environment officials and the landowners against the farmer beneficiaries. Affidavits were executed by alleged program beneficiaries denying that they were bona fide tenants of the island and requesting the local DAR to cancel their names in the application. The harassment intensified in 2008, when the landowners declared “Huwes de Kutsilyo” (Justice by Knife) in the island. Two days after this declaration, an elderly woman was killed while gathering crops in her farm. The house of a leader was demolished by armed men. Firearms were “planted” outside the houses of farm leaders who were subsequently put to jail for alleged illegal possession of firearms. The people’s training center was destroyed, crops were uprooted, and a shanty was set on fire. Two houses were demolished when the people refused to leave.

This repeated use of coercion and consent was a prevailing strategy throughout the land struggle.

---

<sup>18</sup> Based on DAR Administrative Order No. 06-11, an Order of Finality is a resolution issued by the Regional Director or the Minister of DAR or the Office of the President of the Philippines that contains the final decision of a court, quasi-judicial body, or tribunal on cases involving the implementation of the agrarian law. Enforcement of the decision is the next action.



Until this point, consent was applied by surfacing misconceptions about the agricultural sector and pitting these against the market-constructed profitability of the tourism industry to garner policy support at all state levels. The landowners exploited the plural legal situation of the country to wring out people's resources while abiding by the state's legal system. Consent was complemented by coercive tactics, particularly against farmer leaders, to stifle their leadership and threaten the beneficiaries from pursuing their application.

If the story was to end here, it would paint a bleak picture of the land struggle for the rural poor. But the conflict persisted with local communities collectively mobilizing to protest the harassments. Institutional policy reforms opened the space for landless rural poor farmers to claim ownership of lands they had tilled for years. Clearly, however, an institutional opening does not automatically guarantee a pro-poor interpretation and implementation of the land law, as Franco (2011) reminds us. Collective legal and political action from below *and* above has to be done particularly in difficult and contentious situations. In early 2009, the people engaged in a "rightful resistance" by walking 140 kilometers (km) for six days to the provincial capital to negotiate and demand their rights from state officials and expose their situation to the public. Shunning violent measures, the protest became a powerful act that revealed the tilted balance of power between the landowners and people, as well as the absence of state rule in the island. Called "Exodus for Land, Life and Dignity," their protest is an example of how such forms of resistance could be triggered by the failed commitment and pronouncement of the state to grant farmers their land under CARP. It also exhibits the values of equality and human rights in which the resistance is firmly grounded. The protest was powerful enough to deter three foreign investors from pursuing their partnership with SIDECO.<sup>19</sup> It was picked up by both local and national media, gaining the local people new allies from the church and other human rights and social justice advocates. Among them were a senator, a representative of AKBAYAN,<sup>20</sup> the Head of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and CBCP-NASSA<sup>21</sup> – the social development arm of the Philippine Catholic Church. All of them would be the policy currents that would help push the people's demands within the new institutional arrangements.

Cacique law in Sicogon overshadows the state law as in other parts of the country (Franco 2011). But the people were aware, at the advice of their NGO allies, of the need to have the state law behind their cause despite its weakness. Continuing their rightful resistance, they countered every civil case filed against them by the landowners with other court charges. For every abuse inflicted on them, the people filed a report before local police authorities and a case before local state courts. It was through these legal efforts that the court granted them a writ of amparo, which protected them from harassment by landowners – again, a significant feat for the farmers.<sup>22</sup>

In every step of the titling process, the people made sure they followed the law, albeit misled at times by anti-reform state actors. They equipped themselves with knowledge of the law, with the support of NGO allies, and used this to prepare legal counterarguments to the landowners' appeals. The allies they gained from the protest became channels for their claims to be discussed at the national level and to push local state officials in their direction. Going back to Fox's assertion earlier about autonomy and capacity, the case of farmers in Sicogon reflects the degree of independence the local people have in crafting the framework of their campaign. Based on their claims, they determined which agency to pressure and which specific policies to uphold. They maximized the policy currents

---

<sup>19</sup> Sarrosa interview.

<sup>20</sup> A political party that aims to pursue progressive reform agenda and uphold democratic space in the country.

<sup>21</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)- National Secretariat for Social Action-Justice and Peace (NASSA).

<sup>22</sup> The writ of amparo ". . . is a remedy available to any person whose right to life, liberty and security is violated or threatened with violation by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity" (Philippines Supreme Court 2007).

and access routes to access the state machinery and pursue their cause.

Ownership of the farmland seems to be in favor of the people with the issuance of the Order of Finality by the national DAR office. The forestland remains under the management of the landowners while the public land remains in contention. In the background, however, there have been talks of a joint elite partnership venture between Ayala Corp. and SIDECO, with media reporting a Php 10 billion (approx. €173 million) planned tourism project in the island.

Then typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013 and changed the game.

## The land battle changes

### *Market-based, non-coercive strategies at play*

Haiyan was one of the largest and strongest typhoons in the recorded history of the planet. Thousands of people were left without food, shelter, and other basic necessities as extreme high-speed winds of about 300 km/hour brought 5-meter (m) high sea waters to coastal communities. Except for very few cemented structures, the houses were either washed away or ruined. More than 6,000 people perished in central Philippines, and thousands of houses, fishing equipment, farms, and infrastructures were destroyed. It was a massive disaster.

Burdened by its bureaucratic processes and structure and insufficient relief and rehabilitation funds, the state had to call on the corporate elite to serve as “development sponsors” of areas hit by the typhoon. They were asked to help rehabilitate four sectors – education, health, shelter, and livelihood – in each area that they would sponsor. During this process, the state made crucial calculations between (1) maintaining its political legitimacy to its people and the international humanitarian community by ensuring immediate delivery of the necessary humanitarian support and (2) continuing capital accumulation especially since the Philippines was touted as the fastest growing economy in Asia (Coface Group 2014, Mellor and Batino 2013). During the negotiations, Ayala Corp., one of the companies that pledged support, chose Iloilo, since it had already targeted this province to be one of its future growth centers (Ayala 2012). According to Ayala’s Paynor, “Rehabilitating the four sectors is logical if you want to help an area and if you want to approach it from a holistic perspective.”<sup>23</sup>

In Sicogon, its plan was different. The island would not receive support for the four sectors. In fact, the company’s support was merely coincidental, as it has business plans for the area. Ayala Corp.’s ultimate plan was to remove the people and relocate them to the mainland, where it bought a land on which it built 200 to 300 houses for those who would choose to relocate.<sup>24</sup>

The condition of the island after the typhoon was the “clean slate,” the “external other” that the powerful local and corporate elites were waiting for. As one relocatee aptly put it, “When SIDECO could not drive the people away from the island, Typhoon Haiyan gave them that opportunity.”<sup>25</sup> Their combined plans of transforming the island into a high-end tourism area, becoming a prominent player in the tourism industry, and developing the province into a growth center have found what Harvey (2003) calls a “spatio-temporal fix” after the disaster. The elite partners knew that to succeed in their plans, they would have to immediately capitalize on the collective trauma of the people and the expressed incapacity of the state.

Relief goods arrived intermittently during the first weeks after the typhoon. The packages were distributed with prejudice to some families and were not enough to sustain a family of six for a week. One village captain said that he travelled the day after the typhoon to ask for relief goods from the local social welfare agency of the municipality. While he was given assistance, the official promptly

---

<sup>23</sup> Paynor interview.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with relocatees in Jolog village on 27 July 2014 (hereafter, Jolog relocatees interview).

told him that their office would no longer extend support after that, since Ayala Corp. was already sponsoring the island. Fuelling the people's desperation was the sight of security forces of the company blocking boats carrying relief goods to the island and asking them to return to the mainland. SIDECO also prohibited the people from repairing and rebuilding their homes. Humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children wanted to supply shelter materials but were allowed by SIDECO to provide only school materials. A British naval group was asked to leave the island by "three big men" after it supplied tarpaulin and other relief assistance to the island for two days without permission from the company. ICCO Cooperation, a Dutch development organization, distributed 70 fishing boats a few months after the disaster. By then, the people's vulnerability and desire for survival were at their peak levels.

This paradoxical situation of scarcity and abundance was an opportune time for the dominant groups to apply non-coercive mechanisms. Merely offering cash support to remove people from the island would have created an unfavorable image of the corporate elite and might not be sufficient to convince people to leave. Taking advantage of the disaster, the elite partnership created a condition of pressing need for survival that would force people to take its offer without holding the elite responsible for their decision. It was a condition with limited options for negotiations, or an "all or nothing" situation.

A week after the typhoon, a general assembly was held in each village by I-Serve, an NGO hired by Ayala Corp.,<sup>26</sup> to discuss its two offers to the households.

- First option: The household would receive Php 150,000 (€2,607) only if they would waive their rights to their land, destroy their house, and permanently leave the island. If there was another family sharing their home, it would receive Php 30,000 (€521).
- Second option: The household would move to the relocation site constructed by Ayala Corp. in the mainland where they would occupy a house and lot at no cost. It could also choose to receive either start-up money of Php 5,000 (€87) or materials for a *banca* (fishing boat). Title to the house and lot would be given to the household after three years or more, depending on how fast the state could process this. Ayala Corp. would provide community facilities, such as a fish landing, market, and school, as well as livelihood programs. The people could work in construction projects or as administration staff members in the relocation site and receive a daily salary of Php 200 to Php 300 (€3 to €5).

Acceptance of either offer, according to the people, would determine whether I-Serve would provide them with immediate relief goods or not. The nature of these offers reflects the factors identified earlier as affecting people's calculations over land deals.

The relocatees said that those who took the offer would be employed in the resort, depending on their skills. Those who preferred to remain in the island would be litigated in court and would not receive anything from Ayala Corp.

As the desire for survival was already stretched in the communities, a number of the households accepted the offer. Permanently sealing the deal was an agreement between the company and the household stating the following: (1) SIDECO is the registered owner of the 809 ha, (2) the household acknowledges that it has no right to stay on the land, (3) the household has decided to relocate to the mainland after receiving financial support from the landowners because of the damages sustained by their house due to Typhoon Haiyan, (4) the household has agreed to remove all structures from its lot,

---

<sup>26</sup> I-Serve indirectly operated in the island in early 2013, when they conducted community surveys. When asked by the people whether it was affiliated with Ayala Corp., I-Serve gave a negative response. However, according to Ayala Corp.'s 2012 annual report, I-Serve was the same NGO it had contracted to conduct stakeholder mapping for one of its suburban community projects.

(5) the household waives all its cases and claims against the landowners and their company, and (6) the household withdraws its CARP application and membership in FESIFFA (the network of people's organizations in the island that is a member of a national militant peasant movement, *Katarungan*). In addition, the agreement states that the household signed on its own volition and would not reclaim ownership of its property on the island.

### *Challenging social mobilization from below*

Under the agreement, the households found themselves thrust in business with the powerful actors under different terms of exclusion and inclusion. They gained the favor of the powerful elites and perceived their life now as "better." Excluded from this "better" life were those who remained in the struggle. The introduction of market offers produced a mix of constructions of the land and challenged social mobilization from below.

A majority of the households that accepted the offers perceived the struggle as futile, since they did not have titles to the land, were not eligible applicants to CARP, and were opposing a powerful group.<sup>27</sup> They were the relatively more vulnerable families and so might have chosen the "better" option characterized by material and financial offers and promise of employment (or incorporation into the business). Land used to be an important asset for them, but without capital to revive farming, its utility was reduced, making its value easily replaceable by available cash aid. One household head said that she wanted to escape the conflict and have a quiet life with her family. Thus, they saw the small inconveniences, such as paying for electricity and water, which they consumed at no cost back in the island, as their counterpart in having a better life.

Reference to the obsolescence and antediluvian life in an island resurfaced and was highlighted in the remarks of the relocatees. Apart from changes in the material space, this implies the changes created by market-based incentives in people's representation of the island and the experiences, values, or the "lived" dimension they attached to it.<sup>28</sup>

"They told us, your children should not grow up like you who are dependent on just fishing. This is why they offered us other sources of livelihood."

"I do not want myself and my children to be ignorant in the island all our lives."

These negative perceptions of the struggle might have been present even before the typhoon. After experiencing changes in their space caused by the disaster and being exposed to new institutions and their "entitlements," these negative perceptions were reinforced and resurfaced.

"Some of those staying in the forestland are relatively well off. Yet they prefer to stay in the dilapidated tents. It is just a pretense to get other people's support."

Their views of the harassment cases also changed, claiming that these were all false.

Residents who did not accept the offer either stayed in the villages or set up temporary tents near

---

<sup>27</sup> The exact figure of people who took the offer could not be established as of this writing. The records of I-Serve showed that there were 711 families who accepted the offer, including those who shared a house with another family. This figure, however, has to be verified because, according to PROGRESO, it could include non-residents of the island or relatives of I-Serve staff.

<sup>28</sup> Jolog relocatees interview.

the timberland where they could not be easily evicted by SIDECO and Ayala Corp., since this was state property. They were composed of CARP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. While they had also been pushed to a subsistence crisis level, they chose to struggle against expulsion, with their land rights legally backed up by the state. Non-beneficiaries, on the other hand, held on to their informal land rights and the promise of land-sharing arrangements with program beneficiaries. Explaining their actions, they said:<sup>29</sup>

“We are not against development. We are even willing to surrender the 22 ha so that development of the airstrip can proceed in the island. What we want is to be allowed to stay in the island, continue our livelihood, and be part of the island’s development plans.”

“We are already content with fishing and farming. It is all right if we are not employed by the resort.”

“We learned to fight back not because the NGOs are telling us to fight. SIDECO and Ayala are not leaving anything for us and yet they want more from us.”

By applying consent and coercive tactics, the elite helped create cleavages within the community. The different reactions of the people reflected the factors influencing their political calculation of land deals. Those who took the offer felt they were close to the subsistence crisis level and perceived the market offers as their means to remain above this level. Relocating to the mainland would protect them from SIDECO’s continuous harassment and legal retaliations. Their political opportunity structure would have been limited had they stayed on the island and continued with the struggle. For them, the island presented more threats than opportunities.

Those who did not take the offer and continued their resistance framed their struggle differently. Their policy current had broadened and they had the Order of Finality to support their claims. Their political opportunity structure had more opportunities than threats. They therefore did not perceive their struggle as futile but as potentially strengthening. They pursued the struggle not only because their physical subsistence was threatened but also because their subsistence ethic and moral economy were challenged. Higher ideals and promised rights were broken and disrespected. And as shown earlier, it was in these ideals that people’s “rightful resistance” was grounded.

As the powerful elite had been encroaching on their space, the resisters set up an “independent” space that did not honor the cacique law and that they could fully control. They erected the tent camp in the forestland to avoid harassment from the dominant elite. A village captain said that he would rather sleep there than in his home, where he felt threatened.<sup>30</sup> Local state environment officials had been forcing them to leave the area, using the forestry law as justification. But the people ignored them. More than a material space that provided security, the tent camp became a representation of the people’s resistance to and freedom from the encroachment. It was their space for collective thinking and mobilization, as well as a venue for dialogues with national state officials, international and local support groups, and families. The camp was a manifestation of their autonomy and capacity. Thus, any attempts at encroachment by the despotic landlords and corporate elite were met by threat from the people.

Maximizing the plural-legal setting of the country, their growing policy currents, and their

---

<sup>29</sup> Personal interview with community members of Alipata and of Buaya and San Fernando on 24 and 25 July 2014, respectively.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

additional identity as disaster survivors, the people applied for a presidential proclamation declaring their temporary domain in the forestland a permanent resettlement site. They sought the representatives of NAPC and AKBAYAN to facilitate the process at the national level. The people also used the Philippine Fisheries Code, which supports the establishment of fisherfolk settlement areas near fishing grounds, to strengthen their claim. Together with their policy currents of state actors, they continued negotiations with the corporate elite to create an agreeable situation.

The powerful elite meanwhile challenged the people's struggle by resorting to the classic divide and rule tactic. They organized those who accepted the market offers and backed them up with material and financial support to file court cases against the other group. The Sicogon case, therefore, is not just a struggle between capitalists and people or a case of state versus the people, as often depicted in popular literature on land deals. It is these contentions, *plus* the struggle *within* communities brought about by the different configurations of actors and impact on their space, that comprise land conflicts in the island.

The land conflict transformed the humanitarian field. The swiftness of the disaster and the time within which the options were laid out enabled the powerful elite to use humanitarian principles and actions to justify their market incentives. Humanitarian aid and economic payoffs were perceived as one. Despotic landlords and corporate elite became people's benefactors. Meanwhile, those who did not take the offer perceived the "humanitarian support" (based on the agreement) as compensation for their expulsion. This was implied in their description of those who accepted the offer as "*mga nagpabayad*" (those who got paid). Alterations of humanitarian instruments and climate change policies by the corporate elite continued, as we will see in the next section.

### ***Reworking spaces and institutions: A safe island for the privileged***

Weeks after the typhoon, the state implemented a no-dwelling zone policy prohibiting residents from setting up their homes within 40 meters from the high-water mark to the coastline. When strictly implemented, this policy would have rendered about 1,000 families in the island homeless. State agencies had contrasting views of this policy. The Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (OPARR)<sup>31</sup> did not see the need for a blanket implementation of this law. In an official communication by the state, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources states otherwise.

On the 40m easement, that's all in the water code. We didn't put that policy in. In fact for us it doesn't make sense, we find that in the water code and it's supposed to be an easement but for us it's not necessarily unsafe if you're in the easement. (Karen Jimeno, Head of Communications, OPARR)<sup>32</sup>

It is clear in the law that we cannot allow people to build houses in areas for mangroves and beach forest . . . [This] necessitates a display of political will from their local government officials to restore their mangrove areas and beach forests . . . Had the mangroves in Leyte and Eastern Samar not been decimated, the storm surge in those areas would have been dissipated by 70 to 80 percent of its strength. (Ramon Paje, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources [GOP 2013])

---

<sup>31</sup> OPARR is the coordinating body assigned to put together an over-all strategic vision, coordinate, monitor and evaluate rehabilitation plans and programs of the local states for Typhoon Haiyan.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview Karen Jimeno at the OPARR office on 6 August 2014 (hereafter, *Jimeno* interview).

This policy had been latent for years but resurfaced not only because of the risks posed by extreme weather but also because of the demands of the new institutional environment in which the state was situated. As the Philippines is an archipelagic country hit by no less than 20 typhoons per year, the state is under internal and external pressure to address the people's vulnerability. Aside from upholding its political legitimacy to its people, the state has an obligation to international bodies, since the Philippines is a signatory to the HFA. It is mandated to accomplish the HFA's five priorities for action, one of which is "reducing underlying disaster risk factors, whether social, economic, environmental or land use" (UNISDR 2013:3). As a knee-jerk reaction to the disaster, the state ordered the relocation of communities in high-risk areas, such as low-lying and coastal areas, to safe zones. In its Php 160 billion master plan (approx. €2.6B)<sup>33</sup> for rebuilding the affected areas, the state plans to relocate around one million people living in coastal zones areas (Gabieta et.al 2014). It is worthy to note, however, that while relocation is internationally recognized as an adaptation strategy, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2007) recommends this with caution, emphasizing the need to study several uncertainties (e.g., political instability) that may interact with climate change policy responses and reverse the intended impact. In the same breath, IPCC recognizes that climate change drivers and impacts are shaped by existing socioeconomic conditions and institutional settings.

Often, settlements exist in a splintered political landscape that makes coherent collaborative adaptation strategies difficult to contemplate. (IPCC 2007:382)

It is this reciprocal relationship between climate change policies and the political processes occurring in land conflicts that some state actors failed to consider when they executed this policy and the relocation strategy. Balancing capital accumulation and political legitimacy, and influenced by their current sociopolitical location, these state actors conceive and execute policies as if these occur in a political vacuum where only its intended outcomes are produced.

The IPCC's stance on relocation is supported by Esteban Godilano, a climate change expert hired by OPARR to help put climate change projections in the multi-hazard map for Sicogon island (see Figure 2). For him, relocation is always the last resort.<sup>34</sup> As indicated by the map, Sicogon is not a safe area, with all of its portions having different levels of risks.<sup>35</sup> A big part of the island has risk levels running from high to extremely high. However, Godilano quickly points out that this does not mean relocation is the only solution for the communities.<sup>36</sup>

We can still have fisherfolk settlements and a tourism industry in the island, provided that appropriate mitigation structures corresponding to the risks involved are installed. This will entail costs. The higher you go up the risk level, the higher the costs. We can always do something about it. The question is who will shoulder the costs?

---

<sup>33</sup> Eight months after the typhoon hit the country, OPARR came up with a Comprehensive Yolanda Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan for areas hit by typhoon Haiyan. This plan, according to Jimeno, took a long time to finish because OPARR decided to combine the state assessments at the national and local levels.

<sup>34</sup> Personal interview with Esteban Godilano at the OPARR office on 18 August 2014 (hereafter, *Godilano* interview).

<sup>35</sup> According to Godilano, the probability of extreme-weather-related events such as typhoon Haiyan occurring in the future can already be estimated through climate change projections. These projections should be included in existing multi-hazard maps, since these events are now considered as the "new" normal. He says that these projections were not included in the multi-hazard maps produced by DENR to identify the relocation sites in typhoon Haiyan areas. This implies that these sites might be safe from the other hazards but not from extreme weather events.

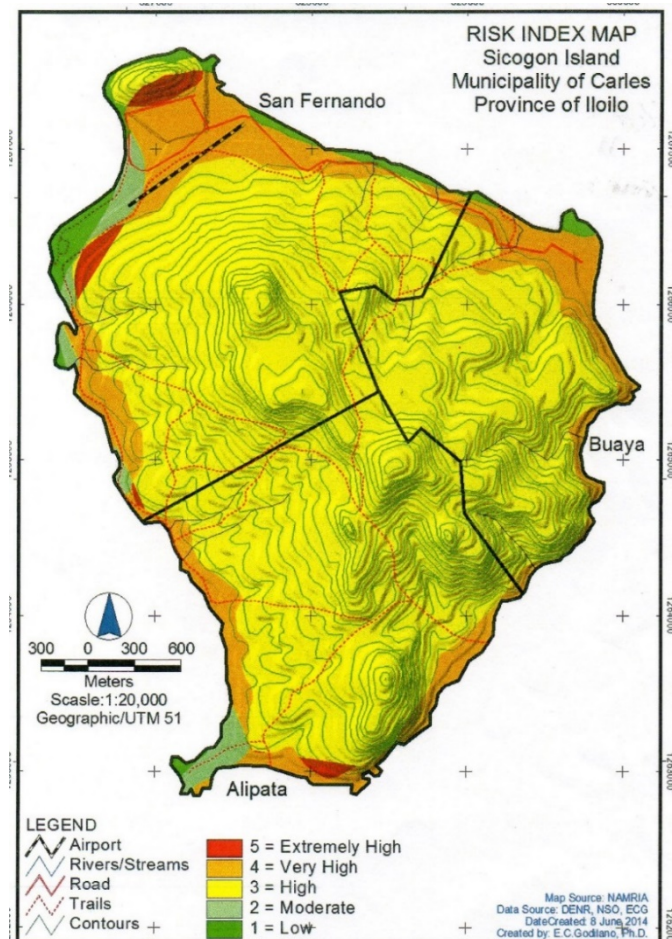
<sup>36</sup> *Godilano* interview.

This question was answered in my interview with Ayala Corp.'s Paynor:<sup>37</sup>

There are mitigating factors. You can build but you have to do this, which the people don't have the money for but which a resort can do. So if you put a high-rise building there, even if you have a storm surge of two stories high but you have an eight-story-high building, then you're okay. There are many ways of, in a sense, skinning the cat. But if left on its own and people who don't know exactly what this means and just want a piece of land to put in their flimsy homes, when the rains come and they're washed away guess whose fault it is.

However, as Godilano remarked, "The maps indicate that there are no safe areas in the island. But it does not mean that it cannot be made safe. Appropriate interventions can be constructed based on the hazard and risk[s] involved. We only have to look at Japan to say that it is possible to do this."<sup>38</sup> And yet, a one-track market-led decision to relocate people is often imposed by the state in favor of the corporate elite.

Figure 2. Risk map of Sicogon Island



Source: Esteban Godilano, consultant, OPARR.

Hazard maps and the 40-meter easement policy are some of the state instruments originally intended to ensure populations are kept safe from coastal flooding. These become focal points of

<sup>37</sup> Paynor interview.

<sup>38</sup> Godilano interview.



negotiations, particularly in land conflicts. From its primary intention of saving lives, these “old” institutions are now used by dominant actors for other ends and given different meanings when applied in land conflicts. International and national calls for “building back better,” “safe and secure settlements,” and other narratives of legitimation around disaster risk management and climate change justify the powerful elite’s argument for relocation: local communities do not have the means to keep themselves safe in the island while the corporate elite has the capital to abide by these calls by making the island safe for everyone. These events show the dynamic relationship among the institutions of climate change, disaster, and land grabs. As these institutions recast the space and political arrangements of land conflicts, so do the politics of land grabs reconfigure the meanings and intent of climate change and disaster-related institutions.

### *No state in a private island*

Franco (2011) writes about “laws” in private plantations and *haciendas*, and refers to “*batas ng hacienda*” (law of the hacienda), where the state exercises less authority inside private spaces controlled by despotic landlords. The case is similar in Sicogon – only that the entire island seems to be governed by private elites. It is a key political setting of how land conflicts intersect with disaster responses and climate change adaptation strategies. In reference to Carranza’s point earlier, it is the private property regime that has held back the state from fully supporting typhoon-affected communities located in private areas such as Sicogon. The absence of a rehabilitation plan for the island explicitly demonstrates this.

We do not have a rehabilitation plan for Sicogon because it is a private land. The one who should do it is SIDEKO, the private firm that owns the land. What we do is we wait for their plans so that we can include it in the municipality’s overall rehabilitation plan. That’s the time we can monitor it.<sup>39</sup>

The same dilemma was expressed by Jimeno.<sup>40</sup>

This goes beyond rehabilitation. You have here property rights issues. To the extent that this is private property, we really cannot build back there regardless of any issues. It is beyond OPARR’s mandate . . . So their problem is that if they are already occupying this [land] and this is private property they really cannot rebuild there not because of any policy related to rehabilitation but because of property law. We cannot advocate for them because it’s beyond our control. This remains private property unless there are expropriation proceedings.

The state’s mandate therefore can cover the residents of Sicogon if they are part of the comprehensive recovery plan that OPARR will monitor and evaluate. Unfortunately, the reverse is true for Sicogon. Without the mandated agency and local state officials to look after the condition of the farmers, where does this put the political legitimacy of the state? Which group is responsible for ensuring that people’s rights are upheld?

In a disaster situation where needs swiftly change and funds for rehabilitation and recovery have to be immediately released, the state calculates the best move to balance its dual functions. By calling on the corporate elite’s support, the state assumes that it will achieve this balance. While the state may

---

<sup>39</sup> Villanueva interview.

<sup>40</sup> Jimeno interview.

refute this, such an arrangement puts its control over the rehabilitation agenda in a flux. If the corporate elite retract from their commitments for some reason, rehabilitation efforts will be disrupted and both state functions will probably be jeopardized. With capital in the hands of the corporate elite, to what extent can the state exercise its sovereignty over lands “adopted” by the corporate elite while balancing its dual albeit contradictory functions? In the case of Sicogon, the island has become “untouchable” to the state simply because it is a private land with supposedly private sponsors. But when post-disaster situation deals with people’s lives at risk, how can the state step in, exercise its eminent domain over the land, and uphold the rights of the communities? How does it calculate its move? How does it tame monopolistic power over its people and natural resources?

### *A compromised deal: the outcome of a protracted battle*

On 8 November 2014, the four-decade-old battle between SIDECO and the farmers came to a resolution, as both parties, together with Ayala Corp. and state officials, arrived at a compromise. The negotiation was mediated by the farmers’ policy currents: NAPC, AKBAYAN, CBCP-NASSA, PROGRESO, and ICCO. The agreement provides the farmers with Php 50M (approx. ₳33,000) for livelihood projects, a 30-ha resettlement site for 784 household members of FESIFFA, 40-ha agricultural lands for CARP beneficiaries, 10 ha for the fish shelter in the current site of the tent camp, and home lots measuring 150 square meters (sq m) for non-beneficiaries of CARP and 250 sq m for the beneficiaries. A collective title will be granted to the program beneficiaries for 40 ha of agricultural land and a collective tenurial title will be given to the homeowners’ association that will be set up by the people to discourage land selling. NAPC will provide the houses for the people.

Fractured but not weakened, the farmers knew compromise was the “second best” option in a protracted battle while remaining hopeful that they would benefit from the tourism business. The agreement was a compromise for all groups: the people had to withdraw their application under CARP (except those specified in the agreement) while the dominant elite had to surrender some of the land for the people to use. All of them lost but gained parts of their claim. Ultimately, Ayala Corp. and SIDECO got what they wanted: land – not entirely, but largely.

## **Conclusion**

This paper began with the question: How do land grabs shape and how are these shaped by climate change and disaster-related adaptation strategies, policies, and principles? The answer is this: When the new institutional environment around climate change and disasters intersects with the prevailing political processes of land grabs, the political, institutional, and spatial arrangements embedded in the conflict are reconfigured. Conversely, the institutions of climate change and disasters are recast and used for different ends, as these interact with the politics of land grabs.

Powerful capitalists, together with their allies within the state, attempted to grab the clean slate as a result of the disaster. But this was not a one-way political dynamic. While not all people resisted land grabbing, some did. Those who resisted land grabs forged alliance with support groups from within the state and in society. The political contestations that ensued were then largely conditioned by preexisting social structures as well as existing institutions – some facilitating, others hindering, efforts of poor people to resist. It was the actual balance of power between these two contending factions of state-societal forces that determined the character of policy processes and shaped outcomes. In this particular case, a successful land grab for the capitalist and a partial victory for the resisters.

Climate change and disasters introduced the crucial element of time. The local landowners engaged the people in a long legal and violent struggle. What shifted the momentum of the struggle was the political influence of the business conglomerate and the introduction of massive amounts of

capital at an opportune time. We should remember that this condition of scarcity, while triggered by the typhoon, was created by the powerful elite (e.g., slow and infrequent delivery of relief, apt timing of introducing market offers). The poor people and their allies were not able to predict and prepare for this, while the capitalists were prepared to exploit this timing. By the time they regrouped, the capitalists had tilted the balance of power, which in turn influenced the outcome of the struggle. In just a year after the typhoon occurred, the four-decade-long struggle reached a conclusion.

The reconstruction of humanitarian principles and climate change adaptation strategies by the corporate elite further complicated land conflicts as subjectivities emerged and were debated. These subjectivities facilitated land grab by subsuming it under the broader humanitarian and climate change fields. The Sicogon case shows the swift transformation of institutions as they intersect. It also presents how these are rapidly changed by interactions of the state, society, and capital. This threatens the integrity of principles related to the humanitarian and climate change fields. The capitalists were able to immediately adapt to and maximize these changes. Social reform and humanitarian groups should be able to do the same. In many cases, the function and structures of these groups are compartmentalized by either development work or climate change and/or humanitarian work. And yet the case of Sicogon exhibits the broad overlap of the fields and the new dynamics and multi-scalar complexities generated when applied to the elements of the nexus. Effectively addressing these complexities entails concurrent reworking of the institutional parameters and operations of these groups.

Climate change and disasters brought in new actors such as climate change experts, and the field of climate change science was brought into the land conflict. However, their roles and recommendations remained external to the negotiations around it. Only those tools and recommendations favorable to dominant groups were taken and accepted. Capitalists took advantage of these tools to reinforce the vulnerability of the poor people while legitimizing their presence and operations. These tools and recommendations of science would continue to acquire different interpretations and to be used for ends other than the original intention in sites of land conflict.

Within the state, the contradictions and political dynamics among state agencies (e.g., the weather bureau and DENR) and state actors largely influenced whether climate change science would be included in policy design and implementation. But as earlier revealed, climate change science was not considered in the state's multi-billion rehabilitation plan, making it vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, the one million people targeted to be relocated by the state and the 205,000 new homes that would be constructed might be safe from earthquakes and other hazards, but not from extreme weather events such as typhoon Haiyan. Located within the nexus, the relocation sites of these families could potentially become sites of future disasters and land grabs if not addressed.

The notions of political legitimacy and capital accumulation highlighted in Fox (1992) and Harvey (2003) were traditionally applied in studying the state. However, the actions of the corporate elite in Sicogon show that these contradictory tasks also confront capital. It is inconceivable to see capital just going for accumulation, unmindful of legitimacy considerations. We see this dilemma of capital at play in this case. Ayala Corp. is a huge business conglomerate that is known for promoting corporate social responsibility.<sup>41</sup> Maintaining this political legitimacy to the public, its shareholders, and the larger business community is therefore important, lest it experiences the fate of SIDECO (when investors pulled out after the people's well-publicized resistance). Simultaneously, it has to keep accumulating capital and creating an "external" other to maintain its stature. In balancing these functions, it does not operate on its own but rather taps into its political network and transforms the humanitarian principles to legitimize its operations and weaken ground resistance. Ultimately, the Sicogon case is a clear case of land grabbing made legitimate by granting concession to the poor

---

<sup>41</sup> *Paynor* interview.

people who were driven from their land – but land grabbing just the same.

Incidents of land grabs continue to rise worldwide. These become even more alarming as they intersect with climate-change-related hazards that are increasing not only in numbers but in intensity as well, as evidenced by typhoon Haiyan. Climate change discourse brings with it a new institutional environment that is highly subjective and value-driven, and therefore easy to manipulate to favor an interest. In central Philippines alone, the government talks about relocating one million people from their traditional coastal residence. We just studied a small community involving a few hundred people. It is not difficult to extrapolate possible similar scenarios – just in central Philippines and just those linked to typhoon Haiyan. If we assume that climate change is here to stay with humanity for a while and global land rush is not slowing down, then the critical intersection examined in this paper would be a central development challenge internationally.

## References

- Adams, V., T. Van Hattum and D. English (2009) 'Chronic Disaster Syndrome: Displacement, Disaster Capitalism, and the Eviction of the Poor from New Orleans', *American Ethnologist* 36(4): 615-636.
- Ayala Corporation (2013) '2013 Annual Report'. Philippines: Ayala Corporation.
- Ayala Land (2012) 'Broad 2012 Annual Report: Enhancing Land and Enriching Lives for More People'. Philippines: Ayala Land.
- Benaning, M. (2014) "Resort Bars 'Yolanda' Survivors in Iloilo from Rebuilding Homes." *Business Mirror*.
- Bernstein, H. (2010) *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*. Vol. 1. Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Borras, S.M. (2007) *Pro-Poor Land Reform: A Critique*. Ontario, Canada: University of Ottawa Press.
- Borras, S.M. and J.C. Franco (2013) 'Global Land Grabbing and Political Reactions 'From Below'', *Third World Quarterly* 34(9): 1723-1747.
- Borras, S.M. (1998) *The Biringka Strategy to Land Reform and Implementation: Autonomous Peasant Mobilizations and State Reformists in the Philippines*. Vol. no. 274. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Borras, S.M., R. Hall, I. Scoones, B. White and W. Wolford (2011) 'Towards a Better Understanding of Global Land Grabbing: An Editorial Introduction', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(2): 209-216.
- Chambers, R. (1983) *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. Longman: London [etc.]
- Coface Group (Last updated 2014) 'Global Trade: A Return to Pre Crisis Levels is Unlikely, but the Potential for Growth Exists' (a webpage of coface group). Accessed 10/25 2014 <[www.coface.com](http://www.coface.com)>.
- Compston, H. and I. Bailey (2011) 'The Politics of Climate Policy in Developed Countries', in A. Ansohn and B. Pleskovic (eds) *Climate Governance and Development*, pp. 149-157. Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.
- Corson, C. and K.I. MacDonald (2012) 'Enclosing the Global Commons: The Convention on Biological Diversity and Green Grabbing', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(2): 263-283.
- DAR (2011) 'Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Administrative Order no. 06-11 The 2011 Revised Rules and Procedures Governing the Cancellation of Registered Emancipation Patents (EPs), Certificates of Landownership Award (CLOAs), and Other Titles Issued Under any Agrarian Reform Program'. Philippines.
- Deininger, K.W., C. Augustinus, S. Enemark and P. Munro-Faure (2010) *Innovations in Land Rights Recognition, Administration, and Governance*. Washington, D.C: IBRD/World Bank.
- DENR (1998) 'Department of Environment and Natural Resources Administrative Order no. 98 - 62 Regulation and Guidelines Governing the Implementation of "Adopt-A-Mountain" Program'. Philippines.

- DILG (2009) 'Guide to Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) Preparation for Local Government Unit'. Philippines.
- DOT (2011) 'National Tourism Development Plan 2011-2016'. Philippines.
- Edelman, M., C. Oya and S.M. Borras (2013) 'Global Land Grabs: Historical Processes, Theoretical and Methodological Implications and Current Trajectories', *Third World Quarterly* 34(9): 1517-1531.
- Fairhead, J., M. Leach and I. Scoones (2012) 'Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(2): 237-261.
- Farbotko, C. (2005) 'Tuvalu and Climate Change: Constructions of Environmental Displacement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*', *Geografiska Annaler B* 87(4): 279-293.
- Feldman, S. and C. Geisler (2012) 'Land Expropriation and Displacement in Bangladesh', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(3-4): 971-993.
- Forbes (Last updated 2014) 'Ayala Corporation'. Accessed 8 July 2014 2014  
<<http://www.forbes.com/companies/ayala/>>.
- Fox, J. (1992) *The Politics of Food in Mexico: State Power and Social Mobilization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Franco, J.C. (2011) *Bound by Law: Filipino Rural Poor and the Search for Justice in a Plural-Legal Landscape*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Gabieta, J., N. Burgos and C. Matus (2014) 'Grateful we're still here': Celebration of life marks Yolanda's 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary, *Philippine Sunday Inquirer* 9 November, p.1, 23.
- Glick, W., G. Huber, C. Miller, D. Doty and K. Sutcliffe (1990) 'Studying Changes In Organizational Design And Effectiveness: Retrospective Event Histories And Periodic Assessments', *Organization Science* 1(3): 293-312.
- GOP (Last updated 2013) 'Official Gazette. DENR Sets Aside P347M for Coastal Forest Rehabilitation in Eastern Visayas ' (a webpage of Government of the Philippines (GOP)). Accessed September 18 2014 <<http://www.gov.ph/2013/11/27/denr-sets-aside-p347m-for-coastal-forest-rehabilitation-in-eastern-visayas>>.
- GOP (2013) 'Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda'. Pasig City, Philippines: National Economic and Development Authority.
- GOP (2009) 'Republic Act no. 9700 Amending Republic Act no. 6657 on the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law 1988'. Philippines.
- GOP (1988) 'Republic Act no. 6657 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988'. Philippines.
- GOP (1972) 'Presidential Decree No. 27 Decreeing The Emancipation Of Tenants From The Bondage Of The Soil, Transferring To Them The Ownership Of The Land They Till And Providing The Instruments And Mechanism Therefor'. Philippines.
- Guha-Sapir, D., F. Vos, R. Below and S. Ponslerre (2012) 'Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2011: The Numbers and Trends'. Brussels: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED).
- Hall, P. (1986) *Governing the economy: The politics of state intervention in Britain and France*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hannigan, J. (2012) *Disasters without Borders: The International Politics of Natural Disasters*. UK: Polity Press.
- Harvey, D. (2006) *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. London: Verso.
- Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hilhorst, D. and B. Jansen (2010) 'Humanitarian Space as Arena: A Perspective on the Everyday Politics of Aid', *Development and Change* 41(6): 1117-1139.
- IBRD/World Bank (2000) 'Managing Disaster Risk in Emerging Economies', Disaster Risk

- Management Series, No. 2. Washington, D.C.: IBRD/World Bank.
- Institute of Social Studies (ISS) (2014) 'The MOSAIC Project: Climate Change Mitigation Policies, Land Grabbing and Conflict in Fragile States: Understanding Intersections, Exploring Transformations in Myanmar and Cambodia'. Accessed September 19 2014 <[www.iss.nl/MOSAIC](http://www.iss.nl/MOSAIC)>.
- Integrated Regional Information Networks (Last updated n.d.) 'GLOBAL: More Extreme Weather in Poorer Countries' (a webpage of Integrated Regional Information Networks). Accessed May 11 2014 <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/75810/global-more-extreme-weather-in-poorer-countries>>.
- IPCC (2007) 'Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment', Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jayasuriya, S.K. and P. McCawley (2010) *The Asian Tsunami: Aid and Reconstruction After a Disaster*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Klein, N. (2007) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Penguin Group.
- McCarthy, J.F., J.A.C. Vel and S. Afiff (2012) 'Trajectories of Land Acquisition and Enclosure: Development Schemes, Virtual Land Grabs, and Green Acquisitions in Indonesia's Outer Islands', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(2): 521-549.
- Mellor, W. and C. Batino (Last updated 2013) 'Philippines' Aquino Races the World's Fastest Economies' (a webpage of bloomberg). Accessed 10/25 2014 <[www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)>.
- Middleton, N. and P. O'Keefe (1998) *Disaster and Development: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid*. London [etc.]: Pluto Press [etc.].
- NSCB (Last updated 2014) 'Gross Domestic Product by Industrial Origin: Percentage Distribution, 1946-2012'. Accessed September 1 2014 <<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/sna/DataCharts.asp>>.
- O'Brien, K.J. (1996) 'Rightful Resistance', *World Politics* 49(1): 31-55
- Perry, R. (2007) 'What is a Disaster?', in H. Rodriguez, E. Quarantelli and R. Dynes (eds) *Handbook of Disaster Research*, pp. 1-15R. New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC.
- Pettigrew, A. (1990) 'Longitudinal Field Research On Change: Theory And Practice'. *Organization Science* 1(3): 267-292.
- Philippines Supreme Court (2007) 'The Rule on the Writ of Amparo A.M. no. 07-9-12-SC'.
- Popkin, S. (1980) 'The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Peasant Society', *Theory and Society* 9(3): 411-471.
- Prill-Brett, J. (2007) 'The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) and Legal Pluralism in the Northern Philippines', *Journal of legal pluralism and unofficial law* 55: 11-36.
- Prill-Brett, J. (1994) 'Indigenous Land Rights and Legal Pluralism among Philippine Highlanders', *Law & Society Review* 28(3, Law and Society in Southeast Asia): 687-698.
- Reale, A. and J. Handmer (2011) 'Land Tenure, Disasters and Vulnerability', *Disasters* 35(1): 160-182.
- Ribot, J. (2014) 'Cause and Response: Vulnerability and Climate in the Anthropocene', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*: 1-39.
- Scoones, I., R. Hall, S.M. Borrás, B. White and W. Wolford (2013) 'The Politics of Evidence: Methodologies for Understanding the Global Land Rush', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(3): 469-483.
- Scott, J.C. (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J.C. (1976) *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven, NJ [etc.]: Yale University Press.
- Steinmo, S. and K. Thelen (1992) 'Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics', in S. Steinmo, K. Thelen and F. Longstreth (eds) *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, pp. 1-32. UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Tarrow, S.G. (2011) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. (Third edn) New York: Cambridge University Press.
- UNISDR (2013) *Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action: Summary of reports 2007–2013*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNISDR.
- Unruh, J. and M. Shalaby (2012) 'A Volatile Interaction between Peacebuilding Priorities: Road Infrastructure (Re) Construction and Land Rights in Afghanistan', *Progress in Development Studies* 12(1): 47-61.
- White, B., S.M. Borrás, R. Hall, I. Scoones and W. Wolford (2012) 'The New Enclosures: Critical Perspectives on Corporate Land Deals', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(3-4): 619-647.
- Yap, T. (2014) 'Revival of Once-Famed Visayas Leisure Destination Eyed' *Manila Bulletin*, p. 1 June 2014.
- Zoomers, A. (2010) 'Globalisation and the Foreignisation of Space: Seven Processes Driving the Current Global Land

## Land grabbing, conflict and agrarian-environmental transformations: perspectives from East and Southeast

An international academic conference  
5-6 June 2015, Chiang Mai University

### International Conference Paper Series

The purpose of the 2015 Chiang Mai conference is to contribute to *deepening* and *broadening* of our understanding of global land deals, resource conflict and agrarian-environmental transformations – in the specific regional context of Southeast and East Asia, with special attention to climate change mitigation and adaptation policies as well as the role of China and other middle income countries (MICs) within the region.

The Conference Paper Series aims to generate vibrant discussion around these issues in the build up towards the June 2015 conference – and beyond. We will keep these papers accessible through the websites of the main organizers before, during and after the conference.

### About the Author

**Maria Angelina M. Uson** is a development worker in the Philippines. She has worked with Christian Aid, ChildFund, and CARE on programs involving disaster risk reduction, urban and rural poverty, and environmental management in the Philippines and in fragile states in Southeast Asia such as Myanmar. She has produced publications on land tenure conflicts as a researcher at the Asian Institute of Management and the Institute of Philippine Culture of Ateneo de Manila University. She has a graduate degree in development studies from the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Her research interests revolve around land rights, environmental conflicts, disasters, and climate change.