Title
The Kabuhayan Index: Gendered Dispossession and Resistance in the Philippines

Author
Santos, Stephanie

Publication Date
2018

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Kabuhayan Index:
Gendered Dispossession and Resistance
in the Philippines

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Gender Studies

by

Stephanie Santos

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Kabuhayan Index:

Gendered Dispossession and Resistance

in the Philippines

by

Stephanie Santos

Doctor of Philosophy in Gender Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Kyungwon Hong, Co-Chair

Professor Purnima Mankekar, Co-Chair

Development scholars and practitioners have struggled to implement programs that were inclusive of the needs women in the Global South. As a Global South country lauded for its high levels of gender equality indices, the Philippines offers a generative site to analyze the gendered effects of uneven economic development. While some developing countries like the Philippines report a rising number of women in economic and public life, feminist and Global South scholars have argued that gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment programs have failed and even harmed marginalized populations, such as urban poor women. This research intervenes in this debate by foregrounding the gendered forms of dispossession in communities that are "made poor" in the pursuit of rapid industrialization. Specifically, this research is compelled by the following questions: First, what are the mechanisms through which market-based development

strategies transform Filipino women's bodies into sites of capitalist accumulation? And second, how do Filipino women conceptualize gender equality based on their own epistemes of development and belonging?

This dissertation examines these questions through how Filipinas analyze market-based projects like microcredit and labor export as attacks on their *kabuhayan*, a Filipino word that loosely translates to "life-making." Unlike concepts such as "labor" or "livelihood," *kabuhayan* references a complex, dynamic, and relational set of practices that includes everything from creating informal economies where formal means of employment are impossible and building communal relations of support when state-based social welfare programs are nonexistent, to redefining what livable conditions are and collectively imagining a future for themselves and their communities when no such future seems possible. Focusing on *kabuhayan* highlights the specificities of neoliberal state-capital regimes of extraction. The disruption of vending, community loan groups, and other practices of *kabuhayan* ensures a steady supply of workers for the country's labor export programs, which then translate to the high gender equality index levels in the Philippines.

This research uses interdisciplinary methods to examine institutional and discursive strategies deployed by the state to render women subaltern and to assimilate disenfranchised Filipina women into the flows of global capital and labor. By juxtaposing the gender equality indices and economic development strategies with narratives and cultural productions from marginalized Filipina women, my research illuminates how gender equality indices demonstrate not how Filipinas have been empowered by development schemes, but rather how vulnerable women are violently assimilated into the flows of global capital.

The dissertation of Stephanie Santos is approved.

Victor Bascara

Lucy M. Burns

Lieba Bernice Faier

Kyungwon Hong, Committee Co-Chair

Purnima Mankekar, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

DEDICATION

For Molson, Sandy, and Tex,

whose unconditional love and support continue to inspire me to be a better human.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to have received financial and institutional support for this research project from the University of California, Los Angeles. The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the Labor Center, the International Center, and Graduate Division provided generous financial support for research and fieldwork. The Center for the Study of Women's awarded me a dissertation year fellowship that supported my writing. In addition to UCLA, I have also been fortunate to receive support from the Social Science Research Center's InterAsia Program and from the Association for Asian Studies. Their grants allowed me to workshop early versions of this research at different conferences and have connected me with many scholars in Critical Asian and Critical Filipino Studies.

The Department of Gender Studies at UCLA has been a stimulating and nurturing intellectual home for the past years. The Department of Gender Studies at UCLA has been a challenging and nurturing intellectual home and for that, I am grateful to Samantha Hogan, Jenna Miller-Von Ah, Van Do-Nguyen, and Richard Medrano for their support and friendship. My sincere gratitude to Lieba Faier, Victor Bascara and Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns for being part of my dissertation committee. Your rigorous comments, advice, and support throughout the various stages of this project have been crucial for my growth as a scholar. I would like to especially acknowledge Grace Kyungwon Hong and Purnima Mankekar, my dissertation committee co-chairs. This research would not have been possible without your feedback, generative conversations, and encouragement over all these years. Your writing, research, mentorship, and collaborations have indelibly shaped my development as a scholar and a person.

Probably my favorite thing about going back to graduate school was being in collaboration with incredible colleagues. Thank you especially to Rahel Woldegaber, Freda Fair,

and Preeti Sharma, long-time interlocutors and writing partners whose work continues to inspire me. At UCLA more broadly, there are so many of you who made graduate student life stimulating and even pleasurable: Wendi Yamashita, Rana Sharif, Tina Beyene, Naaz Diwan, Esha Momeni, Dalal Alfares, Jolie Chea, Jacob Lau, Bo Luengsuraswat, Lina Chhun, Irene Soriano, Mary Kao. What a privilege it has been to come to campus to be inspired by your insights, knowledge, and passion. And my colleagues and friends from the Philippines: Bomen Guillermo, Gene Lacza Pilapil, and Crisline Torres-Pilapil, we are an ocean apart but connected through our friendship and our work. Thank you everyone for your labor, your fellowship, the bike rides, meals, and laughter. You are all amazing activists, scholars, teachers, and I am blessed to be in your community.

For my family in the Philippines and in Los Angeles, I would not have made it this far without you. Much *pasasalamat at pagmamahal*. And for my partner JL and our dogs Molson, Sandy, and Tex, your love and support sustain me and inspire me as we move to the next stage of this academic and life journey.

From the bottom of my heart, *salamat*.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

New York University
Master of Arts
Department of Liberal Studies

University of the Philippines
Bachelor of Arts
College of Mass Communication

Research Fellowships and Awards

UCLA Jean and Irving Stone Dissertation Fellowship
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, UCLA Center for Southeast Asian Studies
UCLA Collegium of University Teaching Fellowship
UCLA Asia Institute Graduate Fellowship
Dean's Award for Research, UCLA Graduate Division of Social Sciences
Graduate Research Mentorship Program Fellowship
Association for Asian Studies (AAS) – Philippine Studies Group (PSG) Travel Award
Alice Belkin Memorial Scholarship, UCLA International Institute
UCLA Alumni Association Fellowship
Chancellor's Prize Award, UCLA

Academic Experience

University of California, Los Angeles
Department of Gender Studies
Teaching Fellow

- Taught classes in Bodies (GS 103), Feminist Pedagogy (GS 495), Gender and Globalization (GS 185), and Gender and Development in Southeast Asia (GS 98)

University of California, Los Angeles
Asian American Studies Center
Assistant Editor

- edited articles for the academic journals *Amerasia* and *AAPI Nexus*

Introduction

Development and Filipina Women's *Kabuhayan*

In the northern Philippine city of Baguio, there is a locked storeroom inside the office of one of the corporate-funded consortiums that provide microcredit services to indigenous women displaced from their ancestral lands by mining projects. The storeroom contains things that loan recipients have surrendered to partial payments for delinquent loans—threadbare blankets, tin plates and spoons, the plywood stripped from the wall of someone's house. The staffers take the items as collateral to ensure the next round of loan disbursements and try to sell these items to recuperate the loan amount. In a corner sits a *duyan,* a hand-woven baby basket that the staffers could not quite bring themselves to sell.

Every year since 2006, the Philippines has consistently ranked among the top 10 countries in terms of gender equality, as measured in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*. The Philippines was often the lone country from the Global South that made the top 10, an outlier in a list dominated by wealthier Scandinavian welfare states. In 2013, the World Economic Forum (WEF) singled out the Philippines for its top ranking in women's participation in political life and proposed the "Philippine model" as a viable strategy for promoting women's participation in the paid economy among its fellow developing neighbors. During the Asia Pacific Economic Summit in November 2017, President Donald Trump praised Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's ongoing efforts towards economic development that was inclusive of women, once again lauding the Philippines as an example for its Asian neighbors. I embarked on this research as a Gender and Development advocate, determined to explain the mechanisms through which the Philippines had gained legibility for its gender equality. The

Global Gender Gap Report relies heavily on indices such as measurable increases in women's wages and income, loan repayment rates, and the number of women in elected office to tell a narrative of Third World women triumphantly joining the ranks of modernity via capitalist economic citizenship. However, in storerooms across the Philippines, darker narratives of loss and dispossession emerge from the things that are left behind. Being confronted by that storeroom, surrounded by the mundane objects of everyday life, brought into clear focus the shortcomings of indices such as women's measurable income and the number of women elected into public office. None of the categories I had even began to approximate the pain that were so palpable in that room, in that archive of loss that is made visible. One of the aid workers, a friendly woman in her late twenties, confided to me that she does not like going near the room. "Sometimes, I ask myself how this happened," she said. "How did this room become so crammed? It makes me wonder what good we are doing because the women seem to lose what little they have."

It is this contradiction between statistics of gender equality and Filipina women's narratives of loss that is the focus of my dissertation. My research examines the relationship between neoliberal capital and gendered dispossession in the Philippines. Specifically, I am compelled by the following questions. First, what are the mechanisms through which market-based development strategies transform women's bodies into sites of capitalist accumulation? And second, how do marginalized Filipina women fight back against subalternity and articulate development based on their own epistemes of community and belonging? If neoliberal, market-

based indices such as women's measurable income were inadequate indicators, then what would a woman-centered development index entail?

Kabuhayan as a concept

Gayatri Spivak (1999) writes that Third World woman who was silenced by colonialism and national liberation struggles is now rendered subaltern by her "violent shuttling" into multinational capital. This disappearance of the Third World woman, her rendering as subaltern, is facilitated through various forms of intellectual production, in different institutional spaces, and recorded in various colonial archives. A narrative of loss that is not in line with triumphalist statistics such as the *Global Gender Gap Report* are cast aside in a global economy that is now sustained through the flows of labor and capital, through the consumption of goods and mediated images. In her essay "Righting Wrongs," Spivak notes that, "to understand and state a problem intelligibly and persuasively for the taste of the North is itself a proof of a sort of epistemic discontinuity with the ill-educated rural poor" (18).

My challenge was then to examine the contradiction between triumphalist statistics and archives of loss not from Western developmentalist categories but from epistemes that were relevant to Filipina women. As I continued talking to Filipinas around the Philippines and in the diaspora, I realized that they were telling me through their narratives of protecting and continuing their *kabuhayan.*

Kabuhayan is a Filipino word that loosely translates to "life-making," from the root word "*buhay*" or life. This is a term that I heard again and again as I spoke to Filipina women—that the spatial displacement from their urban, mountain, or coastal locations and the severing of vital

family and community relationships would make it impossible for them to practice their various practices of life-making or *kabuhayan*. In the mountains of the northern Philippines, indigenous Ifugao women sabotaged mining equipment and lay down in front of bulldozers to protect their ancestral lands from mining projects. They resisted relocation to the "mining villages" that would supposedly give them chances to get jobs ("*trabaho*") and housing nearer the urban areas, because their *kabuhayan* was very much embedded in their ancestral mountain land—in their small-scale silver mines, in the rice terraces that their ancestors had carved on the mountainsides, and in the seed banks that Ifugao women have maintained for centuries. The single-family housing units provided by mining companies would make it difficult for communal tasks such as food preparation and raising animals. They would be unable to practice religious rituals that were built around the cycles of planting and harvest. The seedbanks, nurtured by Ifugao women elders who decided what rice varieties to crop depending on soil and weather conditions, would also be lost. Their *kabuhayan*, they maintained, was in their ancestral lands on the slopes of the Cordillera mountains, and they would use their bodies to block bulldozers to protect it.

I heard this term again among urban poor women who refused government orders to move out of Metro Manila to a province 11 miles away, where they were promised secure jobs and housing. *Aling* Idad, 78, who had lived in her "informal community" for almost six decades, bristled in anger at how the government justified the coercive relocation by stating that the people of her community had no forms of "trabaho" or waged forms of employment. "We may not have 'real' jobs," she said through a megaphone as she rallied her fellow residents, "but our *kabuhayan* is here!" For the residents of this this urban poor community, *kabuhayan* meant the

various livelihoods through which the community members earned money. Many residents were wage workers, employed as cleaning or security staff in the nearby malls. For many others, their ways of earning money were in the informal economy—vending, taking in laundry, acting as barkers/callers for the buses and jeepneys. There were other, less licit forms of earning money, as the community had several midwives who provided abortion and "menstrual regulation" services. Community residents also relied on their networks, established through decades of friendship and trust. Women formed "*paluwagan*" communal loan groups where they pool resources to buy goods for vending services and provide emergency loans to group members in need. Much of the money went towards purchasing books and school supplies for their children and grandchildren, who attended a nearby "good" public school. "If we move," said Aling Edad, "there is no guarantee we will be resettled together with our friends, our family. What will happen to our *kabuhayan* there?" When a young mother prodded her to talk about schools, Aling Idad's already powerful voice exploded in anger. "And where will our children go to school? The public schools there are no good. Here in the city, they have a chance to get a good education, to go to university. Never mind us, we are old. But we have to fight for the *kabuhayan* of our children!"

The more I talked to and read the words of these Filipina women, the more I confronted Filipina activists engaged in various activism and resistance to protect what they saw as their *kabuhayan*. Fisherfolk in the central Philippine islands said they continued to face stronger typhoons and the threats of living near the seawall because their *kabuhayan* was imbricated in the ocean. Families with Filipino workers working as domestic helpers in Hongkong, Dubai,

Rome, saw their separation from their loved ones as the price to pay for to ensure their family's *kabuhayan*. From displaced urban poor families who occupied government housing units intended for soldiers, in a desperate attempt to ensure a *kabuhayan* for their children.

In this dissertation, I examine how Filipina women critique neoliberal, market-based concepts of development through asserting their *kabuhayan* or "life-making." Unlike concepts such as "labor" or even "a living," *kabuhayan* references a complex, dynamic, and relational set of practices that includes everything from creating informal economies where formal means of employment are impossible and building communal relations of support when state-based social welfare programs are nonexistent, to redefining what livable conditions are and collectively imagining a future for themselves and their communities when no such future seems possible. This focus on *kabuhayan* traces the specificities of neoliberal state-capital regimes of extraction. This disruption of vending, community loan groups, and other practices of *kabuhayan* ensures a steady supply of workers for the country's export processing zones and labor export programs, which then translate to the high gender "equality" levels in the Philippines

My research explores this question by studying how the state ensures the destruction of Filipina women's *kabuhayan* or practices of life-making through dispossession, displacement, and neglect. I examine how contemporary (post-1995) discourses of governmentality and development in the Philippines orchestrate this violent shuttling of indigenous Filipina women. I will focus specifically how and why neoliberal interventions such as microcredit schemes have become the cornerstone of anti-poverty programs in the Philippines, and how Filipinas are configured as subjects and economic citizens through these indices. Through close readings of

state instruments such as development plans and intertextual analysis of popular cultural products, I examine how the Philippine state naturalizes neoliberal values and economic scripts via official economic development strategies and through hegemonic cultural production. I therefore argue that the Philippine state crafts restrictive forms of neoliberal economic citizenship that erode and disrupt Filipina women's practices of *kabuhayan*, to co-opt and manage the labor, bodies, and lives of indigenous Filipinas into the flows of global capital.

My research contributes to the literature on gender and development policies, especially as globalization fuels greater labor migration and the erosion of the parallel economy and towards understanding capitalism in postcolonies such as the Philippines, by centering the vibrant ways that marginalized Filipinas are fighting for their *kabuhayan*, articulating counterhegemonic discourses that build upon their own epistemes of development, and harnessing the capacities of transnational and translocal women-centered alliances in the Philippines and the Southeast Asia region.

Public-Private Partnerships

The Philippines' reliance on public-private partnerships for utilities, social projects, and ultimately for economic development undergirds much of the anti-poverty and disaster management policies discussed in this dissertation, including the much-lauded gender empowerment programs. In 1990, the administration of President Corazon Aquino enacted the Build Operate Transfer Scheme, designed to attract private contractors to build and maintain facilities in return for a "freedom" to charge users fees to recover investment and operating expenses. President Aquino was swept into office during the 1986 People Power revolution that

also deposed President Marcos, who ruled the country from 1965 to 1986. President Aquino's administration prioritized paying down its foreign debt to boost its credit rating and therefore, any public sector spending (e.g., infrastructure, utilities) were outsourced to private contractors. In 1994, the Philippine Senate under President Aquino's successor President Fidel Ramos passed Republic Act 7718, popularly known as the Build-Operate-Transfer Law, which states in Section 1 that:

> it is the declared policy of the State to recognize the indispensable role of the private sector as the main engine for national growth and development and provide the most appropriate incentives to mobilize private resources for the purpose of financing the construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure and development projects normally financed and undertaken by the Government (RA 7718, 1994)

The development policies of the Aquino and Ramos governments were early iteration of the explicitly neoliberal direction that would characterize Philippine development policies in the 21st century. This idea of the "indispensable role of the private sector" was enshrined the Philippine Development Plan (2011-2016), the goals and strategies of Benigno S. Aquino, who was president of the Philippines from 2011 to 2016. Under the economist president's leadership, the Philippines set out to position itself as an environment for investment, innovation and appropriate pricing" (NEDA, 2011). Towards this, President Aquino established the Public-Private Partnership Center to provide technical assistance and facilitate partnerships between government agencies and the private sector because the country "cannot rely on public funds alone" (Public-Private Partnership Center, 2011).

While the stated goal of the Plan was to "provide an enabling environment for private sector investment," it also had the additional task of "harness(ing) public-private sector

partnerships" to "create decent and adequate employment opportunities for Filipinos to reduce poverty" (Public-Private Partnership Center, 2011). This neoliberal turn exemplifies Wendy Brown's description of neoliberal governmentality, where the market values are extended and disseminated beyond the economy to all social institutions, including public services that were traditionally the purview of the public sector, such as transportation and anti-poverty programs. By making the market the "organizing and regulative principle of state and society" (Brown, 2005: 41), the Philippines effectively embraced a neoliberal restructuring, born in the aftermath of the People's Power Revolution in 1986. This neoliberal turn meant not only return and solidification of economic policies such as foreign debt servicing, structural adjustment, and deregulation. It also meant that social development goals such as eradicating poverty, improving access to education, and promoting gender equality by facilitating women's roles in the paid economy were also to be done in significant partnership with the private sector.

Review of Literature

My dissertation draws on broad field of scholarship that has been critical of the increased role of market logic, the uneven allocation of resources, and the politicization of humanitarian and development aid. The uneven geographies of modernity, global divisions of labor, and hierarchies of power re-situate knowledge by examining the tensions between universal claims of development as "progress" and the specifics that shape both complimentary and contradictory engagements between the donors/benefactors and the aid recipients. Furthermore, my focus on *kabuhayan* as a development analytic builds upon scholarship on how gendered hierarchical relations manifest in the structures of development organizations and practice. My research thus

contributes to scholarship on the powerful role of gendered hierarchies, uneven development practices, and neoliberal economic strategies as central to gender and development policy and practice in the Philippines and the Global South.

Critical Development Studies

Scholars like Alain de Janvry (1981), David Harvey (2007), Wendy Brown (2005) and Arturo Escobar (1994, 2004) have contributed to development studies scholarship that critique the limitations of neoliberal formulations of development and articulate visions of development around the epistemologies of marginalized and subaltern populations. Earlier studies had employed classical Marxist analysis in examining the core features of a capitalist mode of production (Harvey 1985), especially when practiced in semicapitalist, semifeudal, postcolonial societies such as Latin America (de Janvry 1981).

In Third World countries such as the Philippines, the advent of World Bank- and IMF-mandated structural adjustment programs (SAPs) have installed a neoliberal development discourse which has expanded market-driven political rationality beyond economics and into social life (Brown 1995). Harvey (1985) emphasizes the discursive effects of this framing neoliberalism as a discourse of freedom and liberty when he traces how neoliberalism redefines "freedom" as entrepreneurial freedom—free market, free trade. He argues that neoliberalism has been naturalized into a "hegemonic mode of discourse that has pervasive effects on the ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it has become incorporated into the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world" (145).

In Africa, for example, Kamari Maxine Clarke (2009) analyzes how international and development NGOs have created "epistemic communities" committed to propagating liberalist human rights language about justice. Slavoj Zizek (2005) criticizes how Western ideological formations of "human rights" that have served as alibis for militarism and neocolonial, market-based interventions. I draw from these insights to argue that while a limited population benefits from neoliberal development discourse, and how this destructive form of development is secured at the expense of populations who are considered disposable. My research builds on their analyses of how such a human rights concept further re-inscribes the neoliberal interests of Western states, through rhetoric around African victim as a ghost, an apolitical figure who can only attend to her own survival. The equivalent in development theory is the figure of the helpless Third World victim—often a subaltern woman subjected to the violent shuttling of development discourse. It is against these figurations that I juxtapose the figures of urban poor Filipina women fighting to protect their *kabuhayan*.

Many scholars from the Third World have centered their critiques of neoliberal forms of development from the epistemologies of marginalized populations. Escobar (1994) lays the foundations for a discursive analysis of Western economy as "a system of production, power, and signification" (216), thus making visible how historically and culturally specific concepts of developmentalism are being used to redefine the very core of Third World identity. While Escobar locates his work in South America, feminist scholars from Southeast Asia have employed discursive analysis to study how the state carefully coordinates the illusion of free choice via repressive and ideological state apparatuses to regulate the subjectivities and labor of

its female citizens, such as sex workers in Vietnam (Nguyen-Vo 2008) and subaltern women in the Philippines (Tadiar 2004, Tadiar 2009). These critiques help to make visible how neoliberalism further enshrines Western systems of knowledge and the resultant marginalization of non-Western epistemologies, and thus provide important frameworks for recognizing and conceptualizing non-Western epistemes of development such as *kabuhayan*.

Development and Subalternity

A crucial part of my own investigations into economic development discourses is to center the experience of subaltern populations in articulating and evaluating neoliberal concepts of development. Spivak (1988) provides a generative starting point for analyzing subalternity when argues that subaltern women are excluded from or have no access to economic, political, or cultural systems of representation, thus rendering them unable to speak. Spivak's analysis of the workings of colonialism in rendering people as subaltern are key in my own analysis of the genealogy of neoliberal programs, and how these have been installed and reproduced in the Philippines via colonialism and the collaboration of a colonized elite. Her theoretical framework provides a useful springboard to help me think about these following questions: How do subaltern Filipina women come to be inducted into society as consumers? And how are those who remain outside the reach of colonialism/capital rendered as subaltern?

In response to changes that neoliberalism has engendered particularly in facilitating the flow of capital and labor, Spivak (2000) reworks the idea that subaltern women are still positioned outside the reach of capital, instead positing that due to globalization, subaltern females ("they're almost always women") are now women who are "geographically but not

socially mobile." What are the implications then for Filipinas who are rendered subaltern because of geographic displacements due to militarization and/or economic interventions (such as corporate mining and corporate farming), and who are geographically mobile because they are targeted by the Philippine government's labor export policy? How are subaltern Filipinas who women who were previously unreached by or invisible to the state turned into commodities to be traded in the flows of capital?

Giorgio Agamben (2000) analyzes how the definitions of "human" in such universalist human rights discourses gloss over how people in power have "biopower" over disenfranchised or marginalized people, who are relegated to bare life. Agamben's argument thus echoes Aihwa Ong (2007) and Gayatri Spivak (2007) that there are "growing sections of humankind [who] are no longer representable inside the nation-state" (3). Global South scholars have noted how dominant critiques of neoliberalism can mask complex and often contradictory processes of "actually existing neoliberalism" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) that yield narratives of exclusion, solidarity, and resistance. Gillian Hart, for example, challenges to "grasp the complex back-and-forth processes and contestations through which multiple, interconnected arenas in state and civil society have been remaking one another and to the slippages, openings, contradictions, and possibilities for alliances" (Hart, 2008: 684). By centering Filipina women's *kabuhayan*, this research offers a way to visualize and analyze these slippages and possibilities as a contribution to the growing scholarship on neoliberalism in the Global South.

Cultural Studies of Development Discourse

The classic texts of Cultural Studies have laid down the foundations for studying and challenging the cultural logics, and theoretical approaches of neoliberal development discourse, particularly governmentality (Foucault 2000) and Orientalism (Said 1979). Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo (2008), and Neferti Tadiar (2009) have incorporated cultural critique in making visible the new forms of governmentality that are embedded in neoliberal development discourse. Raymond Williams (1976) locates culture as a superstructure of a capitalist base and instead see culture as a "structure of feeling" that has material effects (Williams 1976). I draw from their work to argue that for vulnerable Filipina women, *kabuhayan* functions as a structure of feeling, one that "operates in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities." This intimacy of *kabuhayan* is one of the reasons that it remains ineffable in indices such as *The Global Gender Gap Report.*

Visual culture, aestheticization, and fragmented narratives form a new "cultural logic" that furthers global capitalism (Jameson 1990). Aihwa Ong (1999) explores how these systems of governmentality are at work transnationally, in the flows between different regimes and social orders. In an era of globalization, cultural production is further implicated in the states' attempts to further naturalize neoliberal values of "freedom," even as these cultural texts are themselves affected by historical processes such as globalization and ongoing class struggles (Ebert 2009).

Scholars like Pheng Cheah (2006) and Carol Hau (2006) have argued that globalization is built upon very specific constructs of humanity, ones that shore up the market rationality that characterizes neoliberal development discourse. Hau mines literary texts, doing close readings of canonical Filipino literature to expose the violent underpinnings involved in the task of

imagining the nation (Hau 2000) as well as readings of more contemporary literature to illustrate how the transnational flows of capital relies on the control and discipline of Filipino bodies at the hands of their home and host states (Hau 2006). Cheah (2006) similarly conducts close readings of literary texts to argue the idea the very idea of a universal experience of being human is actually "contaminated because [it is] repeatedly rewoven back into the workings of global capitalism" (13).

My dissertation examines how Philippine social development policies—anti-poverty, disaster management, and fair housing—are likewise contaminated by the logic of global capitalism. As I discuss in the body of this dissertation, the concept of the Philippines taking its place in the global economy is also predicated in marginalizing and discrediting forms of knowledge and socialities that are incompatible with capitalist values, such as *kabuhayan.* Such studies thus follow in the vein of Edward Said who conceived of Orientalism as system of knowledge that facilitates and imposes ontologies of colonialism that erase, devalue, and marginalize non-Western epistemologies, and Erich Wolfe's (1992) critique of historiographies that study non-European peoples as "standing outside history." This privileging of Western forms of knowledge have resulted in imposing colonial ways of organizing knowledge, space, and social relations on a territory (Anderson 1983). I also incorporate a critique of how this "modernist ideology" (Scott 1998) championed by states that imagine their First World future through invalidating the epistemologies of marginalized populations. Specifically, I argue that the Philippine state inscribes legibility upon its subjects through techniques such as standardization, codification, and simplification--processes that make women legible to the state,

but only in very limiting and specific ways, and only if they turn their backs on non-Western development practices such as *kabuhayan*.

Scholars like Reynaldo Ileto (1988) have responded by crafting a Filipino historiography that challenges the "linear developmental" mode of framing and understanding Philippine history. My project of studying the narratives of development of subaltern Filipino women builds on Ileto's concept of taking "disjointed histories" in ways that contribute to non-linear accounts of Philippine history. Dylan Rodriguez (2010) adds a transnational lens to this analysis of Filipino history and subjecthood, by arguing that the political analytic and discursive modality of "Filipino American" discourse engenders a specific form of citizenship that "celebrates the Filipino-American as a cooperative participant in the United States nation-building project." Filipino American subjectivity requires a strong buying-in into goals of a "peculiar and specific American articulation of a bourgeois and substantively white supremacist liberal democratic state." This cooptation rests on multiple historical and contemporary articulations of an "unnamable violence that masks the genocidal preconditions of 'multiculturalist' white supremacy, to which this discourse unwittingly subscribes." My research broadly builds on Rodriguez's efforts to make visible how this "unnamable violence" permeates Filipino subjectivity, looking at how economic development discourse continues to engineer a Filipino subjectivity that allies itself closely with US economic interests, often at the expense of already vulnerable Filipinas.

Numerous critiques of development also offer ways of imagining social life and social organization outside the confining boundaries of capitalism and Western-defined nation-states

(Gilroy 1993, Glissant 1999). What are the possibilities then for subaltern Filipino women whose bodies are commodified and exported, and whose liminal status challenges the limiting strictures of neoliberal democratic citizenship?

Transnational and Feminist Development Discourse

My research examines the generative possibilities of *kabuhayan* as a feminist praxis, that embodies Chandra Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander (2010) describe as "geographically located but not geographically bound." Mohanty and Alexander assert that such a praxis makes it possible to ask questions that challenge the statist categories of nation and capital. This approach necessarily goes beyond the economic realm, as Lourdes Beneria (2003) does in her analysis of how Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) open "the doors to global capital, and the enforcement of rules and regulations for the smooth functioning of the market" (71). Beneria emphasizes the labor that is left out of this analysis—volunteer work, kinship-based agricultural networks, and domestic work. Since these are areas of work traditionally carried out by women, Beneria thus exposes how, in addition to being colonialist and imperialist, the material and social relations that are privileged and rendered invisible are also gendered processes.

Several feminists have also framed neoliberal development as a process of violence, including studies about how financial institutions create "market-friendly" economies in African countries through disaster capitalism (Meintjes et al 2002, Macklin 2004). Cynthia Cockburn's (2004) framing of SAP policies and its instruments as part of a continuum of violence is a good framework for understanding how, through economic policies such as development aggression, the state is complicit in exposing women to violence. This complicity is not merely because of a

lack of state action to protect women. In its creation of a market-friendly economy, the state actively exposes Filipinas to harm.

Recognizing the connections between agreements negotiated among international financial organizations, transnational corporations, and comprador elites and the growing violence in the lives of marginalized and vulnerable groups of women, Cindy Katz (2007) writes, "exposing the contours and entailments is only a first step. Redressing its multiple oppressions in their rhizomatic spread and tangle requires a political imagination as geographically lithe and symbolically compelling as global capitalism." Katz's imagery of rhizomatic spreads and tangles is a very effective way of making visible the multiple and layered ways that capital logic devalues women's *kabuhayan* and in the process, co-opts the lives and labor of Filipina women.

Chandra Mohanty (1991), in her classic "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," criticizes liberal Western feminists' this assumption of a homogenous oppression of Third World women. She notes that this distinction between traditional and westernized categories is based on how feminism's norm or referent group continued to be women already privileged by class and race or residing in advanced capitalist societies. Gender and Development (GAD) approaches are implicitly assume that Third World women cannot "represent themselves," and must therefore rely on their Western counterparts for representation. This lets liberal feminists, mostly Western, essentially define the goals of feminism in the capitalist scripts of economic and political access, thereby perpetuating economic and cultural colonization. This standpoint plays a key role in legitimizing interventions like creating jobs in export processing zones in terms of women's empowerment. I also draw from Mohanty's

arguments of classification as a form of colonization to illuminate how neoliberal measures such as women in the paid economy facilitates the destruction of women's *kabuhayan*.

Inderpal Grewal (2001) critiques the limited epistemologies of a Western, liberal that focuses feminist issues around domestic violence and rape, to the exclusion of the socioeconomic, environmental, and health problems that concern poor women. Western feminists therefore take it upon themselves to "save" non-Western women, employing a Eurocentric human rights framework that is largely irrelevant for women whose lives are rendered subaltern by the "new alliances" spawned by liberalism and neoliberalism. Mohanty (2003) also critiques this savior narrative, arguing that "women's work" as a category of analysis, and recognizing "spatial economy" as a site of capital production and accumulation. Such an analytical approach makes visible both the versatility and specificity of the exploitative processes of capitalism, especially the "compassionate capitalism" of many global feminists that Grewal describes.

Chela Sandoval (2003) complements Mohanty's and Grewal's critique of the growing capitalization and financialization of subaltern communities. Sandoval addresses the difficulty of being interpellated as citizen/subjects, whose forms of resistance are constantly in danger of being co-opted and reinforcing the dominant social order. Sandoval proposes a framework of "differential consciousness," an ideological tactic that lets subordinated groups move through the various hegemonic political strategies, which she groups under equal rights, revolutionary mode of consciousness, supremacism, and separatism. Sandoval's concept therefore provides a useful analytic support to Grewal's critique of the imperialist humanitarian discourse, while opening

possibilities for collective organizing that Mohanty envisions, that groups such as women-led urban poor groups in the Philippines embody.

Several feminist critiques have also focused on how neoliberalism creates and reproduces gendered forms of governmentality in Southeast Asia (Ong 1999). Using Vietnam as her site of analysis, Nguyen-Vo (2008) investigates how repressive state apparatuses (like police, prisons) and ideological state apparatuses function to regulate the very subjectivities of citizens such as sex workers and middle- and upper-class women (who were potential consumers). This regulation of done through a careful coordination of knowledge production, based on contributions of "experts" and the illusion of free choice in a neoliberal economy. This is a subtle but brutal and very effective form of social control, as it enlists the complicity of the individual whose life is being restricted.

Anna Guevarra (2009) studies the Philippine government's labor export policies as a "technology of government," how the state employs and promotes tropes of good citizenship based on neoliberal values to encourage labor migration. Robyn Rodriguez's (2010) investigates how the Philippines deploys institutional and discursive strategies to mobilize its citizens for migrant labor across the world. By focusing on Filipina women's *kabuhayan*, my research illuminates the Philippine state constructs conditions of vulnerability that ensure the supply of women's bodies and women's labor for the labor export program.

In addition to the works already cited, feminist scholars have been at the forefront of analyzing and making visible the violence that globalization visits upon already vulnerable populations, especially Third World women (Sen and Gowan 1987, Moghadam 2005). Many

others have built upon critical feminist praxis to offer critiques and alternatives to a destructive globalization (Narayan 1997, Gibson-Graham 1996, Gibson-Graham 2006). Escobar and Harcourt (2005) analyze how women respond to global forces in their everyday lives; mobilize transnationally around place, and what women define as "their environment and what determines their livelihoods, being, and identity: that is, body, home, local environments, and community -- the arenas that women are motivated to defend, define and own politically" (2). By focusing on Filipina women's *kabuhayan*, my research extends these studies by examining how urban poor women in the Philippines are articulating alternative forms of development, nation, citizenship, and belonging through intersectional feminist praxis. By claiming spaces where they can build *kabuhayan* for their families and communities, my research offers a framework to make visible how Filipinas cope with and create new lives under conditions of global capital.

Methodology

My research employs several interdisciplinary methods to examine the institutional and discursive strategies deployed by the Philippine state to destroy women's *kabuhayan*. I begin with the concept of "trenchant interdisciplinarity" (Kang 2002), the assumption that the knowledge-making practices in various disciplines result in partial knowledges, at best. Thus, much of the previous policy-based research on gender and development (World Economic Forum 2010) have shown how rapid industrialization, labor export, and other neoliberal development strategies have resulted in strong, economic gains for women while obscuring conditions through which vulnerable Filipina women are rendered visible, intelligible, and subaltern. My research therefore juxtaposes texts such as policy statements, economic development strategies, visual culture, and media to address the "parametric distortions" (Guha

1994) built into disciplines such as historiography and policy research and to articulate more textured understandings of development, subalternity, and *kabuhayan*.

Ethnography

Chapter 1 of my research draws from ethnography conducted in the summer months of 2012 and 2013 in an urban poor community in Metro Manila that I am calling "Sitio Mapalad". President Benigno Aquino had assumed office in 2010 and had implemented an aggressive strategy of converting "idle" public lands into commercial zones, to be run under his administration's public private partnerships. As an informal community located along what is now commercially viable land, the struggle for Sitio Mapalad continues to be among the most high-profile struggles between urban poor residents and both the city and state governments.

KADAMAY ("Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap" or Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor) had always been at the forefront of organizing against displacement of urban poor communities caused by development projects. Through the assistance of Kadamay representatives, I spent time in Sitio Mapalad, attending community meetings and talking with residents about their fears, their hopes, their survival practices, and why they insist that leaving the urban sitio would destroy their practices of *kabuhayan*. Kadamay works with urban poor groups who are constantly targeted by private, non-profit Christian groups who engage in aggressive proselytizing campaigns in addition to what they call their "humanitarian work". The refusal of Kadamay members to surrender their *kabuhayan* provided rich insights into how vulnerable Filipinas help their communities remain intact, as they negotiate the sudden and massive changes to their socioeconomic and political ways of life.

I spent the summers of 2012 and 2013 doing fieldwork in urban poor communities in Metro Manila, examining how urban poor women's lived experiences illustrate the violent effects of the various economic and political instruments employed by the Philippine state. It is

through the qualitative techniques of participant observation and structured interviews that I examined how a development episteme that respected women's *kabuhayan* would be the only meaningful form of development for urban poor Filipina women.

Interviews — Through the assistance of Kadamay, I spoke with urban poor women who were still in the process of resisting the coercive and violent ways that the police and private security guards have been destroying Sitio Mapalad. They spoke of men coming into the community firing shots indiscriminately, mysterious fires that burned their neighbors' houses, and women who had been threatened with detention, sexual violence, and death. These interviews were a critical component of my research, illustrating the forms of violence that women were actively subjected to as they protected their *kabuhayan*.

The displacement of urban poor women illustrates how nation-states are "systems of cultural representation" that legitimize some people's access to resources while limiting the access of others (McClintock, 2003). Since the idea of nation is premised upon sanctioned and institutionalized differences that are mitigated by gender and class, the constructions of a default, male, cosmopolitan citizen contributes to rendering already marginalized and vulnerable populations such as urban poor women as subaltern.

Participant Observation — I had the opportunity to attend Kadamay community meetings, where I was first struck by how urban poor women were very active in campaigning against displacement and in advocating for their community-based practices of *kabuhayan*. Mohanty (2003) states that feminist solidarities and coalitions will only be possible when we can have ethical and caring dialogues about what is important to women, based on their localities and

needs. Through participant observation of Kadamay, I examined how urban poor women articulated the commonality of their concerns about neoliberal development aggression, and how they protected what they saw as their *kabuhayan*. E. San Juan Jr. (2002) also presents a framework for analyzing cultural, economic, and political expressions and conditions as contingent on one another, both in nation-building and in waging collective resistance. The work of the Kadamay, I argue, incorporates such an "intersectional revolution" in their approach to the globalized marketplace wherein low-income women from the Philippines and Southeast Asia are commodified.

I believe that Kadamay is creating fertile spaces for articulating alternative, intersectional concepts of development. These spaces are fraught with tension and friction, but also present new opportunities for alliances, as seen in how Kadamay is also strongly involved in workers' rights movements and the resistance to the current President Duterte's drug war. The work of this organization in these communities would thus generate data on the meanings of citizenship and belonging, of development and what development entails, from the standpoints of indigenous Third World women.

Discursive analysis

In chapters 2 and 3, I use discursive analysis of government responses to the victims of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and the Kadamay members who occupied empty government housing in 2017 to illuminate how the state paints urban poor women who refuse their cooptation into neoliberal development strategies as undeserving and unworthy of citizenship. This includes critical readings of news reports where government representatives criticized residents who refused to leave their coastal communities as stubborn or ignorant of the dangers of living near the Pacific Ocean, or worse, as people who actively refuse the government's assistance. I

examine how neoliberal disaster management programs under then President Aquino actively lead to the displacement of fisherfolk. In his study of the moral politics surrounding structural adjustment programs, Ferguson (2006) shows how blaming local corruption and management for the failure of economic reforms in African countries obscures the role of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and Western donors in promulgating this corruption. Through an examination of disaster management and rehabilitation programs, my research partially illuminates how the technocratic language embedded in these political and economic instruments continue to support neoliberal regimes in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Similarly, I examine government responses to 2017's "Occupation Pabahay" (Occupy Housing), an organized campaign where some 20,000 Kadamay members walked from Metro Manila to the province of Bulacan to claim idle government housing. Through an examination of news coverage and government pronouncements that characterize the occupation as anarchy and theft from deserving police and military, this dissertation examines how media creates a narrative of the urban poor that, as Talal Assad (2003) states, "at once the object of a state's care and a means of securing its own power" (137). My research will examine the forms of citizenship and national belonging being articulated in these media reports. I argue that there are clear gendered limits to liberal rights-bearing subjecthood, as seen the state's violent responses to women who protect their *kabuhayan*. Furthermore, by portraying urban poor city dwellers and fisherfolk as barriers to development, I argue that these media reports and state pronouncements render women who insist on their *kabuhayan* as vulnerable and subaltern.

My examination of representations of the Kadamay members and fisherfolk in media illuminates how the state marks urban poor Filipinos as situated outside national membership, which, as Lisa Lowe (1996) notes, serves as a critical ground of reimagining what it means to be a citizen outside neoliberal indices such as income. Lowe examines production to illuminate

"alternative histories and memories that provide the grounds to imagine subject, community, and practice in new ways" (96). It is in this vein that I turn to the cultural production of urban poor Filipinos to examine "new forms of subjectivity and new ways of questioning the government of human life by the nation state." (29) Specifically, this dissertation examines written, visual, and aural narratives circulated by urban poor community members in alternative print, broadcast, and digital and social media. I argue that through these interdisciplinary archives, urban poor Filipinas embody what Lowe calls the alternative histories and memories. It is through these archives that Filipina women bring out the violence of neoliberal development and articulate visions of development based on *kabuhayan*.

Chapters Summaries

Chapter One, ""We were not poor, but we were *made* poor": The Production of Bare Life in Sitio Mapalad," is an ethnography of Metro Manila urban poor community located in what is now commercially valuable land. Through interviews with long-time women residents and analyses and close readings of instruments such as city anti-squatting ordinances, this chapter examines how the state criminalizes many of the residents' ways of making a living (e.g., vending, midwife services, unlicensed motorpools), severely compromising residents' ability to make a living and to access services such as clean water, utilities, and sanitation. Through the spectacular violence of police-led demolitions, intimidation and threats, and the neglect of the community's basic needs, the state strives to render as disposable the women who relied on the now-criminalized forms of *kabuhayan*. These normalized conditions in turn justify state intervention in the guise of poverty alleviation programs, administered under the government's public-private partnership plans.

In Chapter Two, I focus on another urban poor community, this time in the central Philippine island of Leyte. Entitled "Unnatural Disasters: Typhoon Yolanda and the Destruction of *Kabuhayan*," this chapter is an examination of how economic development and disaster management policies set the stage for the more than 6,300 deaths from Typhoon Yolanda in 2013. I draw from an interdisciplinary archive of newspaper reports, televised interviews, and documentary film to examine the biopolitical conditions of disposability in Barangay Seawall, a poor, informal community of fisherfolk on Leyte's western coast. Using Barangay Seawall in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda as a site for analysis, I trace how residents have been constructed as vulnerable through a systematic dismantling of their *kabuhayan*. The chapter examines the history of typhoon inequalities in the Philippines, locating the state's disaster management policies along a continuum of colonial and neoliberal social policies designed to disappear vulnerable populations—indigenous Filipinos, urban poor, fisherfolk—from public view. Via these biopolitical mechanisms of disposability, I trace how the state made Barangay Seawall residents vulnerable to Typhoon Yolanda well before the wind and storm surges hit Leyte. The second part of this chapter examines the residents' continued refusal to move from the Barangay Seawall, a decision that state and local government officials use to threaten violent demolitions or justify their neglect. Through residents' narratives of previous displacements from their coconut farms and their reliance on fishing for income and food, this chapter highlights the various the reasons for the residents' seemingly incomprehensible decision to stay at area marked as a "no build zone." Thus, for many residents, Barangay Seawall represents their last opportunity to maintain a *kabuhayan* for themselves and their children.

The previous two chapters examine urban poor efforts to protect their modes of life-making by resisting forced relocations. But what happens when is *kabuhayan* is made

impossible? In Chapter Three, entitled "'And so I rallied the women': Occupy Pandi and Urban Poor Women's Activism", I draw from an interdisciplinary archive of raw news footage, film documentaries, and interviews to trace the events leading to "Occupy Pandi," where an urban poor women's group led the occupation of 6,000 idle government houses intended for police and soldiers. Through a critical reading of *Mother Mameng*, a 2012 documentary biography of urban poor leader Carmen Deunida, I analyze how urban poor women have absorbed and mitigated the violences of economic development policies enacted in the Philippines since the post-World War II period. I then analyze the ongoing, urban poor-led occupation of government housing in Pandi, Bulacan as a response to the steady destruction of their *kabuhayan* in their original communities.

The conclusion, "Calvary of the Poor," is an epilogue chapter examining how urban poor women mobilize for social change in ways that connect their own struggles for *kabuhayan* with national issues such as labor contractualization, militarization, and the state-sponsored extrajudicial killings under President Duterte.

Using *kabuhayan* as an analytic thus illuminates how urban poor women employ a feminist praxis that exposes and critiques the capitalist logics that undergird the nation. It is vital to look beyond the neoliberalism's success stories, to interrogate the fall away experiences that emerge from triumphalist narratives of the *Global Gender Gap Report*, narratives that are articulated in locked storerooms housing tin plates and empty baby baskets. Beyond these narratives of loss, however, this dissertation argues for the possibilities of conceiving of a development that nurtures or at least does not decimate women's practices of life-making. This feminist praxis makes it possible to imagine forms of development that are predicated on non-

Western and non-developmentalist terms, such as the tantalizing possibility of development based on *kabuhayan.*

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Chapter One

"We were not poor, we were *made* poor":
The Production of Bare Life in Sitio Mapalad

In his inaugural speech in 2010, Philippine President Benigno Aquino Jr. vowed that the Philippines will be "a nation serious about its commitments and which harmonizes its national interests with its international responsibilities. The country will achieve this by being a "predictable and consistent place for investment, a nation where everyone will say, 'it all works.'" (Aquino, 2010). An economist by training, Aquino campaigned on a platform highlighting his ability to extract "maximum economic gain from minimum resources" Throughout his six-year term, this principle of market logic has been the basis of a wide range of Aquino's government policies, ranging from rapid industrialization to poverty alleviation.

The task of making the Philippine economy hospitable to capitalist investment has necessitated shifting forms of governmentality that further subject already marginalized groups such as urban poor communities to greater violence. I draw from Michel Foucault (2008) and Achille Mbembe (2003) to examine how the government exerts biopolitical and necropolitical power over vulnerable populations to re-imagine and recreate the Philippines as an environment that is hospitable to neoliberal capitalist development.

While its neighbors had emerged as "Tiger economies" during the early 1990s, the dream of achieving newly industrializing country (NIC) status remained elusive for the Philippines. Instead, because previous neoliberal administrations had eliminated capital controls, the Philippines lost $4.6 billion in speculative funds. Decades of structural adjustment and compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) conditions had turned the Philippines from a food exporter into a food importing country. Trade liberalization had steadily eroded the

country's manufacturing base, so by the 1990s, industries like paper products and textiles were decimated. The poverty rate climbed to 35 percent (Bello, 2009).

In response to this crisis and the growing criticism of neoliberal doctrine, the Aquino administration adopted a "public-private partnership" approach with the goal of putting the Philippines back on track to rapid industrialization. A key component of this approach is the creation of commercial and business "development zones" to attract foreign investors. However, what happens when land slotted for conversion to development zones is already home to urban poor communities? How are vulnerable populations further marginalized by development policies? The Aquino government's response to such critiques—the recasting of vulnerable populations as threats to progress and national security—illustrates how neoliberalism maintains its long afterlife in the Philippines even after spectacular financial crises. In the case of the Philippines, the police and military are deployed against urban poor populations who have been constructed as threats to progress and national security for their refusal to vacate their lands. The institutional and discursive practices around "national security" are thus important formations that enable the transformation and continuity of neoliberal doctrine.

One such community is *Sitio* Mapalad, presently a community of 7,000 low-income families built on fifty hectares of public land owned by the National Housing Authority (NHA). When the NHA sold this land to corporate developers as part of a proposed central business district, Metro Manila authorities dispatched police to evict the Sitio Mapalad residents from their homes. Based on interviews and ethnographic research conducted in summer I examine the various institutional and discursive mechanisms deployed by the state to displace and dispossess Sitio Mapalad residents by painting them as obstacles to development and threats to national security.

The first part of this chapter draws from Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben to examine how the state deploys biopolitical power to discipline and regulate the residents of Sitio Mapalad. In addition to overt displays such as use of police brutality for demolitions, I examine state's role in producing and maintaining poverty as a biopolitical mechanism enacted upon the sitio residents, compromising their ability to make a living and obtain basic needs such as clean water, adequate shelter, and medical care. The social and political conditions that normalize such forms of violence in Sitio Mapalad function as biopolitical mechanisms that generate the conditions of bare life for the residents of Sitio Mapalad (Agamben, 1998) and in many cases, early death. These normalized conditions in turn justify state intervention in the guise of poverty alleviation programs, administered under the Aquino government's public-private partnership programs.

Building upon the work of Achille Mbembe (2003), the second part of this chapter examines Sitio Mapalad as a death world, where residents are subjected to necropolitical regulations such as state-generated statistical data, criminalization, and poverty alleviation programs. These necropolitical mechanisms engender the subjugation of life of Sitio Mapalad residents by constructing them as unworthy subjects who may be exposed to violence in pursuit of economic development. This section also studies the violence against Sitio Mapalad residents as narratives that "fall away" in discourses of globalization. Drawing on interviews with long-time women residents, this paper examines the gendered dispossessions and displacements that the sitio's women residents encounter because of new, neoliberal economic development strategies.

This chapter thus traces neoliberalism in the Philippines as a series of biopolitical and necropolitical regulatory mechanisms that further subject already marginalized groups to

violence. By using market rationality to violently displace or incorporate disposable populations, this paper argues that such regulatory mechanisms enable the transformation and continuities of neoliberalism doctrine even in the wake of the damage caused by the Asian financial crisis. The linkage between shifting forms of governmentality and dispossession in communities that are disenfranchised and "made poor" in the pursuit of rapid industrialization illuminates the mechanisms through which the state deploys the rhetoric of development as poverty alleviation to recast vulnerable populations as resources to be expropriated and co-opted into the flows of global capital.

Biopolitics and Necropolitics in *Sitio* Mapalad

In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1971) diagnoses a "threshold of biological modernity" where the state mobilizes biopolitics to subject the biological life of individuals and populations to state politics. For Foucault, analyzing the state as a population rather than a territory means a shift from sovereign power over territories to sovereign power over life. Foucault notes that this new form of power thus makes it possible for the state to "protect life and to authorize a holocaust." In the case of the Philippines, biopower underlies the state's inconsistent approaches to urban poor communities who are subjected to neglect, pathologized as sources of disease and crime, or vilified as impediments to economic progress.

Sitio Mapalad is an urban poor settlement in Metro Manila located along the northern part of Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA). The sitio was established in the 1950s as a resettlement area for the thousands of families who migrated to Manila after being displaced by the Japanese Occupation and the Second World War. Far from a housing program, national and city officials saw the removal of the urban poor as a necessary step towards rebuilding downtown Manila's financial district. The 50 hectares set aside for Sitio Mapalad was little more

than neglected fields in a larger, 250-hectare land parcel owned by the National Housing Authority (NHA). In the 1950s, EDSA marked the outer edges of Metro Manila, situating Sitio Mapalad at the far ends of the city. Until the 1980s, the lack of electricity and water, the scarcity of public transportation, and distance from the financial district ensured that this land had no commercial value.

In the summer of 2012, I conducted interviews with several women in Sitio Mapalad. For this chapter, I focus on the narratives of Caridad Augusto and Mariane Nakpil (pseudonyms), both long-time residents and active organizers. At 78 years old, *Aling* Caridad "Idad" Augusto (pseudonym) was one of the oldest residents of Sitio Mapalad and part of the original 7,000 families that were resettled into Sitio Mapalad. She was in her mid-20s when city officials first came into the colony of makeshift houses near the Pasig River where she lived with her parents and other displaced families. They were told that squatting by the river was illegal, recalled Aling Idad, and that they would be moved. A few weeks later, soldiers came into their settlement, herded residents onto the back of Army trucks, and drove them to the site of Sitio Mapalad. Although they were promised houses with electricity and water, no habitable structures awaited the relocated residents. Along with the early residents, Aling Idad took a machete to clear the thick cogon grass choking their community and built houses out of scavenged wood and metal sheets. They dug a communal well. For the next 20 years, said Aling Idad, no city or government official set foot on Sitio Mapalad. The residents were on their own.

During this period, Metro Manila continued to grow, with business and commercial pockets extending well beyond the initial city boundaries once defined by EDSA. Through the 1970s, city officials began to develop the area around Sitio Mapalad into a public space, building a housing facility for the city's indigent senior citizens, a "people's park," and four public

schools for children from low-income families. By the late 1980s, the formerly isolated Sitio Mapalad was now in the heart of a busy schooling and housing site for low-income families from all over Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, the resettled families built their lives. Aling Idad raised five children and nurtured 20 grandchildren while eking out a living as a street vendor and washerwoman. When the sitio's population peaked at 20,000 families in the early 1980s, Aling Idad organized an electric cooperative which successfully pressured Metro Manila officials to provide electricity to their community. She wished for a few more years of good health, "so I can do my part to save our homes."

In the 1980s, spurred by factors such as the expansion of the country's financial and business sectors and the structural adjustment programs, Metro Manila officials targeted the public space around Sitio Mapalad for new commercial development projects. In 1987, the National Housing Authority released 56 hectares of area public land for sale or lease to private development firms. One firm acquired the housing facility for indigent seniors as a condition for purchasing and constructing a sprawling mall along EDSA. Just across EDSA, a rival development firm acquired the people's park site and converted it into another mall.

These changes had a profound impact on the community of Sitio Mapalad. The construction of the malls and the attendant Metro Railway Station displaced 2,000 families, forcing them to relocate to a resettlement area in Montalban, a province north of Manila. Remaining residents quickly organized the Mapalad Community Council to fight these evictions. The Mapalad Community Council was able to temporarily halt further privatization of the sitio, based on a 1993 Executive Order signed by then President Fidel Ramos, mandating that "revenues accruing in the development of the property shall be utilized for the Social Housing

Program of the NHA." In 2001, during then-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's first year in office, Aling Idad and other Mapalad Council leaders participated in the Department of Social Welfare's community organizing training programs and secured P2 million for a community health center, two additional schools, and back pay for teachers. President Arroyo even visited Sitio Mapalad with her Social Welfare secretary appointee, and, according to Aling Idad, proclaimed the settled land as property of the current occupants of the sitio. On the strength of this public promise, the Mapalad Council began to consult with the National Housing Authority regarding the possibilities of formally distributing land titles to the sitio's families.

Sitio Mapalad residents, however, would not see any such distribution of titles. From 2004 to 2005, four mysterious fires razed almost 3,000 houses to the ground. Officials blamed the fire on faulty wiring installed by residents who were illegally tapping into the city's power lines. A few months later, the National Housing Authority leased another 10 hectares of land cleared by the fire to the development firm that converted the people's park into a mall. For Sitio Mapalad residents, the death knell to any hope for land distribution came in 2007, when then-President Arroyo an Executive Order endorsing the creation of a central business district in the now commercially valuable land around the resettlement community. In theory, Sitio Mapalad residents had the option of an "onsite relocation," buying or leasing housing from the medium-rise buildings to be built in accordance with the mixed-use policy of the central business district.

"We are not against the business district," said Marianne Nakpil, one of the most active and vocal leaders of the Mapalad Community Council. Nakpil was in her mid-30s, a petite, dark-haired woman who had gone to university. Hoping to be a pharmacist, she was in school for almost two years before being forced to drop out due to tuition fee hikes. She had since taken various clerical positions in the nearby government-run high school and had started her own

family in Sitio Mapalad. “Our children go to school here,” said Nakpil. “If we could be the labor force for the business district, then we would not have to relocate to Montalban.” However, in 2009, unbeknownst to Nakpil, Aling Idad, and other Sitio Mapalad residents, the National Housing Authority signed a Joint Venture Agreement with the same developer who converted the people’s park into a mall. This purchase set the stage for the private development of a sizable portion of land around North EDSA, including the remaining portions of Sitio Mapalad. The only remaining obstacles to the central business district are the 3,000 families who refuse to leave their homes.

The story of Sitio Mapalad and Marianne and Aling Idad’s struggle to protect the community they call home is inextricable from the transformation of Metro Manila into privately held economic and financial centers. This transformation was enabled by regulatory mechanisms deployed by the state to construct urban poor populations as political and later security problems. Per Aling Idad’s story, for example, the families displaced by the Second World War were coded not as refugees but as “illegal settlers,” whose very efforts to survive after the war were criminalized by the state.

Foucault noted that in exercising biopower, states employ disciplinary techniques via its institutions, regulations, and cultural practices. These complex interactions result in what he described as “subjugation through a constitution of subjects,” facilitating the creation of docile bodies necessary for the development of capitalism. At the individual level, these disciplinary technologies enabled the constant exercise of biopower:

> by means of surveillance rather than in a discontinuous manner through levies and obligations over time. It presupposes a tight-knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign. This new type of power, which can no longer be formulated in terms of sovereignty is one of the great inventions of bourgeois society, a fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism and the type of society that is its accompaniment” (Foucault, 1978: 105).

However, beyond operating on individuals, biopower is directed at "man-as-species" and thus operates on a collective level. This collective nature of biopower is evident in the regulatory mechanisms that governed the creation and management of Sitio Mapalad. For city and national authorities, the urban poor families displaced by war were constructed as political problems, impediments to the speedy reconstruction of a Manila that was levelled in World War II. By removing this problem population from what was then the city's center of finance and commerce, the state created Sitio Mapalad to function as, in Foucault's words, "security mechanisms around the random element inherent in a population of living beings to optimize a state of life, to take control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined but regularized" (Foucault, 2003: 246).

The primary aim of Sitio Mapalad thus was not to assist displaced families. Rather, such urban poor resettlement programs were enacted to address discipline and regulate urban poor families who might jeopardize the Philippines' quest to take its place in an economically interdependent world.

Creating squatters

The demolition of communities such as Mapalad for development projects is not new. Similar demolitions and displacements have occurred in business districts established in Eastwood City in Cubao and Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, aided by local officials who sold city-owned land to private developers. Armed with land titles, these corporations were thus able to deploy city police to displace residents from what was now private property.

This technique of dispossession through land titles, however, proved difficult to enact in Sitio Mapalad. When Metro Manila officials dispatched police to demolish homes and forcibly relocate residents on in September 2010, residents fought back by throwing bottles and forming

human barricades that blocked EDSA traffic. Largely through Marianne Nakpil's efforts in contacting volunteer lawyers from her former university, the Mapalad Community Council was able to halt the violent demolition by securing temporary restraining orders. The residents also bought more time when newly elected President Aquino, who was only in his third month in office, ordered a suspension on all "involuntary relocations." However, demolitions resumed throughout 2011 and 2012, with residents fighting back via protests at the offices of the National Housing Authority and more human blockades along ESDA. The deployment of armed riot police against Sitio Mapalad residents is a disturbing indicator of how political and economic elites respond to challenges from social organizations that challenge existing power hierarchies. In the case of Sitio Mapalad, the police were dispatched against residents mobilizing for alternatives to a development that was contingent on foreign investment and rapid industrialization. In this sense, the use of police illustrates how the state increasingly deploys militarization as a response to coalitions that actively seek alternatives to neoliberal capitalist formations. In the Philippines, militarization is a vital component to maintaining the power hierarchies that characterize neoliberal doctrine.

Several factors make it relatively difficult for the proponents of central business district to displace residents through force and violence alone. First, Sitio Mapalad residents had lived in their areas for decades longer than their displaced urban poor counterparts in places like nearby Taguig and Cubao. Because Sitio Mapalad began as an official resettlement site, many families possessed National Housing Authority documents that have used to lay claim to their land. Nakpil secured the assistance of non-profit legal groups, who then helped title-bearing residents like Aling Idad mobilize conflicting laws issued by Presidents Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos, and Gloria Arroyo to back their land claims and halt demolitions, albeit temporarily.

The Sitio Mapalad residents have also shifted political allegiances, mobilizing thousands of residents to vote for city and national officials who support their land claims. This is a tactic that many newspapers have criticized as self-serving and dishonest, particularly when the Sitio Mapalad Community Council marched to support disgraced President Joseph Estrada in 2000. Though not an Estrada supporter herself, Nakpil defended their actions, saying that they support candidates willing to discuss poverty.

For the proponents of the central business district, the Sitio Mapalad residents represent a special challenge, a community whose residents had enough cultural capital to secure temporary restraining orders and official documents from the National Housing Authority. Given their inability to displace residents through physical violence alone, national and Metro Manila authorities have enlisted the services agencies such as the National Housing Authority and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). Since 2010, these agencies have been instrumental in the biopolitical management of Sitio Mapalad and in delegitimizing residents' claims to the site they call home.

In its official pronouncements and documents, national and city officials refer to communities such as Sitio Mapalad as "informal settlements," a term which had been readily picked up by the media. In 2010, President Aquino created the Task Force for Informal Settlers with residents ostensibly involved in the drafting of an "Informal Settler Families Framework for Housing." Many who embraced the terms "informal settler/settlements" saw it as a more neutral concept, one without the negative connotations of "squatter" or "squatter colony."

However, in the case of Sitio Mapalad, classifying residents as "informal settlers" erases the community's roots as a state-sanctioned resettlement zone for urban poor. Unlike more recent informal settlements whose growth is fueled by internally displaced populations from the

countryside, many of Sitio Mapalad's residents are families who moved to the site with the full knowledge and support of Metro Manila officials. For example, Aling Idad bristled at being categorized with the bulk of Metro Manila's informal settlers. Unlike "*those* squatters," she said, "we took care of this land. We built our houses here. We have titles and papers from the government."

In contrast, as an urban poor leader, Marianne Nakpil took care to point out that poverty is a widespread problem among all informal settler communities. However, she agreed that Sitio Mapalad indeed has different origins. "The term 'informal settlement'," she said, "does not convey how the community was established by the Metro Manila government, on public land owned by the National Housing Authority, and populated with families who already voluntarily relocated in the 1950s to make way for the growth of business and financial centers in Manila."

Trabaho and *kabuhayan*

Tapping into deeply ingrained mindsets about "squatters" and "informal settlers" sets the stage for proponents of the central business district to reframe Sitio Mapalad as a political problem, one that blocks the benefits that a financial center can bring to all Metro Manila residents.

Through studies and interviews conducted in conjunction with the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), the Quezon City government thus released statistics showing most of the 3,000 families currently residing in Sitio Mapalad do not have jobs or "viable sources of income." These statistics were quickly circulated to the media as rebuttal to sitio residents who worry about livelihood and making ends meet in the resettlement area in Montalban province. These job statistics, coupled with development firm's payment of PhP1.159 billion to the National Housing Authority for resettling residents, effectively turned public sentiment against

Sitio Mapalad. Newspapers and broadcast commentators claimed the residents were "professional squatters" who were gaming the system, milking corporations, and threatening to derail a development deal which would benefit the rest of Metro Manila.

Marianne Nakpil and Aling Idad, however, challenged these official statistics about the lack of viable job opportunities in their community. According to Nakpil, many of Sitio Mapalad residents have "real jobs," a distinction she makes for people who earn a regular salary. These include the young men who work as security guards and young women who work as clerks in government offices and as salesladies at the nearby malls and retail outlets. At the very least, relocation to Montalban would mean additional transportation costs for these workers. For many, the relocation would translate to job loss.

In addition to these "real jobs," Nakpil referred to the parallel informal economy that sustains many of the sitio's families. She cited Aling Idad, who does laundry for families from nearby middle-class subdivisions, as an example. "The official statistics are incomplete," said Aling Idad, "because they only look for people with *trabaho*. But here, we can have a *kabuhayan*, ways of making a living. There's no *kabuhayan* for us in Montalban."

By *kabuhayan*, Aling Idad described how Sitio Mapalad residents live and even thrive through means that are not easily recognized and quantified via the statistical measures employed by the Metro Manila government. Many of the sitio's women residents work cash jobs like Aling Idad—taking in laundry and sewing work; managing cooking stalls; selling cigarettes and trinkets in stalls near the light rail station along ESDA. Other women with relatives overseas have managed to set up convenience stalls outside their houses. Many teen girls and boys earn additional income as barkers/solicitors for jeepneys and other public utility vehicles waiting for

passengers along EDSA. When the traffic lights go out at EDSA intersections, teens would make extra money by directing traffic, in return for coins tossed at them by motorists.

Many of these opportunities for *kabuhayan* are available to older and younger women who would otherwise find it difficult to secure a "real job" or a *trabaho* in the paid workforce. Other examples of *kabuhayan* include children, many not older than 10 years old, working as *kobradors* or "runners" for the illegal *jueteng* gambling games. Aling Idad's recognition of *kabuhayan* shows how families can share resources to survive even in areas where, statistically, there are few job opportunities.

Many of these opportunities for *kabuhayan* depend strongly on the community's nearness to middle class subdivisions and EDSA, hence the refusal of many residents to move 11 miles northeast to Montalban. The move is difficult for people who need to rely solely on public transportation. More important, the move also takes Sitio Mapalad residents away from the city center upon which their various *kabuhayan* depend.

However, there is one form of *kabuhayan* that both Sitio Mapalad residents and Metro Manila officials acknowledge. The sitio has a small "shabu alley" where shabu (Tagalog for methamphetamine) is sold. Two middle-aged women station themselves along EDSA, inviting and escorting potential buyers through the cramped, winding corridors of the sitio. Also stationed along EDSA are two women selling herbs and teas for "menstrual regulation," who also act as solicitors for the Sitio Mapalad midwife who performs abortions. While residents view these activities as forms of *kabuhayan*, Metro Manila officials classify these activities as crimes. Officials argue that shabu-related activities scare away potential investors and are another reason why informal settlements need to be relocated away from business and financial centers.

The loss of these spaces and opportunities for *kabuhayan* illustrates one of the most evident mutations of neoliberal formations in the Philippines. While decades of official neglect meant Sitio Mapalad residents had little access to government services, this also meant that people who may otherwise find it difficult to find jobs in a neoliberal economy were able to carve out spaces to create kabuhayan. However, after the Asian financial crisis, these forms of kabuhayan that relied strongly on community-based socialities are now material obstacles to a smooth transition to new iterations of neoliberal doctrine. Thus, life-making activities which were formerly ignored or even tolerated now must be invalidated and even criminalized by the state to ensure the continuities of neoliberal formations.

Sitio Mapalad as a Death World

While Foucault's analysis of biopower provides a starting point for analyzing the management of life of significant portions of the Filipino population, Mbembe's concept of necropower provides a more powerful tool for analyzing power over life in postcolonial contexts. The regulations governing government actions towards communities such as Sitio Mapalad illustrate what Mbembe describes as the "generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (Mbembe, 2003: 39). Mbembe rightly notes that biopower does not adequately address the conditions under which this instrumentalization of human existence (right to let live) and material destruction (right to kill) is exercised. The concept of necropower thus provides a useful analytic for examining how communities coded as "illegal settlements" are transformed into death worlds built upon "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" (Mbembe, 2003: 39).

For Mbembe, the colony represents a state of exception, one in which violence is condoned and even expected because this violence is used to preserve law. He writes powerfully about the late modern colonial occupation as a permanent state of siege:

> A concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical. The combination of the three allocates to the colonial power an absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory. The state of siege is itself a military institution that allows a modality of killing that does not distinguish between the external and internal enemy.... Daily life is militarized. Freedom is given to military commanders to use their discretion as to why and whom to shoot.... Local civil institutions are systematically destroyed. The besieged population is deprived of their means of income. Invisible killing is added to outright executions (Mbembe, 2003: 29).

In this excerpt, Mbembe is referring to Palestine as an example of a state under permanent siege. However, many of these descriptions also apply to the zones of commerce such as the proposed central business, and specifically to neoliberal policies enacted to facilitate what President Aquino has described as the rationalization of Filipino public life to facilitate foreign investment, a logic that ensures the continuity of neoliberal formations.

State of siege

Mbembe's description of invisible killing is another powerful articulation of the necropolitics in the postcolonial context of the Philippines, a country in which leaders from the postwar to the present have prioritized neoliberal capitalist development. This concept of invisible killings is illustrated in the numerous fires that burned around Sitio Mapalad from 2010 to 2011. Nakpil recounts the community's terror during the period of the mysterious fires. The fire department took a long time to respond, and Nakpil says it was only through the grace of God that no one was killed. She further recounts the community's frustration and anger at being blamed for causing the fires. City officials then took the opportunity to characterize Sitio Mapalad houses as fire hazards, caused by residents illegally tapping into overhead electric wires.

The violent demolitions are another example of the invisible killings designed to keep Sitio Mapalad as a community under siege. It is important to note that the demolitions are carried out by city police, by agents of the state acting out a demolition for the benefit of private, corporate land developers. During the violent demonstration in September 2010, Sitio Mapalad residents formed a human barricade to protect their homes. Aling Idad was part of the barricade and sustained a blow to her right shoulder when police advanced with shields and batons. The violence hit a peak when gunshots rang out. Police maintained that the gunfire came from residents, a claim that Nakpil vehemently denied, saying instead that the shots were either from the police or the extra security "goons" brought along for the demolition.

Nakpil narrated another incident in March 2012, when 25 men wearing the uniforms of the private security officers employed by the development firms barged into the home of a woman who was a fellow urban poor organizer. The officer-in-charge handcuffed the her while his men assaulted her by hitting her chest, neck, and arms. Nakpil called a non-profit lawyer's group who helped her neighbor file police reports of the attack. The organizer continues to receive death threats, including ones aimed at her young children.

For Sitio Mapalad residents, these constant threats of violence add up to a community under siege. "There is a constant threat of demolition," said Nakpil. "Sometimes, officials will schedule a demolition, so we will mobilize and call the media. But they don't come." Other times, police in vans will ride through the community, making people think a demolition is imminent, only to ride away. "We never know when to expect them," said Nakpil. "This is our 'normal.'"

Residents have also reported men dressed as the development firm's security guards roaming the community at night. Since the end of 2011, hooded men carrying gasoline cans walk

around the community, inducing fears of another fire. “We’re getting more afraid,” said Aling Idad. “We know that if there is a fire, the firefighters will probably not arrive.”

Mbembe’s description of necropower is a generative formulation for theorizing control of life through processes such as displacement, intimidation, terror, and sacrifice. He writes of how necropolitical power, “the subjugation of life to the power of death,” creates death worlds, “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life, conferring upon them the status of the living dead” (Mbembe, 2003: 40).

Marianne Nakpil and Aling Idad described such necropolitical tactics as they narrated the changes in their community over the years. Their account of the imminent threat of violence as “normal” speaks to the “new and unique forms of social existence” to which surplus populations are relegated. In addition to its overt biopolitical functions, the women’s analysis also illuminates the necropolitical aspects of militarization. In a space that has been re-zoned for development, the existence of the Sitio Mapalad community is a threat to continued private development and therefore a threat to national interests. The denial of emergency services such as firefighting, the shutting down of utilities like electricity, and the deployment of police against a population coded as “illegal” are therefore justified, as seen in mainstream newspaper editorials and a widespread public disdain for “illegal settlers” among the country’s middle-class population.

“What’s even more frustrating about this,” said Aling Idad, “is that we were doing okay. We didn’t have money but we had *kabuhayan.* But they took it away. We weren’t poor, we were *made* poor.” Through this observation, Aling Idad is diagnosing the necropolitical workings of this new, more violent iteration of neoliberalism in the Philippines. Because of the importance it has placed on public-private partnerships, the state is now a legitimate purveyor of violence on

behalf of private land development firms, against surplus populations who could be exposed to violence in the country's pursuit of national development. The state can thus unleash the institutional force of police-led demolitions and forced relocations on communities such as Sitio Mapalad.

Because of the state's successful efforts to classify residents as "illegal settlers," there is little alarm in the media or among members of the general public about the violence facing Sitio Mapalad residents. In fact, there is instead a general approval about government action to "help" urban poor populations by relocating them towards more acceptable resettlement areas. Given the lack of outrage to instances of explicit, deliberate violence meted against Sitio Mapalad residents, the lack of alarm over less visible, more intimate forms of violence is not surprising. However, the decades of government neglect as articulated by Aling Idad constitute forms of violence that undergird the creation of death worlds that are necessary for neoliberal development in the Philippines.

Fall away experiences

Audre Lorde, in her essay "Uses of the Erotic," discusses that dangers of true women's empowerment, which she defines differently from the neoliberal project of putting more women in the workforce. Though she does not specifically reference neoliberal capitalism, Lorde notes that:

> the principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need—the principal horror of such a system is that it robs our work of its erotic value, its erotic power and life appeal and fulfillment (Lorde, 1987: 55).

Lorde's diagnosis of the horrors of such a system provide a powerful way to analyze the effects of market-based anti-poverty strategies such as microcredit that often remain hidden or

unintelligible in neoliberal development discourse, a method to analyze what Neferti Tadiar has referred to as "fall away" experiences of globalization. In her book *Things Fall Away*, Tadiar (2009) develops the concept of fall away experiences to describe losses of social life and well-being that are difficult to diagnose in the triumphalist language of neoliberal capital. The result is a "normalization" of forms of knowledge that are intimate with capitalism and are used to marginalize and discredit forms of knowledge and social life that are incompatible with the values of neoliberalism. It is not an accident that these losses are experienced by vulnerable women.

In Sitio Mapalad, for example, the difficulty of making ends meet is compounded by the criminalization of the many forms of *kabuhayan* upon which many residents depend. In the early 2000s, Metro Manila authorities declared sidewalk vending as illegal, at the request of the land developers who wanted to clear the walkways surrounding their malls. Even directing vehicle traffic when the signal lights are not working—a task which Sitio Mapalad teens undertake in exchange for coins tossed by car owners—has been declared illegal.

Now that Sitio Mapalad residents are under constant threat of demolition and violence, Marianne Nakpil has also noticed a shift in attitudes towards organizing. "It's hard to describe," she said carefully. "People are worried that there will be no sources of income, so they don't want to be seen as troublemakers. So, they can still avail of whatever government assistance is available to rebuild their lives."

Nakpil is referring to the numerous private microcredit organizations who are organizing loan groups and providing loans to women in Sitio Mapalad and in the resettlement area in Montalban. These loan groups consist of four to five women members, with two members selected to receive loans. The group is monitored to ensure that the loans are used for

entrepreneurial projects, consistent with the goals of the bank. The first loan recipients are expected to pay the principal plus interest on their loan (usually over a period of 50 weeks) before other members of the group are eligible to receive credit.

The prevalence of microcredit as a government-sanctioned poverty alleviation program is premised on its impressive loan recovery program. But another, more subtle measure of its success lies in microcredit program's induction of marginalized women into a spatial economy, into the death world spaces geared specifically towards the production and accumulation of capital. That women's economic participation can now be measured in terms intelligible to neoliberalism (e.g. a measurable income, an increase in the demographics of working women) is seen as proof of the success of neoliberal programs in empowering women, a success that could be extended to the poor women of Sitio Mapalad.

The discourse underlying microcredit contracts and the practice of physically displacing communities from their lands and reordering them into loan groups have had very destructive effects on communities in Sitio Mapalad. Loan cohorts have evicted or refused to accept the poorest women in their communities, because the women who need loans the most also present the greatest risk of default. Women from the loan group monitored how their fellow members used the loan money, and alerted loan officers to potential defaulters or members who used the capital for unauthorized purposes, such as buying food or medicine because the loans are to be used for entrepreneurial purposes only.

In addition to these community-based exercises of biopower, microcredit practices in the Philippines are also strongly necropolitical, as seen in the experiences of women who struggled to keep up with their loan payments. In Sitio Mapalad, women have reported an increase in their work hours, taking on additional income activities selling homemade foodstuffs. Other women

have reported cutting back on family basic expenses like food and children's school items. Thus, the economic indicators of this program's success are not reflected in social indicators, such as maternal health figures and the literacy rate of children under five years old. In emergencies, women who have diverted loans to subsistence purposes have turned to moneylenders. Women who took on microloans to achieve self-sufficiency instead found themselves even more buried in debt. Aling Idad, for example, worried that the move to Montalban would decimate any opportunities for *kabuhayan* for women like herself. There are no subdivisions who will need laundry and no Metro Rail stations wherein they could sell their wares. When prompted about opportunities for microcredit, she shrugged. "We can't all open *sari-sari* stores."

One of the most destructive fall away experiences of microcredit in Sitio Mapalad is perhaps the most difficult to diagnose in the language of neoliberal capital. This effect, the destruction of social relations of trust and of the devaluation of women's roles as producers of knowledge in their communities, can best be recognized as fall away experiences resulting from a governmentality that capitalizes on opportunities for neoliberal development even at the violence generated for surplus populations such as the residents of Sitio Mapalad.

A Continuing Struggle

The primary targets of the structural violence engendered by neoliberalism's biopolitical and necropolitical practices are those who are already marginalized and vulnerable. Sitio Mapalad residents tried to fight back against this structural violence through legal and extra-legal means. Their efforts to push back in effect constitute a refusal to die, a refusal to sacrifice themselves to allow Metro Manila to achieve its developmentalist goals. However, their efforts have been met with even more violence on the part of the state and an irritation and apathy from the general public as a whole.

While the government of current President Benigno Aquino pays lip service towards making economic development "more inclusive," the violence aimed at Sitio Mapalad residents shows how poor people are not just inadvertently left out of neoliberal development discourse. Rather, in the Philippines, new neoliberal development plans that hinge on "public private partnerships" already embody various forms of overt and invisible violence against populations who are considered surplus and disposable. As the political economy in the Philippines turns even more decisively towards necropower, new modes of governmentality are developed to manage the resulting violence and social conflict that are themselves also continuities of neoliberalism. These new modes of governmentality are steeped in market rationality, fulfilling the capitalist requirement for productivity and efficiency, for maximum extraction of profit from ever more limited resources.

Sitio Mapalad represents one of the longest sustained fights for urban poor housing in the Philippines, one that paved the way for the activism in Barangay Seawall in Leyte and Occupy Housing in Pandi, the communities discussed in the following chapters. Coverage of Occupy Pandi dominated the news cycle in 2017, but the spectacles of demolition and resistance in Sitio Mapalad continued. In addition to the demolitions and lack of city services, the community has also been targeted by President Duterte's war on drugs, which spawned the state-sanctioned extra judicial killings of people accused of being drug addicts and drug pushers. During a short follow-up visit in July 2017, Carina (pseudonym), a university student who volunteers with a healthcare organization, shook her head as she narrated some of the changes in Sitio Mapalad:

> I thought it was bad before, but now, with the war on drugs, the police just come in and take people. Even those who don't have anything to do with shabu alley. One of them was a woman, who made a living going to rich people's houses to do manicures. So she got taken *daw* because she had drugs in her manicure bag. Her neighbors found her body near one of the grass areas, wrapped in plastic and with a handwritten sign saying "I am a [drug] pusher." But she was not. Or there's no proof that she was. She was a *manicurista*.

> Her neighbors said she was a pusher of cuticles, maybe that's why the people were confused (Carina, 2017).

Carina gave a sad laugh at the gallows humor that brings the horror of the killings into even greater focus. The healthcare worker said that many residents have been unnerved by the spectacle of the beautician's murder, to the point where they are weighing their options for leaving. Some are thinking of joining the Occupy Housing movement. But many more, she said, were considering the move to Montalban, where the private developers promised to provide not only housing and schools but privately run "point to point" buses to transport people to work. This advocacy for market-oriented development, a cornerstone of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and President Benigno Aquino Jr.'s presidencies, has continued under President Rodrigo Duterte, who assumed office in 2016. In addition to providing economic development, the Quezon City Commercial and Business District is now painted as an integral part of the war against drugs precisely because the development of the area is premised on the displacement and dispossession of bodies who are deemed as dangerous and criminal.

While the past three Philippine presidents have come from opposing political parties and family dynasties, one thing they have in common are neoliberal economic development strategies that are premised on what President Aquino called "public private partnerships" such as the Quezon City Commercial and Business District. For residents of Sitio Mapalad, the election of a president who ran on a "pro-poor" platform meant the escalation of violence in a community already under threat of everyday displacement and dispossession. The war on drugs and the extra judicial killings are another state-sanctioned way of disciplining the unwanted bodies of residents who have to be displaced in order to make way for the urban development projects. President Duterte's war on drugs and populist support also pit urban poor residents against the middle class, who also labor under conditions of precarity. However, many members

of the middle class perceive Sitio Mapalad and other urban poor residents as "lazy" bodies, whose insistence on staying in their urban community were threatened national progress. In a short video that was widely shared on social media, a Filipina woman wearing a hijab who identified as an OFW (overseas Filipino worker) and a "taxpayer" spoke directly to the Kadamay members:

> Hello Kadamay. You are squatters who have lived here for decades and now, thanks to the government, you will be relocated for free. But keep demanding decent housing and you are now given that at the expense of the taxes of people who work. I heard you will even get 30-year loans to pay for those tax-free houses. Well I had to leave my family to work here in the Middle East. Before that, I work 8am to 5pm but there never has been any government housing loan like this for my family! We are the ones who get taxed so much, even though we only use minimal government services because we pay for private school for the kids and pay for private hospitals when someone in the family gets sick. But you, Kadamay squatters, you use our tax money for your free houses and schools and hospitals. You even steal electricity which is so expensive for us. It is so unfair how you use their poverty as an excuse to cover their laziness. And you have the gall to go on rallies all the time? When you should be working? ("Strong Words of an OFW to Kadamay," 2017)

This neoliberal sentiment, building on the notion of a "hardworking" middle class and a lazy, undeserving poor, has been effective in justifying the violence and displacement in urban poor communities. In the face of this disenfranchisement and the promises of the Quezon City, Mariane Nakpil and Aling Idad's insistence on their legibility of their community, on their status as residents and citizens, and on their insistence on their *kabuhayan* are important foundations for spaces of resistance for populations deemed as surplus.

The task of diagnosing neoliberalism as it has developed in the Philippines can be discouraging, especially in terms of the concealed mechanisms through which biopower and necropower undergird a significant continuity of neoliberal doctrine even after the Asian financial crisis. In the following chapters, this research engages with the vibrant ways that marginalized Filipinas are coping with and resisting the violence deployed by the corporate state,

how they are building upon the power of transnational and translocal communities, even in the face of biopolitical and necropolitical management. Translocal, women-centered alliances like regional indigenous and urban poor groups are spaces of resistance to the death worlds of necropolitics and thus have the potential to create new ruptures for neoliberal capital, crafting epistemologies of development and belonging that are premised not on death but on life.

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Chapter Two

Unnatural Disasters: Typhoon Yolanda and the Loss of *Kabuhayan*

During high tide, you could see the ocean through the gaps in the plywood floor of Maribeth Silva's home. Even in 2017, three years later after Typhoon Yolanda hit the central Philippine island of Leyte, the sight of the rising waters still made the 28-year-old mother nervous. Like most of her neighbors in the coastal Barangay Seawall, Maribeth's family refused to evacuate. They thought they would survive, like they did all the other storms that came before. Instead, Typhoon Yolanda slammed into Leyte with 195 mph winds. That terrible night, the sea surged inland, carrying cargo ships aground on 20-foot-high waves. Maribeth huddled in a corner of her small house, with her husband Danny and her mother Marining. The two children, six-year-old Nathaniel and the baby Nickson, were sandwiched between their bodies. Water rose through the cracks of their floorboards seconds before a violent wave tossed their house onto the deck of the MV Eva Joy, one of the cargo ships carried inland by the storm. The family found themselves face to face with the enraged ship captain, who screamed they had no authorization to be on board. "My mother pointed to the baby," said Maribeth. "She told him to have some decency." The captain relented and let the family onto the lower deck ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

Luisa Codillo, 31, lived a few houses away from the Silvas and she too thought their family would weather the storm. But the MV Eva Joy, the Silva family's miracle, crashed into the Codillo's house. Their floor shattered immediately, plunging Luisa, her 36-year-old husband Amado, and their four-year-old twin girls into water. The terrified girls clung to their mother but a piece of metal hit Luisa in the face, and "*Diyos ko*, I couldn't hold on to my girls." When the massive ship hurtled back towards them, Amado grabbed a rope hanging from the deck, flung his

barely conscious wife onboard, then shakily climbed after her. They spent the night clinging to the rail, looking in vain for their girls in the swirling, black water ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

Barangay Seawall was one of the hardest-hit towns by Typhoon Yolanda. The residents, characterized as "informal settlers", lived in makeshift houses made of plywood and corrugated iron, structures that were no match against the wind, the storm surge, and the six cargo vessels that ran aground. But in 2016, three years after the typhoon, the 500 families of Barangay Seawall rebuilt their houses as best as they could, with walls made of scavenged plywood, roofs of corrugated metal, and discarded sacks covering the windows. Luisa Codillo and Maribeth Silva lived next door to one another, beside the wreck of the MV Eva Joy. Maribeth's Nickson was a baby in 2013 and does not remember the storm, but nine-year-old Nathaniel still gets anxious when it rains ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014). "Living by the Barangay Seawall is difficult and frightening," said Luisa, as she cuddled Mutya, her four-month-old daughter. "We panic every high tide, especially when it rains. But what choice do we have? *Diri an amon kabuhi*. [Our lives are here]" (Codillo 2017)

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the Filipino concept of *kabuhayan*, a Tagalog word that loosely translates as "life-making." In the northern Philippines, indigenous Filipinas assert how their *kabuhayan* is imbricated in small-scale farming and agriculture in their ancestral lands. In Sitio Mapalad, the urban poor community discussed in chapter 2, women resist their forced relocation to a state-sponsored resettlement that will make it impossible for them to mobilize their forms *kabuhayan* that were dependent on proximity to Quezon City's commercial areas. In Barangay Seawall, an informal community on the coast of Tacloban, Luisa used the Waray word *kabuhi*, equivalent to the Tagalog *kabuhayan*, to explain a decision that

seems incomprehensible to casual observers—why she and her husband still chose to live in the path of future typhoons at Barangay Seawall.

Henry Giroux (2006) argues that neoliberalism has shaped a new form of biopolitics of disposability, which connects the neglect suffered by poor, Black residents of New Orleans's Ninth Ward in 2005 to state-sanctioned racist violence. Giroux's concept of a biopolitics of disposability provides a generative framework to analyze the Philippine state's typhoon disaster management program along a continuum of neoliberal social policies that render vulnerable populations as disposable. In this chapter, I focus on the state response to Typhoon Yolanda in 2012, to illuminate how neoliberal disaster management employs a biopolitics of disposability that, per Giroux, demands a "cleansed visual and social landscape in which the poor, the elderly, the infirm, and criminalized populations all share a common fate of disappearing from public view" (186).

Methodology

Using Barangay Seawall in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda as a site for analysis, I trace how residents have been constructed as vulnerable through a systematic dismantling of their *kabuhayan*. In the first part of this chapter, I examine the history of typhoon inequalities in the Philippines, locating the state's disaster management policies along a continuum of colonial and neoliberal social policies designed to disappear vulnerable populations—indigenous Filipinos, urban poor, fisherfolk—from public view. I then turn to cultural methods to read an interdisciplinary archive of material to illustrate how the state interpellates the previously displaced residents of Barangay Seawall as disposable and surplus. I read media reports and primary documents such as policy statements and disaster management programs as biopolitical mechanisms that discredit and invalidate Barangay Seawall residents' claims to their community,

thereby constructing them as a vulnerable, surplus population. I also pay attention to how these official government discourses construct the state's public-private partnerships as benefactors to an often ungrateful population. In the second part of this chapter, I turn to the narratives of Barangay Seawall residents to situate their fight to rebuild their community in a continuum of previous displacements from farms and the city center. Specifically, I examine the narratives of two women, Luisa Codillo and Maribeth Silva, whose stories appear not in mainstream news outlets but in a documentary entitled "Women Survivors Claim Justice," a collection interviews collated from raw news footage and from interviews by volunteers who document human rights and social justice stories in marginalized communities. These women spoke in Tagalog with some Waray, and all excerpts in this research are my own translations. Their stories highlight how, for the residents of Barangay Seawall, the concept of "survival" is not only about the Yolanda storm surge and its aftermath but a result decades-long protection of *kabuhayan* even after violent displacements and painful loss.

By rendering these populations as disposable through a number of biopolitical mechanisms, I trace how the state made Barangay Seawall residents vulnerable to natural disasters such as Typhoon Yolanda long before the wind and storm surges hit Leyte and examine how the state's dominant rationality regarding vulnerability serves to further disenfranchise marginalized people.

The second part of this chapter examines the residents' continued refusal to move from the Barangay Seawall, a decision that state and local government officials use to justify neglecting this population. In the last section, I argue that Luisa Codillo's and Maribeth Silva's narratives highlight the various ways that the residents of Seawall refuse and fight back against state-sanctioned biopolitical conditions of disposability.

Unnatural Disasters

On November 2, 2013, the storm that would grow into Typhoon Yolanda was birthed off the coast of Micronesia, a collision of water evaporation from the warm Pacific currents and unstable, cooler atmospheric temperatures. The tropical storm worked its way west, forming the characteristic eye as it passed over Palau, building energy as it crossed the open waters of the Pacific. By November 6, the storm had strengthened into a typhoon, a spiral arrangement of thunderstorms, propelled by intensifying winds. Typhoon Yolanda had grown into a category 5 "super typhoon" days before it crossed where the Pacific Ocean became the Philippine Sea. Shortly before dawn on the morning of November 7, the super typhoon slammed into the islands of Samar and then Leyte, generating storm surges in more than 20 feet high. With its 195 mile per hour winds, Typhoon Yolanda was the strongest storm to make landfall in recorded history. When it finally exited into the South China Sea, more than 6,300 people were dead and thousands more were missing. Bodies were still being found in November 2014, more than two months after the typhoon finally dissipated over Guangxi Province, China.

The Philippine state has used the record-setting nature of Typhoon Yolanda—the strongest landfall on record, the body count that eventually went to 10,000—to deflect criticisms about its slow disaster management response. According to Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, then the head of the Department for Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), "The preparation of the local governments and the national government agencies was not equal to the strength of the typhoon" (Francisco 2014). As the head of the agency charged with overseeing the nation's disaster response, Soliman named other factors that worsened the chaos in the storm's aftermath: a population accustomed to storms that underestimated the intensity of the storm, poorly designed evacuation centers that were flooded by the storm surge, first response team members

who were also in the flood zone. Manuel "Mar" Roxas, then the Secretary of the Interior, further noted that damage to infrastructure caused further delays in the distribution of relief goods (Francisco 2014).

While Typhoon Yolanda was record-breaking storm in many ways, it should be noted that typhoons in the Philippines follow a predictable pattern. More than 100 storms develop off the coast of the Caroline Islands every year, and at least 20 of these tropical storms grow strong enough to be classified as typhoons. Luzon and the Visayan islands, whose densely populated coasts face the open ocean, are particularly vulnerable to typhoon-generated wind gusts and storm surges. In the Philippines, typhoons cause the most number of casualties and damage than any other natural event.

In his analysis of natural disasters in the Philippines, historian Greg Bankoff (2003) noted that Filipinos have developed a "cultures of disaster" due to how the constant threat of typhoons, floods, and earthquakes have been integrated into Filipino social life since the Spanish colonial period. Much of the literature regarding typhoons in the Philippine has focused on the failures of disaster risk reduction and effective disaster management programs in typhoon-prone areas of the Philippines (Sherwood et al, 2015), with a few even focusing on how indigent communities are disproportionally affected by recent typhoons (IPC 2013). As one of the most "disaster-prone" countries in the world, Gaillard (2010) states that Filipinos have created systems for thriving even as their lives are framed by these natural disasters. Such reports argue that "informal settlers" live along flood zones and typhoon-prone coastal areas either do not have an understanding of the dangers of typhoons or they do not have the education and cultural capital necessary to navigate the bureaucratic steps needed to move to safer areas. This chapter contributes to this literature by examining how communities like Barangay Seawall are rendered

vulnerable to natural disasters and how narratives of *kabuhayan* speak back to this biopolitics of disposability.

Biopolitics of Disposability

In 2012, the Philippines hosted the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 45th Board of Governors' meeting in Manila. The theme of that year's meeting was anti-poverty, with delegates flying in from 67 countries around the world to discuss regional initiatives to address poverty in Asia. After landing, delegates were ushered into air-conditioned buses and driven to the ADB's headquarters, a walled compound in Manila. En route, the buses drove over the Tambo Airport Bridge, a narrow structure bordered on both sides with makeshift 12-foot high, dark green walls made of corrugated steel. For the conference, the green walls were draped with tarpaulin posters screaming "Welcome ADB Delegates!" Amid pictures showing *bancas* floating against a backdrop of white sandy beaches and calm blue waters, the tarps promised tourists that "It's more fun in the Philippines." Towards the north end of the bridge, a "thank you" billboard listed the conference sponsors, identified by a mishmash of logos from multinationals such as HSBC Bank and BMW to local corporations like Ayala Land Incorporated and Banco de Oro.

Behind the green corrugated walls and festive tarpaulins lies Riverside 2, an impoverished informal community of 500 families. During the time of the conference, Metro Manila officials were busy demolishing Riverside 2. One hundred and seventy-five families had already been forcibly relocated to resettlement 12 miles south of Manila. Echoing the analysis of residents of Sitio Mapalad discussed in Chapter One, most of Riverside 2's residents resisted their relocation outside Metro Manila, where jobs and basic services are scarce. Riverside 2 residents argued that that their proximity to Metro Manila, to the airport in particular, was central

to their *kabuhayan* or ways of life-making. Many residents who had been forcibly relocated returned to the urban poor community, resuming their *kabuhayan*.

Henry Giroux (2006) argues that neoliberalism has shaped a new form of biopolitics of disposability that demands a "cleansed visual and social landscape in which the poor, the elderly, the infirm, and criminalized populations all share a common fate of disappearing from public view" (186). Giroux's concept of a new biopolitics of disposability provides a generative framework to analyze how the residents of Sitio Mapalad and Riverside 2 and, discussed later in this chapter, the residents of Barangay Seawall, have been rendered disposable by the state's neoliberal social policies. Due to cuts in social services, urban poor residents have decreasing access to healthcare, education, and other forms of skills development. The state's efforts to relocate the urban poor away from the city centers and to wall them away from the view of tourists and potential investors illustrates how populations rendered as disposable not only have to assure their own survival. They also have to survive while being rendered invisible.

Building walls to hide an undesirable and disposable population has a long history in Metro Manila. In 1974, then First Lady Imelda Marcos erected similar whitewashed walls along the route that carried foreign press and other visitors to the Miss Universe Pageant. Similar walls were erected in 1981 during Pope John Paul II's Manila visit and in 1981 and President George H.W. Bush's state visit in 2003. More recently, the Aquino government dismantled the shanties along the Manila Bay walkway near the US Embassy, forcibly relocating indigent families before the 2014 state visit of President Obama. In preparation for Pope Francis' visit in 2015, the Department of Social Welfare and Development detained nearly 500 homeless children onto army trucks and drove them to an upscale resort in the city outskirts. The DSWD defended its actions, saying that the children were taught livelihood skills and that the resort setting was to

provide homeless kids opportunities to "practice" living in houses (Viray 2015). While this particular rounding up of street children brought the Aquino government much criticism from local and foreign media, the forcible removal of populations deemed undesirable in the name of "beautification" and improvement programs continues for tourism projects.

In addition to walls and forced relocations, the new biopolitics of disposability undergirds neoliberal economic and social policies enacted by the Philippine state since 1986. The use of police and military to displace of indigenous communities from ancestral lands slated for mining and eco-tourism projects is another example of rendering vulnerable populations as invisible. The state refuses enact safety regulations in export processing zones, where workers routinely exposed to chemicals and unsafe working conditions face job loss and a lack of healthcare options when they get too sick to continue working. Neither does the state advocate for the thousands of Filipina women engaged in domestic work in private homes around the globe, even as the state-run labor export program (Rodriguez 2010) employs biopolitical measures to regulate the conduct of overseas foreign workers.

In Chapter One, I discussed the implications implementing social policies steeped in neoliberal rationality, which Wendy Brown defines as a process of "extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action" (2005: 40). While President Aquino's policies of "making the Philippines hospitable to business" has generated financial rewards for political and economic elites, this chapter has discussed these same policies necessitate the disavowal of populations like overseas Filipino workers and Riverside 2 residents. By casting them as obstacles to the development of commercially valuable spaces, as criminals unable to participate as consumers in the new market, and as drains on state resources, the state has effectively absolved itself of its responsibilities towards poor and indigent Filipinos. Under the biopolitics of

disposability, Manila's urban poor residents not only have to fend for themselves. They further have to conduct their struggle for survival behind brightly painted walls and away from public view.

Changing Climate in Leyte

Leyte is a large island located in the middle Visayas region of the Philippines, 550 miles southeast of Manila. The island has a varied geography, with forested mountainous area in the south and north and an agricultural valley in the northeast. It is also bordered by bodies of water—gulfs, seas, and to its east, the Pacific Ocean. Its major cities are Ormoc in the northeastern part of the island and the capital Tacloban City, in the northeast.

Because of its location in the Philippines' "typhoon belt," the island sits squarely in the path of the typhoons originating from the west Pacific and has a long history of typhoon-related damages and casualties. American colonial records show a history of typhoon casualties that stretch back at least over a century. In 1897, a typhoon struck the island, killing 120 Europeans and 5,000 Filipinos. In 1912, during the American colonial period, another typhoon leveled the city of Tacloban, the capital of Leyte. Casualty reports were vague because all communications to the island were severed in the storm, but the *Washington Herald* (1912) estimated that dead at 6,000, half of Tacloban's population at the time.

Official state accounts of Yolanda paint the typhoon as an exceptional event to deflect criticism about the incompetent disaster management response. However, unlike earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves and other natural events that come with living the geographic region called the Pacific "ring of fire," typhoons in the Philippines follow a fairly regular pattern. Typhoon season in the Philippines typically starts in the middle of the year, with the strongest

storms clustered between September to November. These are major weather phenomena that most Filipinos have to deal with annually.

The same geographic setting that makes Leyte vulnerable to typhoons is also a factor in the political and economic development of the island. In 1521, Leyte was the site of the first Catholic mass in the Philippines, after its "discovery" by Ferdinand Magellan. In 1543, Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos named Leyte and neighboring island Samar "Las Islas de Filipinas" in the name of King Phillip of Spain. In 1944, General Douglas MacArthur famously waded ashore onto Leyte, leading the US troop invasion and recapture of Luzon from Japanese forces in World War II.

Centuries of colonialism fundamentally changed Leyte's geographic and social environment. Leyte went from being a mountainous and heavily forested island with barangays running on subsistence economies in the early 16th century to an agricultural island by the start of the 20th century. The valleys to the northeast were converted to sugarcane plantations, owned by wealthy descendants of Basque colonists who moved to "New Spain" in exchange for vast tracts of land. The mountainsides were cleared for coconut farmers, while the rest of the valley was converted to rice fields. The start of the American colonial period in the beginning of the 20th century also saw the growth of the timber industry, which intensified the clearing of tropical forests and key watershed areas. While rice was still the most common crop, many farms also grew bananas, cacao, pineapple, and ornamental flowers to supply to US agricultural corporations. The dawn of the 21st century brought the next wave of massive change to Leyte's economic climate. The first geothermal plant in the Philippines was built in Leyte in 1977. By 2010, there were six geothermal plants around the Leyte mountains, supplying power to the eastern Visayas region.

Despite its fertile land and abundant geothermal resources, Leyte is one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines. In 2012, before Typhoon Yolanda, 43.3 percent of Leyte's residents were living below the poverty line, a figure already well above the 27.9 percent national average. Since Typhoon Yolanda, the poverty rate in Leyte has risen to 47.3 percent in the first half of 2015 (Philippine Statistics Authority 2016). Much of Leyte's poor live in what the officials euphemistically call "informal settlements" like Barangay Seawall. Most of the informal residents are dependent on the fishing industry, with the men earning a living as fishermen while most of the women worked as small vendors and traders (Oxfam 2014).

Constructing Vulnerability in Leyte

In Leyte, the vulnerability of marginalized population to storms are produced within the specific melding of meteorological and colonial factors in Philippine history: a changing global climate, Spanish and American colonization, structural adjustment policies (Tadiar 2009), and as will be elaborated upon in this chapter, the private-public partnerships that are embody how the market logic of neoliberalism (Brown 2005) infects social policies, including what Paul Hutchcroft (1998) calls "booty capitalism" and Naomi Klein (2007) calls "disaster capitalism."

Part of Leyte's vulnerability is because of its geography. Environmental historians (Schwartz 2015, Hoffman 1999) have also noted the increase of storm clusters in the late 20th century, leading to a dangerous tipping point combining typhoons of increased strength with dwindling resources for coping with the typhoon's aftermath. But in addition to climate change, they also note the effects of colonialism in the destruction of "traditional methods" of coping with cyclonic storms and other natural events (Oliver-Smith 1994). By the late 19th century, deforestation, the depletion of soil fertility, and other environmental damages have made colonies across Africa, Latin America, and Asia even more vulnerable to environmental risks. As

a result of these historical and ecological factors, formerly colonized nations are inordinately affected by the effects of environmental destruction and climate change.

Comparative research in the relationship between rapid urbanization and hurricanes highlight the vulnerabilities of cities in the Caribbean. Like the hurricane-prone cities of Georgetown in Guyana, Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, and Bridgetown in Barbados, cities in the Philippines that experienced greater typhoon casualties have three things in common: increased population densities, undeveloped or degraded infrastructure, and increased private sector involvement in the economy (Pelling 2003). Furthermore, cities with the greatest damage from the extreme or superstorms also have seen a growth in the population of peri-urban settlements (McKnight 1990). While global warming is a factor behind the increasing intensity of the storms, there is also a great increase in the number of Filipinos living in vulnerable conditions, such as low-lying coastal areas like Barangay Seawall. In the Philippines, this means that vulnerable populations, such as the residents of Riverside 2 and Barangay Seawall, are most vulnerable to the onslaught of typhoons.

All Leyte residents have typhoon stories, and the most harrowing ones come from the island's most vulnerable residents. Their narratives also reflect how typhoons are worsening, as seen in more ferocious winds and more intense storm surges that cause water levels to rise inland. In 2012, just a year before Yolanda, Luisa Codillo hunkered down with her girls in their two-room shack as Typhoon Pablo tore launched metal roofs into the air "like flying machetes" ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

In 1991, Typhoon Uring was a super typhoon, one of the "strongest storms," and the flood that it generated was an unlucky, one-time "freak" event of nature that could not have been anticipated. As with Typhoon Yolanda, the government was slow to coordinate relief efforts to

the residents of Karanga and Ormoc affected by Typhoon Uring. Also, similar to Typhoon Yolanda, local and national government officials deflected criticism by pointing to the "unprecedented" nature of the event. Maribeth's family were tenants in a coconut farm in the Kananga Mountains in Central Leyte. She was barely two years old in 1991when Typhoon Uring hit Leyte, causing the Ilog River in to overflow in the middle of the night. By sheer chance, her father was awake and heard the roar of the coming water. He woke his family and tied his wife and three children to coconut trees before the wall of water hit their Barangay. Marining held on so tight that the toddler Maribeth, causing the baby's arm to bleed. It only took a few minutes for the water to course through their farm before continuing down the mountainside to the sea, carrying houses, animals, trees, and people. "It was dark and there was a lot of screaming," Marining said to her daughter. "Your father screamed all our names, and your brothers, me, we all answered, 'Here, I am alive.' Everyone but Ernesto" ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014). The devastation was made clear when the sun rose a few hours later. All the houses were demolished, and the fields were littered with fallen coconut trees, farm equipment, animal carcasses, and too many dead bodies. The family never did find eleven-year-old Ernesto's body; he was one of the 5,000 residents who were killed in the massive landslides and the floodwaters that rampaged down the Kananga Mountain, swept through the city of Ormoc, and out into the open sea. The eastern and western plains of Leyte were covered in debris and sediment up to two feet deep for months after the flood.

A report from the Manila Observatory's Environmental Research Division (1992) found that the flooding was triggered by three hours of intense rain in the Leyte mountains. At its peak, floodwaters rose by seven feet in 15 minutes. Geologically, this area was formed by volcanic activity and was already highly susceptible to erosion. It was this volcanic soil that comprised the

Ormoc watershed, which, according to the report, breached its capacity to hold water when it was subjected to unusually intense and concentrated rain. However, the report goes on to state that:

> There is also the obscurity of why the resulting flood in Ormoc grew to such an immense magnitude and why it caused so much damage. Was the storm event alone responsible for the catastrophic proportion of the flood? Were there other underlying physical causes? Conversely, did human activity play any part in the tragedy? Could human action have prevented the death and dislocation of so many people and the damage to millions-worth of property? (ERD, 1992: 8)

These questions are notable for a report from a non-government organization primarily concerned with earthquake monitoring and weather forecasting. In 1991, 3.3 percent of the Ormoc watershed was classified as timberland and therefore open to unrestricted logging. The other 96.7 percent was "alienable and disposable land" (ERD 1992: 10) which was open to private use, which in Ormoc included commercial sugarcane production, coconut farming, irrigation of rice fields, and pasturelands. Deforestation brought about by commercial logging and agriculture, was therefore a critical factor that contributed to the landslides and the watershed's inability to hold water.

While the storms themselves are getting stronger due to climate changes, these economic, political, and social factors in the colonial and meteorological history of Leyte that have either placed marginalized populations in unsafe areas and destroyed their abilities to cope with and recover from the effects of storms.

Biopolitics and Disaster Management

Marlins Beach Resort is located in Bantayan Island, a small island off the coast of Cebu province and about 150 miles west of Leyte. The Marlins is a low-key hotel catering to backpackers and young eco-tourists, with basic cottages that often run out of hot water. What it does have, however, is a beautiful stretch of the coastline which the hotel brochures describe

with terms like “pristine,” “untouched sandy beaches,” and “paradise on Earth.” Its best feature is an elevated deck jutting out into the ocean. Guests gaze over the blue water as they grill food, sip drinks at the picnic tables, and Instagram selfies of themselves lounging under rainbow-colored umbrellas.

It is precisely this scenario that critics of the government’s disaster risk reduction and management programs fear, the white sandy beaches made pristine by the removal of the community of small and subsistence fishers who used to live on these shores. Building on studies analyzing the government’s uncoordinated and corruption-laden relief efforts, this section examines what comes after—the designation of “no build zones” and the Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda (RAY). Both plans depend heavily on public-private partnerships. In this section, I examine how the no build zones and RAY employ a biopolitics of disposability, designed to conceal, contain, and relocate poor fisherfolk to create the “untouched sandy beaches” that are devoid of poor fishing communities.

The United Nations designated 1990 to 1999 as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction. During one of the UN-sponsored events, JC Gaillard (2015) quotes one of the UN experts as stating that: “Disasters in the less affluent world were caused by people’s lack of knowledge of natural hazards, the absence of monitoring systems, the failure of warning systems, the weakness of emergency planning, the disorganization of post-disaster management and finally, by the lack of security measures.” (33) This worldview that marginalized populations are incapable of understanding their risk and vulnerability underscores the dominant disaster risk reduction (DRR) paradigms employed by most multilateral relief agencies. Much of DRR is thus focused on issues such as logistics of delivering relief goods, setting up evacuation centers, and producing hazard maps which become the basis for relocating populations. While these are

important aspects of DRR, they do not address what marginalized populations, such as the residents of Barangay Seawall, deem as important to their well-being.

Militarized Humanitarian Aid

The state's response to Typhoon Yolanda can be divided into two general phases, namely, relief/recovery and rehabilitation. In the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, the national government's relief/recovery response was notable for its reliance on militarization. While the use of soldiers against the urban poor is an established practice in urban poor communities in Manila, the deployment of armed forces in Leyte and the rest of the Eastern Visayas region was also notable because of the presence of US troops. When residents and community groups expressed concern about the presence of local and foreign military troops in Yolanda-affected areas, the Aquino government justified their presence as necessary for the relief and rehabilitation efforts. Since many of the military and police personnel who were stationed in Leyte ended up as typhoon victims, the Armed Forces of the Philippines deployed 508 members from its Special Action Force and an additional 106-member army contingent to affected areas in the Visayas, including Leyte (*AFP Gazette*, 2013). The morning after the storm, Luisa Codillo headed to a relief tent to get medical attention as her husband scoured the debris-strewn shoreline for any sign of his two daughters. She was bleeding from a cut on her forehead where she was hit by the metal, and could not see clearly from her swollen right eye. "I asked one of the soldiers, please help me, my daughters are missing." The young soldier helped her into the tent than apologized. He could not help her now, he said he needed to go back to his post. Luisa raised a hand to her forehead, tracing the two-inch long scar that bisects her right eyebrow. "We thought the soldiers were there for search and rescue," she said. "But everyone in

the tent was crying because they were missing someone. Mostly children" ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in fact stated that their priority was to re-establish communications in Leyte and other Visayan islands that had been cut-off by Yolanda. Temperatures and humidity levels climbed steadily in the days after the typhoon, and the lack of potable water drove survivors to raid groceries for survival. As a response, the AFP deployed more troops to clear the roads and to guard business establishments against looting. By November 16, 2013, four days after Typhoon Yolanda, the AFP had deployed more than 15,000 ground troops around the Eastern Visayas. (*AFP Gazette*, 2013) In Tacloban, many of the troops were stationed around the SM Mall, to safeguard the business from the increasingly desperate residents. The presence of the military increased in the weeks following Typhoon Yolanda, Reports from the AFP announced that Philippine troops were charged with clearing the roads and with security the area. While relief operations were supposedly in the purview of the local government units, troops were also charged with protecting relief efforts from attacks and sabotage by the New People's Army.

A few days after the typhoon, the USS George Washington docked in the Gulf of Leyte, the same gulf from which General MacArthur launched operations to recapture the Philippines from Japanese forces. The nuclear-carrying warship housed jet fighters, helicopters, and more than 6,000 naval soldiers. It was accompanied by four guided missile cruisers and one supply ship which were docked around various parts of Leyte and neighboring Samar. In the next few days, US soldiers took over the Tacloban airport and the airport and seaport in neighboring Cebu. These militarized relief efforts were named Oplan Damayan (Operation Mutual Help), a

US military-directed effort that eventually involved US$37 million in aid and some 13,000 US troops stationed around the Philippines.

In the days and weeks after Typhoon Yolanda, international media descended into Tacloban to cover the aftermath of the typhoon. The *New York Times* (2013) had front page, full-color pictures of masses of people lining up in ankle-deep floodwater for relief goods, with the headline "Powerful Typhoon Causes Devastation in the Philippines." The *Guardian* featured a front-page picture of a tearful man in a torn white t-shirt, cradling the lifeless body of his young daughter. The story described masses of dead bodies piled up along Tacloban roads or floating at sea, using visceral language like "bloated," "seeping entrails," and "unbearable stench" (Hodal, 2013). On CNN, journalist Anderson Cooper assailed the Aquino government for the "miserable, miserable situation" in Tacloban City. Cooper noted that US Marines were on the ground with relief efforts, with no comparable effort or supervision from the Philippine side. Images of US soldiers clad in fatigues—on the tarmac unloading boxes from planes, putting up disaster tents in temporary relocation areas, distributing bottled water from flatbed trucks—was thus successfully framed as the antidote to the Philippine national and local government's incompetent relief efforts.

In addressing the militarization in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Henry Giroux writes:

> Faith in democratic governance and cultural pluralism increasingly gives way to military-style uniformity, discipline, and authority coupled…all of which undermine the force of a genuine democracy by claiming that the average citizen does not have the knowledge or authority to see, engage, resist, protest, or make dominant power accountable. (187)

This form of militarized humanitarian aid attains greater significance in the context of the Philippines' long history in US defense strategy. In 1992, the United States closed its military

bases in the Philippines, after the Philippine Senate rejected a treaty extending their lease. Since then, the governments of the Philippines and the United States have initiated various initiatives allowing US troops to visit the Philippines. The Visiting Forces Agreement, signed into effect by the US and in the Philippines in 1999, established the biannual Balikatan ("shoulder-to-shoulder") program. The Balikatan program are military training exercises in the Philippines and were a very visible part of what many Filipinos interpreted as a returning US military presence. The Balikatan program increasingly focused on counterterrorism measures. After President Obama's visit in 2012, the Philippines agreed to "rotational basing" arrangement, leading critics to speak out against the growing permanence of troops who were supposedly visiting the Philippines.

One month after Typhoon Yolanda struck, then US Secretary of State John Kerry travelled to Tacloban and announced the allocation US$25 million in humanitarian aid and disaster resistance, in addition to the US$60 million already given in aid. What did not receive as much press was another allocation, US$40 million to "improve" the Philippines' maritime security and maritime awareness (VOA News 2013). In April 28, 2014 the Philippine and US government signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). While still forbidden from establishing permanent military based in the Philippines, EDCA allows the United States to rotate troops into the Philippines for extended stays and to build and operate training facilities on Philippine military bases. A representative of the US National Security Council called EDCA "the most significant defense agreement that we have concluded with the Philippines in decades." (Eilperin 2014)

Because of its geographic location and its historic ties to the United States, the Philippines plays a crucial role in increasing US military presence in the Asia Pacific region. The

extensive involvement of US troops as the harbingers of order and as a benevolent, humanitarian presence thus contributed greatly to the increased US military presence in the Asia Pacific region. Contrasted to the incompetence of local and national government offices, the images of US soldiers contributed towards legitimating a biopolitics that conflates a militarized humanitarianism with national security and law and order. This slippage between law and order and a benevolent, even patriarchal humanitarianism was evident in 2016, when Rodrigo Roa Duterte ran a successfully presidential campaign where he referred to himself as "*tatay*" ("father") and promised to declare a war against drugs. As of May 2017, 11 months into Duterte's six-year term, Philippine police have killed 9,000 people, mostly drug addicts from urban poor areas. Despite outcry from Philippine and international human rights groups, Duterte enjoys massive public support from Filipinos.

The conflation of militarization and humanitarian aid had just done more than simply facilitate the return of US troops to the Philippines. They helped to legitimate a form of biopolitics where "the police and the military, often operating beyond closed doors, take on public functions that are not subject to public scrutiny" (Giroux, 2006: 177). As the floodwaters receded and the destruction and loss of life were laid bare, the strong presence of militarized humanitarian aid served to solidify a biopolitics based not only on denying the humanity of a vulnerable group but more importantly, on solidifying support for a "security state" built on identifying and eliminating abject or "waste" populations, such as people struggling with drug addiction and the urban poor.

Biopolitics and the No Build Zone

The MacArthur Landing Memorial Park is a national park in southern Tacloban. It is one of Leyte's most popular tourist destinations, a bronze, life-sized installation of the general

leading a group of soldiers into Leyte, making good on his promise to return and liberate the Philippines from Japanese forces in World War II. The area, designated a national historical landmark, provides a beautiful, open-air backdrop for people visiting the nearby convention center, tourists at the Leyte Oriental Hotel and Beach Resort, and the region's government center. A low, retaining wall hugs the coast, protecting the area from the sea while giving visitors a spectacular view of the Leyte Gulf and beyond it, the Pacific Ocean.

Outside this retaining wall, on a narrow ribbon of rocky land dropping steeply towards the ocean, lie Barangays 89 and 90. They are similar to Barangay Seawall in composition, communities of 500 poor families living in houses constructed of plywood and scrap metal. The day before Typhoon Yolanda struck, Filipino soldiers hopped over the retaining wall, herded residents into trucks, and drove them to public elementary school that served as a storm shelter. The mandatory evacuation was part of then President Aquino's plan to have zero casualties for Typhoon Yolanda.

The day after the typhoon, Barangays 89 and 90 residents walked from the public school that served as the storm shelter, down the *avenida* that led to the memorial and to their homes. They were slower than usual, hampered by the heat, debris, and the numerous dead bodies on the side of the road. But just past the government centers, on the road to the MacArthur Memorial and beyond, residents encountered a barricade monitored by two truckloads of soldiers who refused to let them through. A hand lettered sign spelled out "danger zone" in bright red paint. The soldiers informed them that the no one was allowed back into their informal communities, which was now part of the newly designated "no build zone." Barangays 89 and 90 were no more, and residents were now subject to mandatory permanent relocation.

After Typhoon Yolanda, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) marked 40-meter "no build zones" along central Philippine coasts that were ravaged by the super typhoon. The goal was to facilitate the construction of "green walls" of mangroves and beach forests, to protect against the coming storms. The no-build zone covered 100 kilometers of coastline in Leyte and neighboring Samar. The Department of Public Works and Highways put up banners blockades and banners identifying these "no build zones." Armed troops physically blocked and intimidated residents from returning to their communities.

Luisa Codillo heard about the soldiers and barricades as she was heading home to Barangay Seawall. She was praying the rosary as she walked—one "Our Father" to thank the lord for the medic who treated her right eye and a litany of "Hail Mary's" for her daughters, in the hope that they were lost and perhaps hurt, but alive. When she heard of the barricades, she tried to walk more quickly and added another prayer request, that the road to Barangay Seawall was still open, "and it was, *salamat* Lord." ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014). She made it back to Barangay Seawall before the soldiers, but the news of the barricades already engulfed the community. People spread rumors that soldiers were shooting residents who insisted on going back to their houses, rumors made believable because it would not be the first time that uniformed men, police or otherwise, tried to destroy their communities. Typhoon survivors, many still frantically searching for loved ones under the debris, now had to figure out how to rebuild their houses while they still could.

There are 138 communities along the eastern coast of Leyte classified as "informal settlements". Like their counterparts in Metro Manila, Barangay 89, Barangay 90, and Barangay Seawall had been subjected to the same national government policies of concealment, constraint, and increasingly, of forced relocations. In the weeks following Typhoon Yolanda, Philippine

soldiers cleared Barangays 89 and 90, and put up white tarpaulin signs saying, “This is a NO BUILD ZONE.” Barangay Seawall was a more established community, dating back to the mid-1990s, built parallel to a kilometer-long stretch of private, coastal highway leading to the Shell Oil Refinery. Their location made it difficult for soldiers to completely block off. Residents modified a tarpaulin over one of the entrances of Barangay Seawall to read, “This is a ~~NO~~ BUILD ZONE” (“Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice” 2014).

Partly because of this permeability and because soldiers were instructed to prioritize clearing coastal communities nearer the city center, residents were able to reconstruct Barangay Seawall quickly. They rebuilt two-room houses out of plywood and metal raised on stilts to accommodate for high tide. The walkways connecting houses to the shore were back up in a few days. Most families rebuilt their houses in the same general area where their previous houses stood. For the Silvas and Codillos, this meant that they rebuilt beside the wreck of the MV Eva Joy, one of the six ships permanently run aground in Barangay Seawall.

In a newspaper interview a few days after Typhoon Yolanda, Dick Gordon, a Senator who also served as chair of the Philippine Red Cross, expressed concern at how quickly residents were constructing houses in the no build zone:

> This is not a criticism but many informal settlers have moved back to the area where the big ships [were swept out to shore. They built beside the sea... [I told them], if you live here, it would be dangerous. I asked them, 'Why are you building there?' [They said,] 'We will be relocated but that would be hard for us.’ (qtd in Quismundo, 2014)

At the time he made those statements, Gordon was planning to run for president, and his words were carefully calibrated to appear sympathetic to the coastal residents. Gordon even used the phrase “informal settlers,” which while regarded as more neutral than “squatter”, also negated residents’ claims to their community. Given his visibility as a representative of both the government and of a prestigious non-governmental charity group, Gordon’s statements also

legitimized the soldiers' actions—blockading access, intimidating residents, and dismantling communities along the coast—as a form of "help", a gesture benevolently extended despite informal settlers creating difficulty for their benefactors.

Neferti Tadiar (2013) examines how conditions of disposability aimed at those rendered as "human rubble of global neoliberalism" are repeatedly mobilized against already devalued lives. This includes the consistent criminalization in urban poor spaces. The proximity of Barangays 89 and 90 to tourist sites and an already operational beach resort made them priorities for removal, thus necessitating the mandatory evacuation and eventual removal of their residents. Given its location further up the coast and the lack of enough troops for relocation, Barangay Seawall residents were able to gain a stronger stake in their community by quickly rebuilding their houses, thus asserting that their *kabuhayan* as something that depends strongly on their community. To characterize their actions as "not caring for their own lives" further justifies the neglect and repudiation of a population already marked by their national and local governments and as what Tadiar calls surplus lives or waste to which the state is indifferent.

On December 18, 2013, in a gathering of the international community in Manila, President Aquino announced the creation of the Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda--Build Back Better (RAY), the Aquino government's program "for immediate government interventions in the affected areas" and "to facilitate international donor assistance" towards Yolanda recovery. RAY is the framework for the Comprehensive Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (CRRP), a PhP170 billion plan for the resettlement, infrastructure repair, livelihood programs, and other social services for Typhoon Yolanda survivors. President Aquino was an economist by training whose inauguration speech spoke of "extracting maximum output from minimum resources" and of "making the Philippines a more hospitable place for business." (*Philippine*

Gazette, 2010). These promises were the harbingers of President Aquino's neoliberal presidency and are manifested in the RAY's plan. Most notable of these strategies were the "expansion of the public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements for major investment programs" and "fostering business-community links through 'adopt-a-town' partnerships." Also of note was the fact that only 30 percent of RAY's PhP170 billion funding was from the government. The rest was to be raised through private investments (NEDA 2013)

The Build Back Better framework was adopted from post-tsunami rehabilitation programs used and developed by financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. It has previously been used in disaster rehabilitation efforts, such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Through RAY, the task of "building back better" is delegated to private sector investment, with the government providing support services. It was in this way that reconstruction was privatized, with 20 private companies and 21 corporate foundations participating in the "adopt a town" partnerships as "development sponsors" (NEDA 2013).

In the context of RAY and the build back better strategies, the designation of no build zones is thus a thinly disguised support system for clearing informal settlements away from land that had been adopted by "development sponsors." This was the case in Bantayan Island, Cebu, whose rehabilitation was directed by Marlins Beach Resort, a German-owned business whose daily operations were run by the town mayor's brother, and the six other resorts in the area. While Bantayan Island does not have as many informal settlers as its bigger neighbors, the construction of decks out into the water made it difficult for subsistence fishers to find places to dock, thus serving to ensure an experience of pristine, untouched sandy beaches for tourists.

Development sponsors had free rein to choose which towns to adopt. Corporate sponsors clustered around highly urbanized areas. Leyte, with its long coastline and its mineral and

geothermal resources, was highly desirable among corporations, leading to many districts with multiple sponsors. Tacloban, the urban capital, had numerous sponsors, including banks and telecommunication corporations. The Energy Development Corporation snapped up Ormoc City and the town of Kananga as well as other districts in the Leyte Mountains. The eastern coastline of the city, including Barangay 89, Barangay 90, and Barangay Seawall, were all sponsored by the International Container Terminal Services, a Manila-based port management corporation. Both the Energy Development Corporation and the International Container Terminal Services faced intense opposition for their environmental and labor practices, so their designation as development sponsors served to silence from various community groups.

Zones of Indistinction

Writing in the context of India, Vinay Gidwani and Rajyashree Reddy (2011, 1653) describe a population of surplus humanity who "cannot be expelled ... it is simply abandoned, thrust into a zone of indistinction where it is regulated but not considered worth redeeming." The Philippine state's militarized relief and corporate recovery programs for Typhoon Yolanda survivors employs this logic of regulation and abandonment. Thus, agents of the state such as soldiers, police, and even the Department of the Environment are mobilized into programs such as the no build zone, which are founded on the displacement of communities like Barangay Seawall. RAY and its concomitant no build program subject a marginalized population who had already been through multiple displacements to further visibility and surveillance. These actions are further justified by dominant discourses constructing residents' criminality and refusal to value their lives, thus solidifying a biopolitics of disposability that justifies the abandonment and violent relocation of coastal residents. To facilitate the militarized relief and corporate rehabilitation of Leyte, the state has thus effectively mobilized the "natural" disaster of Typhoon

Yolanda, whose wind and storm surges relegated Barangay Seawall residents as waste populations to be washed away from public view.

What Falls Away

I end this chapter with two life stories that both reproduces and challenge the biopolitics of disposability of living in Barangay Seawall, namely the video testimonies of Maribeth Silva and Luisa Codillo ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014). Both Maribeth Silva and Luisa Codillo are deeply rooted in Barangay Seawall. Luisa's parents were among the area's first residents, moving to the coast in 1984, when Barangay Seawall was still called Barangay 68. Luisa was born in 1986, the fourth child in a family of five girls. "Papa said he was *malas*, bad luck, so he never had a son, but he was joking because we were happy," said Luisa:

> The only problem was that there was no boy to work at the pier with Papa, so there was very little money. He earned only 70 a day [less than US$1.50] as a *kargador*. So Mama figured it out. She got up early morning to meet the fishermen at the shore and sold fish at the *talipapa* [informal roadside market]. We always had fish and rice. She did that so all seven of us ate ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

Luisa's nostalgic account of moving into Barangay Seawall contrasted sharply with how she described living in Barangay Seawall in 2016:

> No one cared that we live here. It felt so far away from the *bayan* [city center]. Then a lot of people moved from the inside of Leyte, from the other side of the province, so we got noticed. Depending on who the mayor was, we would have people coming here, calling us squatters. They asked for our vote or told us to leave. Go where? [My husband] Danny is a fisherman. I worked at the department store. My two girls, they were very young but knew how to repair a fishing net. That was our *kabuhi*. How could we move? I wish it could be like it was when we were still Barangay 68, when we were left alone ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

Luisa and Amado spent the eight months after the typhoon looking for their daughters, in morgues, in neighboring Barangays and cities. They gave DNA samples to a volunteer organization but were never linked to any of the unclaimed bodies. Then she got pregnant again:

"Another daughter, *malas*!" she said and laughed, clearly joking. Her sisters, married and scattered around different informal communities in the Visayas, told her she needed to move on and live for the baby's sake. They named their daughter Mutya, meaning "muse" in Waray, their inspiration to keep going. Luisa was a salesclerk but the store where she worked was destroyed in the storm. She was waiting to hear back from the SM Tacloban where she applied for a sales job, "but even a janitor job is ok." She was grateful that Marining, Maribeth's mother next door, agreed to take care of Mutya "when I get another job." The storm destroyed most of the fishing boats, so the men of Barangay Seawall found temporary work as salvagers, dismantling the ships that ran aground for PhP 260 a day [US$5]. In the meantime, she stretched her budget. Government-subsidized NFA rice and fish were easier to come by, but they also had to buy formula for Mutya and water for everything—drinking, cooking, bathing. Luisa believed "God is good," and like her mama, she would figure it out ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

In many media accounts of "stubborn" residents, Luisa's words are interpreted to construct her and her fellow Seawall residents as surplus, waste, or even as criminal and dangerous. Her account reveals many aspects for which urban poor populations have been criticized, including having two daughters while living in an urban poor community, the death of her daughters, and the birth of Mutya. The young mother's words, however, belie the conditions of waste and disposability embedded in pronouncements of that they "do not care about their lives," emphasizing instead a commitment to building a family life and to her place in the community that is Seawall. While there are numerous academic and inspirational media accounts of self-reliance among squatter communities, Luisa's accounts of self-reliance—looking for a job, arranging for childcare for Mutya—do important political work of speaking back against

dominant discourses characterizing communities like Seawall as abject. Furthermore, while her search for jobs and insistence on claiming a space where she can be "left alone" and her efforts to find gainful employment comply with the calculus of value employed by neoliberalism, Luisa's efforts do not yield her the rewards for being a self-actualizing neoliberal subject.

Maribeth Silva had undergone multiple displacements in her young life before making a home and *kabuhi* in Barangay Seawall. After Typhoon Uring, the 1991 storm that destroyed their coconut farm and killed her brother, the family moved to another coconut farm on higher ground. By 1997, the new farm had been acquired by an energy corporation, and soon after bulldozers uprooted the coconut trees. "Such a waste, a sin," Marining said, her slight frame shaking with anger at the memory. They were promised new jobs at the plant, but when the time came to hire engineers and plant personnel, "they said we weren't qualified" ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

In 1999, Maribeth was almost 10 years old when her family—her mother, father, and her older brothers—walked the 90 kilometers from Ormoc to Tacloban. It took a few days, but they were coconut farmers who were all used to walking long distances while carrying heavy loads. Her father hoped to find a job in the capital city, hoped to send the children to better schools, but all he could get was a job as a *kargador* at the port. "We even talked of nursing school for me," laughed Maribeth, "so I could get a job abroad." Their stay in Barangay Seawall was supposed to be temporary, but in 2017, more than two decades after their supposed temporary move, Maribeth found herself Nathaniel and Nickson, the next generation of her family to live in Barangay Seawall ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

Maribeth's family was part of the influx of displaced people that swelled the population of Barangay Seawall. In addition to displaced farmers, Barangay Seawall also became the default

destination for displaced residents, whose communities in the interior part of Tacloban were converted into commercial and industrial parks. “It was good,” said Marining,

> the kids were in school again. The port got busier so my son Dennis got work there too. I tried to get a job in the city [Tacloban] but no one wanted to hire someone from the mountains, but a seller at the market gave me a job [peeling garlic]. We always had fish and garlic. We didn’t have a sandy beach like in the resorts, but there was space. (“Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice” 2014).

When they got married in 2009, Danny moved in with Maribeth and her parents. It was not uncommon for Barangay Seawall residents to have extended families living together, sharing resources. Maribeth’s father passed away in 2011, shortly after Nathaniel was born. Marining, now in her fifties, said she is happy to live out her life as a doting grandmother. Both women still work peeling garlic for market vendors, earning PhP70 [US$1.25] daily. Dennis works in Manila as a caregiver and sends money for his nephew’s school expenses like books and uniforms. Danny earns PhP260 a day [US$5] as part of the salvage crew working on the ships, but Maribeth was worried what will happen when the ships are fully dismantled.

Both Maribeth and her mother Marining bristled at the suggestion that their refusal to move from Barangay Seawall indicated a lack of awareness or worse, a lack of caring about their lives. Marining said:

> They want to move us to Barangay 108, in the mountains. We can’t move back to the mountains. There is no fish in the mountain. There’s no road even and we won’t be able to walk to where there is work. There are no more coconut farms there. If there were, we would never have left. There is a school here for the boys; when they can graduate high school, [my son] Dennis says he will help them go to Manila. The boys are healthy, they are fed, and they have friends. They play basketball. They have lives here (“Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice” 2014).

About the safety of living in Barangay Seawall, Maribeth continued:

> When the typhoons come late in the season, like in November, you know it will be a super typhoon. We can go to the public school [temporary shelter] during a storm but we need to come back here. If the government says they want to help us, we need help to fix the boat so Danny can fish again. We got donations for wood to fix the boat but no nails

> or motor so we will save up for that. If we have a better life, I think I want to visit to Baguio, Hong Kong. Or Canada to experience what snow feels like. But I know Barangay Seawall is our home. Nathaniel says he will help me build a house. I will have a *sari sari* store at the bottom. Then rooms for me and mama on the second floor. Maybe a third floor to rent the rooms. I would buy a house on the other side of the Barangay Seawall, so there's no danger of high tide. I don't want to move to Tacloban, to an executive village. We moved a lot but I grew up here and I know Barangay Seawall is our home ("Women Yolanda Survivors Claiming Justice" 2014).

The mother and daughter's accounts highlight important difference between their definitions of disaster and vulnerability and that of the government. For government, disasters are unpredictable acts of god, natural events exacerbated by the stubbornness of a population who do not or refuse to understand the risks they face. Relocation of residents was thus the simpler and more rational response to the threat of super typhoons like Yolanda. For Marining and Maribeth, however, vulnerability and insecurity are directly related to the loss of kabuhi or *kabuhayan*. Marining and her husband's efforts to move their family to another coconut farm, to an urban poor community in central Tacloban, and then finally to Barangay Seawall were all motivated by the need to find work and to maintain access to resources and socialities vital to the family's well-being—a house, various sources of income, a guarantee that the family stays together in the same place. Marining thus moved her family when migration within the island was their best option. Similarly, even as she dreams of selfies in the snow, Maribeth's insistence on creating a life in Seawall is thus a radical disruption of the culture of migration that is foundational to the Philippine economy. For her, disaster management would involve an evacuation center for the residents and then assistance—or at the very least, non-interference—when they return to resume their *kabuhayan*. Their refusal to return to the mountainous areas where a *kabuhayan* are no longer possible would be the true disaster.

Tadiar (2013) describes lifetimes of disposability as a form of intergenerational stagnation of large populations, an "'enduring' mode of human superfluousness" that, for the marginalized populations, is "simply a mode of life" (38). As a superfluous and surplus population, unqualified to participate in labor migration or even to find work in a rapidly industrializing Leyte, any sacrifice they make in the past or present are unlikely to be redeemed in the future. While much of Tadiar's work analyzes this enduring temporality of disposability in terms of the country's labor export program, the intergenerational reproduction of precarity is also seen in the continuous displacements of populations such as Leyte's coconut farmers.

The vulnerability of Barangay Seawall to natural disasters like Typhoon Yolanda has been constructed through a colonial reordering of Leyte and, in the contemporary period, through neoliberal economic development policies, laws, foreign policies, and local government regulations. In many ways, their vulnerability has parallels to how the zoning of Manila post-World War II and its subsequent turn to a neoliberal economy constructed Sitio Mapalad residents as criminal and obstacles to national development. Though their communities are 600 miles apart, Maribeth, Marining, and Luisa's struggles to protect their *kabuhayan* in Barangay Seawall have much parallels with the struggles of Aling Idad and Mariane Nakpil in Sitio Mapalad and provide a context for the women-led in Occupy Pandi, discussed in the next chapter. The fight to nurture *kabuhayan* in Sitio Mapalad, Barangay Seawall, and Pandi are claims to a future for themselves and their children and are thus radical disruptions of the Philippine state's culture of migration and imposed conditions of disposability.

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Chapter Three

"And so I rallied the women": *Kabuhayan* and Urban Poor Women's Activism

On March 8, 2017, 6,000 families affiliated with the group Kadamay ("Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor") began to walk from urban poor communities across Metro Manila to the rural town of Pandi, Bulacan. Pandi is a quieter town compared to its neighbors. Most of its land is devoted to rice fields and banana plantations, and its remote areas are still covered in wild taro and bamboo. Some of the Kadamay family members—including elderly people and very young children—walked as far as 25 miles from Metro Manila. They met up at the outskirts of Pandi and continued walking along unpaved roads towards six housing projects constructed by the National Housing Authority (NHA). These row houses, originally built for the families of police and soldiers, had stood empty for the past few years. Instead, Kadamay families claimed 6,000 idle and deteriorating houses as their own, in an event that has become known as "Occupy Pandi."

In the Philippines' long history of demolitions and the forcible relocation of urban poor communities, Occupy Pandi marks the first time that displaced communities relocated en masse to a housing site of their own choosing. Via manifestos, banners, and media interviews, Kadamay members criticized state and private sector commercial development partnerships that priced supposedly low-income housing units out of the reach of the urban poor. When police and military set up barricades to block food deliveries, the members rallied unions, migrant groups, lawyers, and members of the clergy for support. Through digital media, Kadamay members shared their decades-long fight against dispossession and for fair housing. In summary, Occupy Pandi involved the simultaneous takeover of six empty government housing sites, an action that required planning, synchronization, political consciousness, and courage—attributes that the

government clearly did not expect from the group of vendors, day laborers, drivers, and scavengers. Another surprising aspect about Occupy Pandi that state and local authorities did not expect was the sheer number and visibility of women. Media commentators remarked on how the "quiet town" was invaded by outsiders that included "even women" (Perez 2014). Pandi police officers, unused to dealing with urban poor residents, were reluctant to evict mothers and grandmothers from their homes.

When writing about globalization, political theorist Cynthia Enloe (2014) challenges readers to ask the question: "Where are the women?". In the case of the Pandi occupation, the answer would be "everywhere." Middle-aged women hung colorful bedsheets over unfinished windows and set up *sari-sari* or convenience stores with meager rows of candy, cigarettes, and toiletries. Pre-teen girls laughed and told stories as they stood in line to draw water from the communal well. Young mothers kept watchful eyes as children flew kites and played tag in the streets between the rows of houses. Women joined the groups rolling cement pipes from the construction rubble to the barricades. At night, young women in jeans and hoodies huddled against the cold at the barricades, keeping watch for police and demolition teams. It is only fitting that Kadamay members commenced with Occupation Pandi on March 8, 2017—International Women's Day.

The women of Pandi also faced the media. They fielded hostile questions such as "Why are you *illegally* trespassing?" and struggled to explain that they were only occupying empty houses. Another common media question hinted at the ever-present threat of violent reprisals: "What will you do if the government does not give you land titles?" Many of the men thought for a few seconds before answering, "I would leave. I do not want violence." From experience, the

residents understood that a refusal to grant land titles meant that police, soldiers, and hired goons would soon arrive to forcibly evict them from the area.

In contrast, intergenerational groups of women, from teenagers to grandmothers, spoke to the media explaining how they were claiming houses that were deteriorating and unoccupied. They explained their decades-long fight for affordable housing in Manila, endless trips and applications for government-sponsored housing units that the National Housing Authority insisted were unavailable. Many also told stories of verbal abuse and beatings from police and private security guards hired by the private land developers. When asked about the similar possibility of a violent eviction from Pandi, many women simply said that they needed to fight, to take a last stand for the sake of their children. The response of *Aling* Bhaby Cruz, Kadamay organizer and mother to 10 children, is typical: "When the police come, we will be ready" ("Aling Bhaby," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017).

How then can we analyze the overt presence of women at this "sudden" occupation? What factors would account for the gendered dimension of Occupy Pandi?

In this chapter, I examine the forty-year history of the urban poor housing movement in the Philippines as an intersectional feminist movement. I start with an overview of the history of the fight for fair housing through the life of Kadamay leader Carmen "Nanay Mameng" Deunida, as chronicled in the documentary *Nanay Mameng* ("*Mother Mameng*", dir. by Adjani Arumpac, 2012). The history provides the context of how urban poor populations have continually absorbed the violences of economic development policies enacted in the Philippines since the post-World War II period. In the next section, I analyze Occupy Pandi as a mass action in response to the continual destruction of *kabuhayan*—the rich, heterogenous forms of life-making that are vital to the survival and well-being of urban poor. Through close readings of

documentary film testimonies of Deunida and the women from the Occupy Pandi communities, I examine Occupy Pandi as an urban poor-led response to their decades of erasure, particularly to the obliteration of *kabuhayan* in their original communities.

Methodology

The events of Occupy Pandi were unfolding as of the writing of this chapter, raising a number of challenges to research. Media coverage of the beginning of Occupy Pandi was largely negative. Through close readings of representative news coverage, I analyze how media portrayals interpellate the Occupy Pandi activists as undeserving of protection from the state as well as the material effects of these representations. I also use cultural methods of analysis to the Kadamay narratives, in order to situate the residents' insistence on relocating and protecting their *kabuhayan* as important modes of resistance. The Kadamay members have used social media such as their website and Facebook pages to respond to these portrayals and to control the narrative of their occupation. For this chapter, I focus on the documentary *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, a documentary directed by Jewel Maranan. This documentary weaves together footage from Occupation Pandi and long interviews with the Kadamay members themselves, in contrast to the quick soundbites that were often taken out of context in the news. I analyze the residents' narratives as primary sources that illustrate both how the residents resist their relegation to bare life and imagine a future for their children.

This chapter additionally draws from visual media, namely the documentary *Nanay Mameng*, on the life of Kadamay organizer Carmen Deunida. I consider Deunida's words as well as the filmic re-enactments of key events in her life as primary sources that an archive of what Foucault calls "structuring knowledge" (1969), which in turn provide a way to illuminate how

the fight for fair and affordable housing in the Philippines has always been imbricated in the protection and reproduction of women's *kabuhayan*.

Analysis of *Nanay Mameng*

The documentary *Nanay Mameng* was released in 2012, when the fiery Carmen "Mameng" Deunida was still the outspoken leader of Kadamay. Through interviews, re-enactments, and footage of Deunida from various rallies and demonstrations, film director Adjani Arumpac traced the life story of the 84-year-old urban poor activist who has lived through 13 presidents. *Nanay Mameng* began with static text providing the viewer with background information on the Second People Power Revolution that led to the ouster of Philippine President Joseph Estrada in 2001, his subsequent impeachment, and the corruption charges levied against next President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004. Throughout these times of political upheavals, the film stated, the voice of an elderly woman named Carmen "Mameng" Deunida rang out over the protests. The next scene followed a young girl in shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt, walking through narrow, dirty corridors of a Manila slum. Viewers only see her from the back, following her as she purposefully makes her way through the debris-strewn street while carrying a platter wrapped in plastic cellophane. The audience then hears Deunida's narration, "Let us start from my childhood."

Via a voiceover, Deunida recounted how her father was a clerk whose small salary was not enough to feed the 10 children. Her mother made rice cakes, which the young Mameng then sold in the streets. In the scene, a shaky motion camera followed the young girl as she set her tray of rice cakes on a pile of rubble by the side of a street. The camera panned to the girl's face as Deunida said in a voiceover, "I asked myself, why was our life so difficult? No matter how hard my parents worked, no matter how hard I worked, we were still poor." The film then

showed the present-day Deunida, a petite, silver-haired lady, challenging a crowd to continue the fight for land reform. Finally, the viewers watch as Deunida herself gazed directly at the camera. At the time of this movie, she is 84 years old. “I am Nanay Mameng,” she says to the audience, in a voice full of conviction. “I have been involved with this movement for the past 42 years.”

Though neoliberalism is most associated with the short-term temporal framework of financialization, Neferti Tadiar (2013) turns to cinema, specifically to films that offer insights into the lives of people caught up in these zones of disposability. As a documentary composed of oral history, testimonials, news footage, and filmic recreations of her memories, *Nanay Mameng* depicts the transformations brought about by neoliberal formations in the Philippines. In this opening sequence, filmmaker Adjani Arumpac presents the marginalization of the urban poor as a continuing process, with roots dating at least to Deunida’s childhood. The scene of young Mameng vending rice cakes is shot in sepia using an old film overlay, complete with dirt, scratches, and jumps. The vintage feel of the scene contrasts with the image of young Mameng in shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt, walking through streets, a scene that looks like it could be present-day. Deunida was born in 1928, so her memories of vending would have been in the 1930s or early 1940s. And yet, Arumpac constructs a scene whose time period is ambiguous. When Deunida interrogates the conditions of her disposability despite her family’s hard work, her observations hold true today as it did when she was vending rice cakes. The opening sequence thus powerfully illuminates what Tadiar refers to as “condition(s) of permanent transience” for populations rendered as human surplus. Per *Nanay Mameng*, these conditions have been present in the Philippines at least since the 1930s.

Deunida narrates how her family had lived in their urban poor community in Pasay City, Metro Manila since the 1940s. When food supplies were scarce, she stole vegetables from a

garden cultivated by the Japanese army to help feed her family. She almost got caught one time and hid under the altar of an abandoned church to escape. “I knew the Americans and the Japanese were fighting,” she said. “But why were we the ones caught in the middle? So many people were killed. And those who survived, we had nothing to eat.”

Deunida’s narrative illustrates the effects of the steady neoliberal transformations that have taken place in the Philippines since her childhood. She remembered being a child, caught in a war between two empires. In the mid-1950s, Deunida recalled how city authorities sent in a demolition team into their community because a university was interested in buying the land. The documentary showed a recreation, Deunida in her late 20s, dressed in a green t-shirt and jeans, confronting the police officers. Deunida said, “I called on my neighbors. The men were at work, but the wives, we were home because most of us washed laundry for a living. So I rallied the women. We told the men to leave, because we will fight to protect our land.” The following scene showed people being beaten and bloodied in a violent confrontation with police before transitioning into a montage: President Ferdinand Marcos shaking hands with Ronald Reagan during the latter’s visit to the Philippines in 1969, President Corazon Aquino shaking hands with Tip O’Neill after her speech to Congress in 1986, President Fidel Ramos shaking hands with Bill Clinton in the 1990s, President Gloria Arroyo and President Benigno Aquino with Barack Obama. Deunida noted, “This is the Philippines. We are Filipinos. This land is ours. They said that in 1946, the Philippines had our freedom. But where is that freedom now? We are not free.... All our policies are mandated by the US and followed by our government.”

In this 15-minute sequence, *Nanay Mameng* presents a filmic illustration of the conditions of disposability starting from the post-World War II period after the Philippines gained independence from the United States. At least 500,000 Filipinos were killed during World

War II and a significant part of Manila was reduced to rubble, a devastation that Deunida describes in her account. Economic relief from the United States were on conditions such as the establishment of US military bases across the Philippines. Partly as an effort to stem peasant revolts without having to implement agrarian reform, the Philippine government initiated foreign exchange and import controls. This allowed the government to prioritize imports necessary for industrialization while protecting nascent industries being established in the Philippines. As a result, the 1950s saw the growth of a modest industrial base in the Philippines, including pharmaceuticals, cement, textiles, paper, and telecommunications. It was during this period that the Philippines industrial economy ranked second only to Japan. Deunida's narration, however, illustrates how the benefits of this burgeoning industrialization did not extend to majority of the population. The need for factory sites and infrastructure generated massive displacement and demolitions for many urban poor communities.

The film then shows images of the last three presidents—Joseph Estrada, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and Benigno S. Aquino, as Deunida stated, "And then, during the most recent presidents, everything got worse. Everything was even more difficult." Her voice shook with anger as she recounted how President Benigno Aquino threatened to "blast away" the makeshift houses of informal settlements along Manila's waterways. The film showed footage from yet another demolition of a community, with police and residents clashing violently. The camera lingered on the bloodied face of a resident, staring at the audience as he is carried out by the police. The viewer is overloaded with sensorial details—people running, screaming, police cursing, the sound of gunshots, and blood. "Nobody, no president nor mayor nor councilor ever gave us a single cent to construct our homes," said Deunida in a voiceover. "And yet, they would blast away our houses without a second thought."

When recreating scenes narrated by Deunida, filmmaker Arumpac employs unsteady tracking shots that follow the young Mameng and Carmen in her early 20s closely. After the scene of Deunida's first successful confrontation with the demolition team, Arumpac revs up the temporality of the sequence. The audience is taken into a violent demolition and a sequence of meetings between Philippine and US presidents, from the 1970s to the present. The quick shots convey a shift, from the gradual and everyday struggle of young Mameng's childhood as she sold rice cakes to eruptions of political and economic crises that have been set in motion by industrialization and the collusion of Filipino elites with US neocolonial efforts in the Philippines. Deunida's assertion that "everything got worse" since the 2000s illustrates not only how effectively the seeds of disposability sown in the 1950s have taken hold. Furthermore, her words gesture towards new, more insidious forms of foreclosing on future life-times being confronted by the women of Occupy Pandi.

Towards the middle of the movie, Arumpac takes the audience into the interior of a cramped, dimly lit house. In the foreground, a young man, Deunida's son, spoke to a group of friends about organizing fellow youth to educate and make them aware of the government's anti-poor policies. A middle-aged Carmen, in the background, perked up and abandoned the dishes she had been washing and turns to the group. "*Anak*, I want to join you." The young man laughed and shook his head at his "meddlesome" mother's attempts to join a youth group. He continued talking to his group about class disparity and the need to "awaken" their fellow masses to structural inequality and oppression. Deunida continued her narration in a voiceover, about how her son organized a movement of progressive youth (Kadena), attending rallies and holding meetings in their home. Back in the scene, the middle-aged Carmen faces her son. "*Anak*, I *will* join you. I know poverty. More than you. I want to understand why we are poor." In 1978, at the

age of 50, Deunida became the oldest member of the Kadena youth group. She joined meetings and study groups and went to rallies.

This pivotal scene, situated in the middle of the film, harks back to the scene from young Mameng's childhood, where she wonders at the disjunct between her parents' hard work and her family's continued poverty. Decades later, Carmen, now a mother herself, has taken new action towards interrogating the conditions of poverty. It should be noted that even this step is a struggle for Carmen, who had to overcome gendered and age-related expectations even from fellow organizers.

Later in the film, viewers see the middle-aged squatting on a small stool as she hand-washes a large basin of jeans. She is approached by a smiling older woman who asked about her life, about her thoughts on government policies. "I don't know about that, I am just a laundrywoman," Deunida replied, as she wipes soap bubbles off her face. "But I know every family in this community is going through so much hardship but we can't do anything." The older woman was an organizer with an urban poor women's group and with her help, Deunida once again called on the women of her community. Many of them were the same women who successfully turned away the demolition team in the 1950s. This time they organized women's groups in urban poor communities, educating other women about their rights as Filipinos and as women. People began to address her as Nanay Mameng (Mother Mameng), a name and title that expressed personal affection and respect for the thin, petite woman who stared down demolition teams and spoke forcefully to crowds about urban poor women's rights. Nanay Mameng, mother to the urban poor.

The film also delved into Nanay Mameng's personal life. She talked about her marriage, the death of two of her children, the time when she tried to hack her abusive husband to death

with a machete—all testimony to the enormous personal toll of poverty and struggle. The final scene showed a gathering in a small hall, as Kadamay and other urban poor community members celebrate Nanay Mameng's 84th birthday. The old woman looked slightly embarrassed as her fellow organizers and neighbors speak about her courage and achievements, looking away whenever the audience applauded. But when she is handed the microphone, Nanay Mameng's forceful demeanor returned. "If one of you will teach me how to fire a gun, how to wield a weapon, then I will join the fight while I still have strength!" Over a shot of herself blowing out candles on her birthday cake, Deunida lamented

> I have been organizing so long, but we still need to fight for our rights and our *kabuhayan*. But it is hard to find people to continue this fight. People are hungry. And they are afraid. I tell them, we should not be afraid. Children can be afraid, but not us, we are old. But I worry. When I am gone, would there be a son or a daughter or a grandchild to continue this fight?

The film ends on this question, a question of futurity. Despite her decades of work, Nanay Mameng gestures towards the enduring conditions of disposability that have not only endured but worsened in the first decade of the 21st century. Nanay Mameng's pronouncement directly follows the period that Walden Bello (2016) calls "the apogee of neoliberalism" in the Philippines. President Corazon Aquino, who assumed office in 1986, had made the repayment of foreign debt the top national economic priority. In the decades that followed, debt servicing would take up the largest chunk of the national budget. From 1992 to 1998, under President Fidel Ramos, the Philippines slashed tariff rates, deregularized the energy industry, and privatized the construction and administration of public infrastructure such as roadways, railways, and tollways. It was during this period that the Philippines also joined the World Trade Organization. The export-oriented, pro-corporate development political economy based on privatization, labor export, and low wages would result in modest, single-digit economic growth rates throughout the

2000s. However, conservative estimates from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2015) report an estimated 26.5 million Filipinos, more than one-fifth of the population, lived below the poverty line. The benefits of the neoliberal economy whose contours were consolidated in the post-1986 People Power have failed to extend to Nanay Mameng and other members of the urban poor.

Through the oral history and filmic recreations of *Nanay Mameng*, filmmaker Arumpac effectively immerses viewers in the life-times of disposability of urban poor populations. The orientation of the Philippine economy since post-World War II towards global financial capital has found its fruition in the gendered and aged practices through which women like Nanay Mameng has struggled to make space for *kabuhayan*. Nanay Mameng herself recognizes that the conditions of her own disposability remain, that she would take arms if she still had the strength. By ending the film on the question of her inheritors—would there be a son or a daughter or a grandchild to continue this fight—the film *Nanay Mameng* refuses to make a conciliatory gesture towards victory or even hope. That she has endured for 84 years is not presented so much as a victory but as a reprieve, a difficult struggle of extracting one more day from a life-time that has already been cashed in and designated as having no future surplus-value. Her life illuminates how, for surplus populations, conditions of human disposability are not immanent, and are instead processes that are recreated and maintained throughout decades, through a succession of political administrations. For people like Nanay Mameng, disposability is a mode of life to be survived every day.

Occupy Pandi

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I examined the concept of *kabuhayan* of urban poor women in Metro Manila and in Tacloban. *Kabuhayan* encompasses livelihood opportunities. As discussed in chapter 1, the women of Manila's Sitio Mapalad need to be near

EDSA highway to work as vendors and retail staff. Similarly, the families of Tacloban's Barangay Seawall share childcaring duties and pool resources to be able to send children to the nearby public school. Most urban poor residents rely on their proximity to major thoroughfares and commercial centers to make a living as construction workers, retail workers, and street vendors, hence their refusal to move to isolated areas. In addition to livelihood, *kabuhayan* also encompasses relationships that enable the sharing of resources.

What happens when these forms of *kabuhayan* are made impossible?

Through analyses of interviews from the urban poor women who have occupied Pandi that are collated in the documentary *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, I trace a timeline of the few weeks that led to a precarious agreement where President Rodrigo Duterte granted the members housing. I further investigate the gendered dimension of this fight for affordable housing, situating this campaign as part of a decades-long, women-led campaign rooted in *kabuhayan*.

The events of Occupy Pandi unfolded from March 8 and lasted for 28 days. The most visible and dramatic visual was of thousands of urban poor people marching towards the gates of three various sites. Nina Nueva, 38, was part of a group that headed to Pandi Heights 3. She had originally come from Tondo, Manila before their home was demolished for a road-widening project. She travelled to Pandi with her ten- and six-year old daughters. Her husband and 16-year-old son are construction workers in another part of Bulacan. Police tried to barricade the gates to Pandi Heights 3, but Nueva said they were able to enter because of their sheer number. "We spoke to the residents who were already living there. When they told us the house had an owner, we didn't occupy it" ("Nina Nueva," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017). She and her daughters walked around the long rows of connected, two-story rowhouses until

they found one without an owner. The Nuevas claimed a unit in the far corner of Pandi Heights 3, near the empty lots where Nina Nueva hoped to grow vegetables.

Nueva's unit was typical of many of the rowhouses in Pandi. The exterior walls, originally painted a bright yellow, had faded over the past four years to a dirty white. Inside, the walls and floors were of unfinished cement. Like most of the units in the NHA housing communities, the floor area measured around 250 square feet. On the first floor is a small space intended as a living/dining area. Towards the back is a tiny bathroom. There was no toilet or sink, much less running water, and no electricity, although many of the units had electric outlets. The second floor is an unfinished, small open area, which was supposed to be separated into bedrooms before construction was halted. In the corner, the torn, water-stained ceiling hinted at a damaged roof. Nueva hoped her son could fix that before the rainy season started. For now, however, it was summer and while she did not need to worry about the roof leaks, the lack of insulation translated to a stifling heat inside the house. "But we are used to the heat," said Nueva. She hung a bedsheet across the square hole in the front wall of their unit, a temporary curtain until her son could visit and finish the window ("Nina Nueva," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017). The sheet of pink roses signified that this unit now housed a family. By the next day, March 9, 2017, orange, pink, and other brightly colored sheets decorated the windows of 419 units in Pandi Heights 3, signifying that the previously empty units were now homes to families like the Nuevas.

The housing units in Atlantica are similar in size to those in Pandi 3, except that the facades are painted light blue. In her short video, a slim, dark-skinned eighteen-year-old girl named Xyrah Bernal narrated how she moved into Atlantica with her parents and two younger siblings. Their small house was bare; the bathroom had no fixtures and the sinks did not have

faucets. Foot-length rusted metal and electric wires jutted haphazardly from the wall. On the floor in the middle of the room, the family spread a thin straw mat, and it is here that they would eat their meals and sleep. But for Bernals, this house was a much better alternative to the small room their family rented for P2000 ($40) in the town of Bocaue, Bulacan. Xyrah's parents sold packaged seasonings in wet markets around Bulacan but barely make enough to pay their rent and to send the three children to school. Xyrah was the focal point of her family's meager resources. "I know my mother skips her meals to give me money for the tricycle fare," said Xyrah, "and to pay for my uniform, and books for school." She was now in Grade 11, set to graduate in a year with an Associate degree in Accounting and Business Management. In the same video segment, Xyrah's parents Lito and Jewel recalled the many times they submitted their application for a unit to the National Housing Authority to no avail. "Xyrah is our dream," said Jewel. "We want her to be able to go to college, to help the younger children, so that things will not be too hard for them. If we can get this house and make our business more stable, then we could give all our children that chance" ("Xyrah Bernal," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017).

The narratives of the Nuevas and the Bernals were typical of the Kadamay families who participated in Occupy Pandi. They were mostly families whose applications for government housing have languished for decades. Most of them were members of the working poor. Many had at least one family member, usually the eldest daughter, working as a domestic helper in places like Hong Kong, Singapore, and Lebanon.

There were also families like the Ismaels, the family next door to the Bernals. Aling Neneng, 52, lived in Aklan in the Central Philippines until her informal community was demolished and declared a "no build zone" in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda in 2015. Her

husband *Mang* Gerry, 55, was a tenant farmer on a coconut plantation. Like their neighbors, their home is bare. There is no furniture save for a small stool in the corner of the room where Neneng had placed a framed photograph of a smiling young woman, her long black hair draped over her right shoulder. Numerous pieces of paper, receipts from cash transfer places, are tucked under the frame. "That is our daughter Mely," said Aling Neneng. "She works in Bahrain and sends us money, and that's why we were able to leave Aklan after the storm." They moved to Manila with their three teenage children. Gerry earned P450 ($9) a day when he could find work as a construction worker, while Aling Neneng earned P130 ($2.50) a day at the food stall she put up beside the highway. They joined Kadamay's Occupy Pandi with the hope that they could once again find gainful employment. Mang Gerry was looking for work in the area fruit plantation, while Aling Neneng had set up a roadside stall selling cold orange juice. With Mely's help, they were hopeful that they could finally plant roots in Bulacan and own a permanent home ("Aling Neneng," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017).

The participation of families like the Nuevas, the Bernals, and the Ismaels in Occupy Pandi contradict accounts of residents as lazy, poor people who were abusing government aid. All the Occupy Pandi families have experienced multiple forms of state-sanctioned displacement, including violent demolitions of their previous communities.

The residents also point to the dilapidated conditions of the housing units as a way of responding to criticisms that they have taken housing away from the families of soldiers and police. Bea Arellano, who took over as Kadamay president when Nanay Mameng retired due to illness, said

> These units were empty for a reason. The families of the police and the military refused to move there because the houses were not acceptable to them. They are far from Manila, from their children's schools. The houses are substandard, which is why they have broken down and deteriorated after only a few years. For many rich people, these homes

> are only good to be houses of pet dogs. The only people who would be able and willing to live here are squatters like us (Arellano, quoted in Umil, 2017).

Media distortions of Arellano's quote— "Kadamay says houses are too small, fit only for dogs"—further polarized public opinion against Occupy Pandi. By March 11, just three days after Occupy Pandi began, the National Housing Authority estimated that Occupy Pandi had grown to 4,000 units. Local Bulacan officials reported that their police were overwhelmed, unable to stop the number of families who arrived to occupy units in Pandi Village 2, Padre Pio, and Villa Elisse, so the number of occupied houses was expected to grow.

On March 13, 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte described the Kadamay actions as "anarchy" and warned that "settlers" who refused to move would be evicted by force. Three days later, a week after Occupy Pandi began, NHA officials visited various housing sites supposedly to create a dialogue and to gather housing applications from the families. Per the NHA, 160 families submitted applications, but majority of the families refused to participate in the dialogue. Residents of Pandi Heights 3 and Padre Pio barricaded the entrance to their community to keep the NHA team from entering. Media reports fueled a new wave of public criticism against the "arrogant and lazy" squatters. According to Arellano, Kadamay members were concerned that the NHA would use the census information and housing claims to designate a few families as social housing beneficiaries at the expense of all other urban poor families. Kadamay insisted that their fight was for all families to get housing. Per the urban poor group's estimates, by March 18, urban poor families had occupied 8,000 of the 10,000 available and empty houses in the Pandi projects.

Meanwhile, Kadamay members attempted similar occupations in other parts of Metro Manila. On March 21, police violently dispersed Kadamay members who had started to occupy idle houses in nearby Rizal province, arresting 15 people in the process. The NHA warned of a

"Kadamay effect" (Ager 2017), a chaotic scenario where urban poor citizens would forcibly take over housing units and refuse to pay for their amortization.

On March 23, 2017, NHA personnel taped eviction notices on the walls of the houses around the Occupy Pandi communities. In Villa Elisse, a community where all the row houses are painted white, Kadamay organizer Bhaby Cruz, 44, a large, formidable woman with a booming voice, called to her neighbors and invited them to gather in front of her unit so they could address the media. The residents—mostly women and children—emerged from the blocks of houses. They tore the eviction notices off their walls and walked down the rocky streets towards Aling Bhaby's home, the one with a bright, multi-striped bedsheet hanging from the window. Reporters had already set up their cameras, recording as Aling Bhaby recounted the story of their occupation to the media. Most of the settlers in Villa Elisse were from Navotas, where they paid exorbitant rents for small rooms. Another woman sobbed as she recounted her 17 years of waiting and following-up with the NHA. "We are not thieves or anarchists or violent people," said Aling Bhaby. "We are respectful of the original settlers here in Villa Elisse and took care to occupy only the empty houses." The eviction notice gave residents three days to vacate, but Aling Bhaby and the rest of the people in their group shook their heads emphatically. "We are fighting for our children's rights and futures. We will not leave these houses. If they come to evict us on Monday, then we will be ready for them" ("Aling Bhaby," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Bulacan*, 2017).

Neferti Tadiar (2013) writes of the concept of life-times, where vulnerable populations "struggle to make and remake social life under conditions of their own superfluity or disposability" (23). The testimonies of Occupy Pandi residents speak to the forms of state-sanctioned biopolitical organization imposed under conditions of neoliberalism on their

communities. For vulnerable populations such as the urban poor, the forced relocations from their urban poor communities are subjected to the biopolitics of disposability.

In the Philippines, these conditions of disposability have pushed vulnerable populations, usually young to middle-aged women, into the state's labor export program. By walking to Pandi with her young daughters, Nina Nueva has managed to respond differently to this biopolitics of disposability, instead striving to create a social world, where her two daughters live in a house with a roof and possibly near a vegetable garden. The Ismaels, whose displacements from the central Philippines were catalyzed by natural and political storms, continued to struggle for housing for their three teenage children. It is a struggle that took the family northward to Pandi and took their eldest daughter Mely all the way to Bahrain, and struggle which the family hopes will provide some stability for three other Ismael children. The Bernals imagine a future for Xyrah and their younger children, one that involves college degrees, a steady business, and a house of their own. By imagining a future for their children, their parents are refusing the biopolitics of disposability that have rendered them as socially and prematurely dead. For them, Occupy Pandi is a last chance to make possible a social life for their families.

Kadamay members and their allies staged a protest at the NHA main offices in Manila, scoring the Duterte government for the eviction orders. On March 27, the NHA announced plans to expel the Occupy Pandi residents, now numbering 20,000. After members of the Progressive Bloc of Congress facilitated a dialogue between Kadamay and NHA representatives, the urban poor group agreed to undergo a "validation process," the first step towards determining the eligibility for housing. This verification process, however, was rendered moot on April 4, 2017, when President Duterte announced that he was going to let the Kadamay families live in Pandi.

In a speech during the Philippine Army's 120th Founding Anniversary celebration, Duterte instructed the soldiers to let the urban poor stay in Pandi because

> These houses are missing many things--water, electricity. They were built before my time. I have asked the NHA to look for suitable land [for you]. Let us not interfere with the residents there because they keep fighting back… I will give you better houses, larger, more expensive, more comfortable. Let us be magnanimous to these poor residents. (Vibar 2017)

It should be noted that Duterte's decision to "let" the urban poor stay in Pandi, far from a progressive or pro-poor gesture, also served to neutralize Kadamay's efforts to connect the lack of affordable housing options to larger economic structures of dispossession. By locating the substandard housing as "before (his) time," Duterte attributes the problem to his predecessors. He positioned himself as benefactor to both the urban poor and the soldiers, a patriarch who generously gives away housing. Furthermore, the "magnanimous" gesture of granting Kadamay members "free" housing further turned public opinion against the urban poor group, who continued with their demands.

While they welcomed the president's statement promising ownership, the Pandi residents continued to fight for basic services to their communities. They rallied in front of Pandi's town hall, demanding the city provide them with power and water connections. On May 1, 2017, Labor Day, Kadamay members massed in front of the Office of the Ombudsman in Manila, demanding livelihood programs that enable urban poor residents to earn a living wage. And they demanded that the Duterte government continue to provide for the urban poor whose housing needs were still unmet.

Duterte's response to the last demand for additional housing belies the benevolent paternalism of his previous announcement,

> I am warning you, do not do this again. If you insist on occupying other units, I will oust you by force. You will be hit with clubs. Or if you fight back, I will have you shot. Do

not use your poverty to create chaos. (Ranada 2017)

The president's reaction reflects public anger at the urban poor members, who were now accused of demanding utility services, livelihood programs, and worse, additional housing. Under the terms of the biopolitics of disposability, people like the Kadamay residents are supposed to secure their own survival. Instead, group has continued to position urban poor members as residents who are worthy and deserving of life-sustaining benefits from the state. Tadiar (2013) argues that the present era of neoliberal financialization is dependent not on primitive accumulation but on "processes of dispossession to create and maintain a population of 'surplused' people as monetized aggregates of disposable life." For many Filipinos, especially young and middle-aged women, being rendered as surplus is a catalyst to find work overseas and then send remittances back to sustain their families. Displaced populations are thus ready to be mobilized as capital migrates to different sites and thus facilitating the circulation of capital around the Philippines. By striving to recreate and maintain their *kabuhayan* in Pandi, the Kadamay families are refusing to participate in monetizing their lives in ways that are legible to neoliberal indicators.

Furthermore, Tadiar states that under new conditions of exploitation, disposable populations are also made to serve as "risk-absorbing capital" for the state and its allied enterprises. Populations whose *kabuhayan* is in the informal parallel economy could not be effectively monetized by the state in terms of flexible labor and taxes. Another way that the state can thus extract value from this surplus population is to "advance" the commodities of their future life-times through abdicating its financial and social responsibilities to surplus population. By enforcing a biopolitics of disposability that creates a population to be "let die", the state can thus "cash in" on the present expense of providing social services, infrastructure, and utilities to

its surplus and disposable populations. The cashed in resources can then be channeled towards value-generating activities such as debt servicing and the private-public partnerships, where the state awards government contracts for infrastructure and housing to corporations allied with the country's economic elite.

The effects of this "cashing in" can already be seen in the state's proposed 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), which significantly reduces the allocations for the NHA and six other key housing and shelter-related agencies from PhP14.8 billion (US$280 million) in 2017 to just PhP4.4 billion (US$81 million). This represents a 70 percent decrease in the overall housing-related budget, with the biggest decreases coming from the budget of the National Housing Authority. Allocations for the private-public infrastructure building projects, however, were increased by 37.5 percent, the largest increase in allocations. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) budget has also been increased by 15 percent to fund the hiring of additional police officers to support the Duterte administration's current war against drugs (Rey, 2017).

In light of the massive decrease in the budget for housing, especially to the funds allocated for the relocation of urban poor families, the benevolent gesture of "granting" housing to the families of Occupy Pandi is thus predicated on the displacement and further marginalization of other vulnerable populations. After all, despite the decrease in the housing budget, the allocations for building housing for soldiers and military were further increased to US$31 million. In contrast, under the new NHA allocations, the funds for the relocation of "informal settler families" displaced by infrastructure projects has been further reduced by 95 percent. These allotments allow Duterte to make good on his promise to build better houses for the families of soldiers and police, citizens who have some form of recognizable future surplus-

value. The modest increase in the budget for education also allocates funding for Duterte's campaign promise of free tuition in state colleges and universities. This move thus potentially increasing opportunities for poor, young people to pursue college education. However, this "investment" in the education of certain youth who, as the country's future workers and remittance senders, are perceived to have some form of future surplus value. This "deserving" population includes OFWs like Mely Ismael, who found a job in Bahrain and the other young people working as semi-skilled laborers at the country's manufacturing zones.

Kadamay's campaign for affordable housing still serves as an important means of disrupting state efforts to "cash in" on the future life-times of urban poor families. When Lito and Jewel Bernal dared to imagine and actively enable a future for their daughter Xyrah and her siblings, they were in effect positioning their children as rightful, legitimate subjects deserving of life-sustaining benefits from the state. Similarly, by hanging a bedsheet of pink roses in the window of a deteriorating rowhouse and planning for a garden, Nina Nueva is refusing to let the state cash in on her daughters' futures. The labor of and remittances sent by Mely Ismael to her parents afford the family some form of neoliberal legibility, enabling George and Neneng Ismael's journey from the central Philippines northward even after the destruction of their *kabuhayan* in Albay. By journeying from Navotas to the Villa Elisse residences in Pandi "for their children," by demanding infrastructure and utilities and livelihood programs, Aling Bhaby and her group of urban poor residents refuse the state's efforts to foreclose on the albeit limited future life-times of their children. By claiming homes and by extension land, Occupy Pandi illustrates how a group designated as "surplus" fights to secure a future, perhaps not for themselves but for their children. The residents of Occupy Pandi are in effect answering Nanay Mameng's call by continuing the daily struggle for *kabuhayan*.

Occupy Pabahay

Partly as a result of President Duterte's promises for better housing, most of the soldiers and police designated as Pandi beneficiaries agreed to give up their claims. In September 2017, the Philippine Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the National Housing Authority (NHA) to redistribute empty Pandi units to Kadamay families. This move formally sets in place Kadamay's housing claims, and the Pandi residents are now much closer to owning their homes. However, their housing benefits come with onerous conditions, as seen in Duterte's warning that participants in any further occupations will be shot. In fact, Kadamay members have already been arrested after similar actions in other parts of Bulacan and provinces just outside of Metro Manila. As Kadamay Bea Arellano states, their fight is clearly far from over. In addition to fighting for utilities and basic services to Pandi, the urban poor group has now embarked a larger campaign for "Occupy Pabahay", a figurative phrase which conveys continued mass action for affordable housing.

In 1975, during Martial Law, President Ferdinand Marcos issued a presidential decree criminalizing "squatting" as a "nefarious" action, where informal settlers would be fined or jailed. The presidential decree was meant to neutralize the growing political power of the 180,000 residents who had set up "informal settlements" in the Manila community of Tondo, who preferred to live in makeshift shanties that they claimed as their own, without utilities and services, instead of renting. Nancy Kwak (2017) notes that by designating a legal dichotomy between legitimate versus illegitimate residents, Marcos' anti-squatter policies created the concept of informality. While "informality" is often conceptualized as a space of periphery or exclusion, Kwak more accurately describes informality as "an absence of government control, management, or knowledge over an area." In some cases, such as Barangay Seawall in Tacloban,

this absence is much preferred by residents, many of whom prefer to be left alone to live their lives as fisherfolk. In contrast, Sitio Mapalad residents, discussed in chapter 1, work in various levels of formal and informal economies. Many women from this community, from teenagers to grandmothers, have found employment as domestic workers abroad. Other Sitio Mapalad residents work as janitors and sales staff at the nearby malls. A greater number of residents work informally—vending lunches to nearby call centers or driving unlicensed vans to ferry employees to their offices in the commercial and financial hubs of Manila. Sitio Mapalad residents thus emphasize the centrality of their labor to Manila's efforts to be recognized as a globalizing economic hub to resist their displacement, by positioning themselves as legitimate citizens with valid housing claims. By refusing the biopolitical disciplining of their life-worlds, Sitio Mapalad residents make visible the importance of their modes of *kabuhayan* to the global economy.

Occupy Pandi and its subsequent incarnation as Occupy Pabahay represents a departure from these two approaches. The Kadamay families in this mass action, many of whom have already been violently displaced and have no marketable skills, nonetheless insist on the legitimacy of their claims to the formal, state-regulated space of government housing. They insist on housing and land titles, on utility connections, on livelihood programs not simply because of their labor but because, in the words of Nanay Mameng, "This is the Philippines. We are Filipinos." In this statement and with their actions, the families of Occupy Pabahay are recovering their legibility as citizens, a legibility obfuscated by the anti-squatter policies of the Martial Law era.

Back in Pandi, residents were cautious about celebrating. In her white house in Villa Elisse, Aling Bhaby remained vigilant. Despite promises from previous presidents and various

government officials, she and her family had been through numerous violent displacements in their previous community in Navotas. Many of her fellow organizers had been killed, and the growing number of state-sanctioned extra judicial killings made it more dangerous to organize and to eke out a living in Metro Manila's informal spaces. It was not so much hope but desperation that she joined Kadamay member families in the 22-mile walk to Pandi. Anticipating further violence, she said, "I knew that many of us could get shot, but they won't be able to shoot us all. And those who survive, especially the children, they will have housing" ("Aling Bhaby," *The Unfinished Story of Occupy Pandi*, 2017).

Aling Bhaby's words thus illuminate what Grace Hong (2015) conceptualizes as "neoliberal disavowal," where the urban poor are marginalized as a waste population structured for exclusion and premature death. Under this terrible bargain, the successful campaign for housing and university education comes at the expense of a larger swath of urban poor citizens whose futures are cashed out in the form of massive budget cuts in further housing assistance and the already underfunded government-subsidized healthcare system. The reallocation of resources in the 2018 budget thus comes from revoking present and future resources from the urban poor.

At the end of the documentary on her life, Nanay Mameng worries if there will be any children left to continue the fight for fair housing. The women of Occupy Pabahay have responded with an extreme solution, an occupation that places them and their families in immediate danger of death. Their actions, the acknowledgement of the possibility that they may be shot, speaks back to how, for urban poor populations, the gradual and sped-up erosions of their *kabuhayan* means imminent death. By offering up their lives and bodies, Occupy Pabahay families are fighting for more than just reprieve from the everyday struggle for survival and

existence. Together with their counterparts in Sitio Mapalad and Barangay Seawall, the women of Occupy Pandi claiming a *kabuhayan* for themselves and their children.

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Conclusion

Calvary of the Poor

As I write this chapter in March 2018, it is Holy Week in the Philippines. Members of KADAMAY ("*Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap*" or Federation of Mutual Aid for the Poor) are holding their annual Calvary of the Poor mobilization in Manila. In 2018, an estimated 3,000 people joined this street reenactment of the Passion of Christ, one of the larger commemorations going on around the country. Seven men, ranging in age from their early twenties to their sixties, knelt periodically as they walked in a procession bearing heavy, wooden crosses on their backs. Tacked to one cross was a sign that read, "TRAIN LAW," referring to the recently passed Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law, a law widely blamed for the rise in the prices of basic goods and transportation fares. The other crosses bore signs saying "Demolition," "Resettlement," "Build-Build-Build (Evict-Evict-Evict)," "Extrajudicial Killings," Justice System," and "Federalismo". A thin, middle-aged woman with a lined face and determined eyes wore a band of barbed wire wrapped around her head, with a sign saying "*Ganansya sa Pribado*", linking "Private Profit" to the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head as a form of torture. Children chanted Our Fathers and Hail Marys as the group prayed, sang hymns, and wept. In a news interview, a Kadamay representative stated, "Until now, the Duterte regime, like Pontius Pilate, washes its hands of our pleas for living wages, decent housing, and the lack of basic goods and services in our communities. For the urban poor, every day is Calvary."

When I began working on this research in 2010, the Philippines was at a time of transition between two presidents. We were at the end of the term of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, an economist who promised to turn the Philippines into a First World Country by 2020, and moving towards the term of Benigno S. Aquino III, another economist who vowed to make the

Philippines into a “place that is hospitable for business.” The current President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, who assumed office in 2016, was elected on a law and order platform. While he is not an economist, Duterte defended the state-sanctioned killings as necessary to keep the Philippines attractive for foreign investment and promised to safeguard young people—"our country’s best resources”—from the scourge of illegal drugs. The Duterte government has since embarked on a brutal “war on drugs” that has resulted in the extrajudicial killings of more than 7,000 suspected drug dealers and users. The vast majority of whom are members of the urban poor, adding to the Calvary of widowed spouses and orphaned children.

The first three Philippine presidents of the new century had in common a way of framing “development” as a discourse, a discourse one that Arturo Escobar maintains “created a space in which only certain things could be said or even imagined” (39). In this work, Escobar acknowledges culture not merely as a system of rules and values, but more importantly, as epistemologies or knowledge systems. The domination of Western forms of knowledge systems in development discourse have severely marginalized non-Western knowledge systems and have subsequently enshrined development as the adoption of Western values and knowledge systems, which in the case of the Philippines, has depended heavily on the hypervisible and severely devalued wage labor of women—as overseas foreign workers and as workers in the country’s manufacturing zones. In the Philippines, development is only measurable in market terms such as women’s waged labor and women in the political sphere. As Escobar writes, development has become a “pervasive cultural discourse with profound cultural consequences for the production of reality in the so-called Third World” (Escobar 2000: 11). In the Philippines, this is a reality that devalues, denies, and even makes impossible the myriad gendered practices of *kabuhayan* that have been vital to the well-being of Filipina women. However, as shown in the narratives of

urban poor women in Barangay Seawall and Pandi, this production of reality also engenders new, vibrant forms of *kabuhayan.*

The conclusion of this dissertation thus returns to the questions my research raised at the beginning. What does it mean to think of development as a set of directed, intentional processes? How do reductive concepts of neoliberal economic development violently reorder of social relations in the Philippines and other postcolonial countries in the Global South? And finally, what would development discourse entail if it was built around sustaining and nurturing Filipina women's *kabuhayan*?

Kabuhayan and Disposability

In Chapter One, I traced the history of Sitio Mapalad, from its origins in the 1950s as a resettlement area at what was then the outskirts of Manila, to its current interpellation as an "informal community" in what has now become commercially valuable land in the wake of Manila's growth. This chapter examines how women residents like Caridad Augusto and Marianne Nakpil built a *kabuhayan* for themselves and their communities, from basic services such as clearing the land, building their houses, and eventually mobilizing political support to ensure that their community had schools, a senior center, running water, and electricity. Sitio Mapalad residents faced periodic eviction attempts throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but as a post-war resettlement area, they had forms of documentation and titles that gave them formal claim over their land. However, by the 2000s, Manila had grown outward, situating Sitio Mapalad along the EDSA, one of Manila's busiest and major thoroughfares. Residents stated that their lives became much more difficult during the presidential terms of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-2010) and Benigno S. Aquino (2010-2016). In the early 2000s, private developers acquired the land encompassing Sitio San Roque from the government, with plans to develop the

area into the Quezon City Central Business District. It was during this time that the residents began to deal with the violent demolitions and fires that destroyed the houses in their communities. Furthermore, through institutions such as the National Anti-Poverty Commission, the state also uses statistics such as the lack of "jobs" and anti-squatting ordinances to criminalize the residents and paint them as threats to the economic development of the city. This chapter thus argued that the Philippine state deployed various biopolitical mechanisms, including surveillance, state-sponsored violence, and through laws such as anti-squatting ordinances to invalidate Sitio Mapalad residents' ties to the community wherein they built their *kabuhayan*. With their *kabuhayan* destroyed, many women had no choice other than to seek employment abroad and to move to another resettlement area outside of Metro Manila.

Chapter Two focuses another urban poor community, Barangay Seawall along the coast of Tacloban in the central Philippine island of Leyte, in the months following Typhoon Yolanda in November 2013. In the same way that families first migrated to Sitio Mapalad in Manila, I traced the vulnerability of Leyte residents to typhoons to a number of factors, including the reordering of Leyte into haciendas during the Spanish colonial period, the deforestation and depletion of soil fertility through the 19th and 20th centuries, and the construction of the geothermal plants in the 21st century led to increased population densities along the Leyte coastline. Contrary to government pronouncements painting Typhoon Yolanda as either an exceptional outlier or a modern phenomenon spawned by global warming, this chapter argues that the increase of Filipinos living in unsafe areas such as Barangay Seawall is a major factor in the casualties of Typhoon Yolanda. As in Sitio Mapalad, I argue that this construction of vulnerability is intergenerational, as Barangay Seawall families continue to struggle with displacement, first from the mountainside where their coconut farms were razed to make way for the geothermal

plants needed to power commercial and industrial zones in the Visayas region, then from the Tacloban city slum areas that were turned into call centers, and now from their ravaged coastal communities. In the aftermath of the typhoon, this chapter also examined how the Aquino government used neoliberal disaster management policies to designate "no settlement zones" that criminalized the rebuilding of informal communities along the "unsafe" coastline. These "no build zones" allowed private corporations to acquire coastal land for beach resorts and also allowed the local and national governments to wash their hands of the residents who chose to ignore the dangers of living along the typhoon-prone coast.

These findings from these first two chapters illuminate how the Philippine state mobilizes violence, criminal laws, media, disaster management policies create conditions of vulnerability by destroying the livelihoods and relationships that constitute the *kabuhayan* of Filipina women. Both chapters also discussed why urban poor women in Manila and Tacloban faced state-sanctioned violence in order to protect their *kabuhayan*, whether in Sitio Mapalad or Barangay Seawall.

What happens after the displacements, or when the state, through violence and neglect, makes urban poor women's *kabuhayan* impossible? Chapter Three is the most recent in terms of time period, drawing from the events surrounding "Occupy Pandi" which began in March 2017 and continues as of this dissertation's writing in 2018. In this chapter, I examine an interdisciplinary archive of news footage, documentaries, interviews, and other forms of cultural production from the Kadamay members who participated in the occupation of 6,000 government houses in Pandi, Bulacan, originally intended for the families of police and soldiers. As with Sitio Mapalad and Barangay Seawall, the families of Occupy Pandi faced violent government responses designed to render their claims to Pandi houses as invalid. These included a

convoluted, bureaucratic process of filing housing claims, constant police surveillance, and threats from President Duterte that he would have additional Pandi occupiers imprisoned, beaten, and even shot.

In summary, through violence and neglect, the state has severely eroded women's *kabuhayan*, in attempts to create a disposable population to keep up the Philippines' status as a site and source of cheap, feminized labor. It is through mobilizing these biopolitical measures that the state reproduces and maintains an everyday Calvary for the residents of Sitio Mapalad, Barangay Seawall, and Pandi.

Future directions

President Rodrigo Duterte's "war against drugs" campaign was officially implemented in June 2016, resulting in the "extrajudicial killings" of more than 12,000 drug suspects (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Most of the dead were from poor families in urban areas such as Sitio Mapalad. In addition to the scale of the violence, a notable aspect of President Duterte's drug war is how this employs what Foucault termed the "spectacle of the scaffold" (Foucault, 1978: 58). While Foucault examined spectacles of pain and suffering of public executions, the modern Philippine analogue are the bodies of suspected criminals dumped in public alleyways and vacant lots, with signs reading "I am a drug pusher." Police investigators cite these hand-lettered, cardboard signs as evidence that the deceased were drug users or dealers. Sitio Mapalad, the urban poor community discussed in the first chapter, has been the site of a number of dumped bodies. Numerous Philippines-based and international human rights groups have criticized President Duterte's violent methods as they noted the strong public support for the violence. In continuing my research in urban poor communities in the Philippines, I will examine the drug war as part of the Philippine government's history of using state-sanctioned violence against

populations whose lives are constructed as devoid of value (Agamben, 1998). In contrast to conventional analysis painting President Duterte as wielding dictatorial powers, my previous research in communities such as Sitio Mapalad and Barangay Seawall indicates that such violence had long been deployed against marginalized communities, such as the urban poor. Building on Grace Hong's (2015) examination of how neoliberalism confers populations with the "status of protectable life" at the expense of relegating to premature death the "poor, racialized, and sexual- and gender-deviant populations" (11-12). I argue that the scale of the violence of President Duterte's drug war and the public support for these mass killings were engendered by previous violence in communities such as Sitio Mapalad, whose residents were similarly criminalized as threats to public safety and national development.

In June 2017, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) under President Rodrigo Duterte released its new Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022), a continuation of many of the market-based development strategies outlined in the 2011-2016 version enacted under former President Aquino. Though they are ostensibly from rivalling political parties, much of the new Plan replicates the neoliberal strategies of attaining economic growth through attracting foreign investment. The new Plan notes its predecessor's failure in meeting its economic growth targets and its failure to reduce underemployment and continued poverty especially among rural populations. In recognition of the damage from 2013's Typhoon Yolanda, the new Plan also includes sections for disaster preparation and relief efforts. As part of its growth strategies, the new Plan contains programs and projects with a long-term goal of turning the Philippines into a "global knowledge economy" by 2040. Towards this, much of the Plan's policies for dealing with social inequality are built around harnessing the country's "human capital," including expanded technical and vocational training programs to be fulfilled through

public-private partnerships. Since 2010, the Philippines has seen the growth of its call center industry, as more established firms in India are outsourcing its front-end, customer services operations to the Philippines. There is a growing body of scholarship examining relationships between intimacy, labor, and capital (Mankekar and Gupta, 2016). In future research into this project, I will continue examining the various ways that Filipinos are interpellated into this growing knowledge economy, and what the consequences are for marginalized Filipinos who are displaced. What do these new economic directions mean for Filipina women's *kabuhayan*, especially in relation to work that challenges the previously sharp distinctions between the public and the intimate spheres?

In future research, I will also examine the erosion of *kabuhayan* as a fall away experience of globalization in comparison with other regional studies of women's participation in the public sphere, such as Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo (2008) on the "hooking economy" in Saigon and Davorn Sisavath (2015) on women who work clearing landmines in Laos. Given how the "Philippine model" is touted as an exemplar for women's empowerment, I am interested in analyzing any parallels or differences in how women engage with neoliberal strategies across Southeast Asia, in a comparative context.

What is to be done?

This research analyzed how neoliberal development in terms of making the Philippines legible as a space for foreign investment undergirds anti-poverty, disaster management, and law and order policies in the Philippines. Former Presidents Arroyo and Aquino and President Duterte have all used "job creation" of manufacturing and commercial zones to justify the violent demolitions of informal communities and the expropriation of coastal land from fisherfolk. In terms of space, Philippine state thus frames "development" as a phenomenon only

in urban areas. This discourse of development does not merely institute a simple binary distinction between rural and urban, between modern and traditional as the Philippine case shows more overlap between the two sectors, especially as global capitalism further eliminates land, resources, and other material bases of the traditional sector. Since 2001, there are more Filipinas being absorbed into an impoverished, marginalized urban underclass, pushing them into the state-regulated labor export program. This is the logic of the much-quoted *Global Gender Gap Reports* that keep reporting the Philippines as among the best countries to live in terms of gender equity.

What the does it mean to imagine development that refuses the neoliberal logic of counting women's contributions only when it shows up as salary in the paid economy? How can women's contributions towards economic development be made legible and therefore protected? In other words, how can development be re-imagined if the starting point is to facilitate development based on *kabuhayan*?

As this research has shown, urban poor women have specific recommendations for a development that is compatible with—or at least does not destroy—their *kabuhayan*. The residents of Sitio Mapalad had the inclusion of low-income housing units in the new commercial zone, to enable them to continue living in the community they built. Furthermore, they proposed job training programs that will enable them to secure work as clerical or maintenance staff in the proposed commercial zones. These solutions will help their families survive the loss of their current forms of *kabuhayan* (vending, midwifery) once the land is developed into a commercial zone. Implicit in these programs is the demand that the state treat the residents of Sitio Mapalad not as a disposable population, to be hidden behind decorative walls or displaced to the countryside. Also notable is how these policy recommendations also pave the way for many Sitio

Mapalad residents to participate in the paid economy, a significant variable for neoliberal indices such as the *Global Gender Gap Report.*

In contrast to the Aquino government's emphasis on the relocation because of the risks of natural disasters, Barangay Seawall residents like Luisa Codillo and Maribeth Silva see their vulnerability as directly related to the loss of their *kabuhayan*. Thus, in contrast to the no build zones and further relocation/displacement, Barangay Seawall residents' desire to be "left alone" highlights an important distinction between their concept of vulnerability and well-being. The coastal informal community, after all, represented possibly the last chance to maintain access to the socialities that were vital to their family's well-being--their own house, their own community, a source of food, and a possible albeit meager source of income. Thus, instead of designated no build zones and permanent relocation, Barangay Seawall residents have proposed community involvement in drafting evacuation plans before typhoons, and then being allowed to return to their community to resume their lives.

The Kadamay families of Occupy Pandi, who have also already faced multiple displacements, have offered the clearest challenge to the state's various biopolitical mechanisms of rendering them as disposable. By occupying the houses in Pandi, women like Bhaby Cruz and Xyrah Bernal are refusing their designation as a surplus population. Instead, they position themselves as citizens, as akin to the soldiers and police for whom the government houses were intended. Their current demands for land titles, utilities, and other services for their community because, in Kadamay leader Carmen Deunida's words, "we are Filipinos" also illustrates how the women of Pandi are asserting their legibility as citizens who have legitimate claims to state services such as housing, city services, and livelihood programs. As of this writing, the Occupy Pandi movement has continued to grow into a larger Occupy Pabahay (Occupy Housing),

involving attempted takeovers of idle government houses in other areas near Manila. In addition to their campaign for housing, the women of Occupy Pandi have rallied with other mass organizations. During President Duterte's 2017 state of the nation address, Occupy Pandi families marched back to Manila, to support and thus extend their media coverage to mobilizations for the implementation of land reform and an end to the contractual labor laws which they criticized for job insecurity. When they were characterized as "ungrateful" for joining mobilizations—after all, *Tatay* Duterte had already granted them housing—mothers from Pandi replied that their fight continued because "We need to protect our *kabuhayan* so our children will have a future."

This idea of protecting their children's future was a concept that I have heard repeated over and over from vulnerable women across the Philippines. From indigenous Filipinas protecting their ancestral lands in the northern Philippine province of Ifugao to Muslim and Lumad women enduring Martial Law and militarization in the southern province of Marawi, Filipina women from around the country have echoed this phrase. The large contingent of children praying the rosary with their families during the Calvary of the Poor procession was widely criticized in the media as a form of "brainwashing" and as irresponsible parenthood on the part of Kadamay members who exposed their children to the possibilities of violent demolition. While their fight to protect their *kabuhayan* is a refusal of the biopolitics of disposability and a risk of imminent death, there is also an importance to the future that Luisa Codillo envisioned for her baby Mutya, to Lito and Jewel Bernal's hopes that their daughter Xyrah attend college, and to the large contingent of Pandi parents at the Holy Week procession, praying that this is the year they are finally granted housing titles so their kids be able to grow up in Pandi, with a house, running water, electricity. They are thus imagining and are actively creating a future perhaps no longer

for themselves but one where their children can grow up in safety, with access to schools and healthcare.

As Filipina urban poor women have shown, development discourse is much more than the number of women elected into office or the percentage of women who generate an income measurable in neoliberal indices such as the *Global Gender Gap Report*. On a practical level, the women of Sitio Mapalad, Barangay Seawall, and Pandi have made specific policy recommendations regarding how they could continue to live, work, and maintain their family and community relations in their geographic locations, even as their communities are transformed into resorts, malls, and other commercial/retail spaces. In addition to simple policy changes, however, these recommendations also articulate a fundamentally different relation to the concept of development. By protecting and carving out a space for their communities, urban poor women are articulating a different role for themselves in a neoliberal economy in which they are only legible as overseas or manufacturing zone laborers or as a population to be hidden behind walls through the biopolitics of disposability and zoned for premature death. The insistence that they are "Filipinos" further refuses their designation as barriers to the economic development of an area. By mobilizing to have the housing, educational, and healthcare needs of their children met by the local and national government, urban poor women are speaking back to the development plans that have been put in place under the regimes of economists and former Presidents Arroyo and Aquino—strategies that rely heavily on the underpaid labor of women. They are thus fighting for more than just a reprieve from their daily struggles against disposability. Through the narratives of their lives and the lives of their children, urban poor women critique narrow concepts of gender equity and instead illustrate the links of land conversion, militarization, and fair labor laws to their *kabuhayan*. Rather, they are articulating a development episteme that

starts with ensuring their *kabuhayan* and at least not foreclosing the possibility of a future for their children.

I will continue to examine the intersections between export-oriented economic development, fair labor, affordable housing, and militarization, and the implications of these interactions for women's *kabuhayan*, important critiques given the disturbing image of a "Philippine model" for gender equity. In the next phases of this research, I will conduct more research among immigrant Filipino communities around the United States and migrant worker communities in places such as Taipei and Hong Kong, to examine how Filipina women maintain and rebuild their *kabuhayan* practices outside Philippine borders.

In the meantime, as Holy Week 2018 draws to a close, the members of Kadamay allow themselves to feel a little hopeful. In the Filipino language, "Easter Sunday" translates to "*Pasko ng Pagkabuhay* (Christmas of Rebirth)", commemorating Jesus Christ's resurrection to new life. Again, the root of "*buhay*" or life is key here, as urban poor women continue and celebrate their practices of life-making. While they are still struggling with the bureaucratic processes of obtaining housing titles and still face the threat of eviction, many Kadamay families celebrated their Pandi residences as a form of *pagkabuhay*, a rebirth that looks beyond everyday Calvary to the possibility of a new life. By using *kabuhayan* as an analytic, my research argues that Filipina urban poor women are creating fertile spaces for articulating alternative concepts of development. These spaces are fraught with tension and friction, but also present new opportunities for alliances, as seen in how urban poor women's groups around the Philippines organize with labor and land reform advocates to protect the *kabuhayan* of their children. They are thus engaged in the difficult but ultimately hopeful task of articulating new meanings of

citizenship and belonging, of development and what development entails, from the standpoints of vulnerable women in the Global South.

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